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High-level segment

Provisional summary record of the 17th meeting (second part)*

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Wednesday, 4 July 2007, at 9.30 a.m.

President: Mr. Hannesson(Iceland)

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* The summary record of the first part of the meeting appears as document E/2007/SR.17.

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High-level segment (*continued*)

Annual ministerial review (*continued*)

Strengthening efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger, including through the global partnership for development (*continued*) (E/2007/71, E/2007/81, E/2007/CRP.5)

1. **Mr. Molina** (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that once again the measures taken to eradicate poverty placed economic development above the personal development and dignity of each human being. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela maintained that, to combat poverty and hunger, the serious social and economic problems resulting from unbridled capitalism had to be eliminated and equitable public policies implemented; in other words a new development model based on full respect for human rights and the conservation of the environment had to be introduced. The Bolivarian revolution, with its emphasis on the collective interest, strengthened participatory democracy by letting the poor have their say. The Government's efforts in that regard had met with resistance among foreign-backed minorities of entrenched privilege, minorities that refused to agree that the right to food, which was closely linked to the right to life, should be written into the Constitution of 1999.

2. In the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, access to land and property was no longer the prerogative of the privileged few, but open to the whole population, in keeping with the principles of solidarity and equality. According to the Constitution, the *latifundista* system of large landholdings ran counter to the general interest, to justice, and to social harmony in rural areas. The Land and Agricultural Development Act of 2001, which provided for a fair distribution of wealth, had therefore put an end to the system, which had been in place for over four centuries. In six years, the Government had distributed over 2 million hectares of arable land to thousands of *campesino* families and provided them with technical assistance and credit, which had helped combat poverty and hunger.

3. With regard to the right to food, the Government of President Chávez had successfully implemented social policies and programmes to guarantee food security for all Venezuelans, particularly those belonging to the most vulnerable groups. One programme had involved the creation of a food market where people could obtain a range of commodities at modest prices because the middlemen had been cut out. One million people could exercise their right to food as a result. The Government had also set up 6,000 "*casas de alimentación*", where free meals were given to people living in the poorest parts of the country. As the Venezuelan Government saw it, the neoliberal capitalist model had failed and was responsible for hunger and poverty.

4. **Ms. McNish** (Observer for Jamaica) said that Jamaica aligned itself with the statement by Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The interrelationship between economic growth and poverty reduction, though indisputable, was tenuous unless there was a broad-based approach that promoted pro-poor sustained economic growth. Notwithstanding the positive growth recorded in the previous decade, the global poverty index remained high and the progress made was insufficient to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. If current trends continued, some 6 million people would still be living in extreme poverty in 2015. The fact was that many developing countries were not reaping the benefits of globalization and trade liberalization, and regional and even subregional disparities persisted in the fight against hunger and malnutrition. The regional forum for Latin America and the Caribbean had highlighted that growth alone was not sufficient to reduce poverty and that, to combat inequality, priority had to be given to employment generation and decent work.

5. The Government of Jamaica was committed to providing the necessary resources for the implementation of programmes to combat poverty as well as programmes for vulnerable groups, such as children, youth, women, persons with disabilities and the elderly, to break the cycle of poverty and end its intergenerational transmission.

6. Since 1995, the overall poverty level in Jamaica had declined by 12.7 per cent, reflecting upward trends in certain aspects of the economy, particularly construction and tourism. Those trends had had a positive impact on employment creation and overall consumption levels. Social assistance and income-generation programmes had also lowered poverty levels. The progress achieved, however, meant that Jamaica had been classified once again as a middle income developing country, which paradoxically made its situation more precarious because it could no longer benefit from development aid. Middle income developing countries should not be penalized in that way.

7. The situation of the countries of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States was already difficult due to the erosion of their preferential market access to the European Union and could worsen if the European Union followed through on its threat to unilaterally renounce the Sugar Protocol agreed with the ACP States. The vulnerability of small island States such as Jamaica, including their limited ability to react to external economic and financial shocks, together with the susceptibility of Caribbean States to natural disasters, could have a deleterious effect on poverty reduction. Efforts to mitigate global warming must be an integral element of poverty-reduction strategies. If developing countries wished to achieve the Goals of halving poverty by 2015, they would have to address other challenges as well, such as HIV/AIDS, insecurity, the energy crisis and the brain drain.

8. **Mr. Najib** (Iraq) said that only with the establishment of democracy and an effective justice system, together with a robust civil society, would Iraq be able to make progress on the economic and social front and eradicate poverty and hunger. Iraq also had to combat terrorism, which was destabilizing the region as a whole, and foster a climate of tolerance in order to achieve national reconciliation and respect for human rights. He strongly appealed to donors to give their support to the developing and least developed countries (LDCs) that needed it so that they could attain peace and stability, which was the only route to prosperity.

9. On the economic front, the Government of Iraq had spent several billion dollars on improving the population's living standards and had doubled teachers' wages. Steps had also been taken to ensure the country's sustainable development, the fair distribution of resources and the participation of women and young people in the economic and political life of the country. The State had also granted financial assistance to over 1 million families and financed food programmes. He urged the United Nations to step up its efforts in Iraq and United Nations agencies to participate in those efforts.

10. **Mr. Lowcock** (United Kingdom) said that the Millennium Development Goals were indeed achievable provided that donors honoured their official development assistance commitments. The United Kingdom was on track to meet its target of devoting 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance by 2013 and urged other States to do the same. The United Kingdom had also doubled its aid to Africa, focusing on the countries most in need, namely those where a large proportion of the population was poor.

11. Country ownership of aid projects was important, as was accountability, and a greater voice needed to be given to the poor, to representative bodies and to civil society in policy planning. Everyone agreed that development policies worked best when the Government of the developing country set out clear strategies with civil society and the private sector. The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness had improved the dialogue between donors and partner countries, and the United Kingdom would like the principles it

enshrined to be incorporated into United Nations policy and thus universally applied. The Economic and Social Council was responsible for delivering the Millennium Development Goals to the poorest people in the world. It was therefore time to turn the global partnership for development into fact.

12. **Mr. Matsuura** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO) said that UNESCO had been chosen at the World Economic Forum in Dakar to coordinate international efforts to achieve “Education for All” by 2015. UNESCO also provided direct assistance to countries to develop and implement sound education policies, mainly in sub-Saharan Africa, LDCs and small island developing States, where education needs were greatest. According to the *Education for All Global Monitoring Report*, education could make a real difference and help the battle against poverty. Education was thus the key to success, and countries, including developing countries, must invest in it. Donors therefore had to honour and even step up their commitments in order to achieve the Dakar goals. Science was also fundamental to poverty eradication. In some countries in Africa and elsewhere, water resources management was a matter of life or death, and UNESCO was helping Governments to adopt the right technological approaches to conserve that resource, which was essential for people’s survival and poverty eradication.

13. UNESCO attached considerable importance to building partnerships for development and brought together partners of various kinds: governmental and non-governmental, national and multilateral, public and private. It had developed fruitful partnerships with civil society organizations, especially within the context of the Education for All movement. UNESCO had also worked actively to collaborate with the private sector, which provided not only additional finance, but also its advocacy, expertise and innovation.

14. **Mr. Båge** (International Fund for Agricultural Development – IFAD), speaking on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme (WFP) said that the vast majority of people in developing countries lived in rural areas, and it was precisely in rural areas that 75 per cent of the population lived in extreme poverty and suffered from malnourishment. Although those people lived from agriculture, official development assistance to the sector had fallen by 70 per cent between 1990 and 2004. The eradication of poverty and hunger called for constant attention to be paid to agriculture and food security. In that process, a number of challenges would need to be overcome, of which climate change was the most pressing: storms, floods and droughts were more frequent than in the past; the Sahel, East Africa and Southern Africa were drying up, Asia and Latin America were experiencing unseasonal rains, and the already high vulnerability of the poor was increasing around the globe. Developing countries needed help with tackling climate change. With the advent of biofuels, efforts should be made to ensure that biofuel production did not worsen food insecurity or rural poverty. Means needed to be found to help the 75 per cent of the population living on less than a dollar a day to address the new challenge of climate change, in addition to the ones they already faced, such as forced migration, HIV/AIDS, soil erosion, water scarcity and disease, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

15. The activities of FAO, WFP and IFAD were complementary, inasmuch as FAO supported the building and strengthening of agricultural development institutions, while WFP provided food aid to famine victims and IFAD implemented programmes to eradicate poverty and hunger that benefited millions of poor people in rural areas by providing them with access to financial services, markets, technology, land, water and other resources. Efforts needed to be intensified along four lines of action: help small and large farmers improve their productivity and thereby increase food security; award priority to rural development and agriculture in national development plans and poverty reduction strategies; offer large and small agricultural producers solutions for tackling the effects of

climate change; and increase official development assistance, particularly by doubling the amount of funds allocated to Africa.

16. **Mr. Diop** (International Labour Organization – ILO) said that applying macroeconomic policies that led to sustained growth was essential for employment creation, poverty reduction and achieving internationally agreed goals for sustainable development. It was necessary to ensure that the incomes of the poorest grew steadily, and minimum wages needed to be established, together with basic social protection systems covering health, minimum pensions and child benefits. The ILO supported the idea of strengthening partnerships to eradicate poverty and hunger, and dialogue between governments and key actors, such as employers' organizations and trade unions, as well as between countries and their international partners, was essential.

17. **The Chairperson** gave the floor to representatives of the Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CONGO), which had held a Civil Society Development Forum from 28 to 30 June 2007.

18. **Ms. Bloem** (Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations – CONGO) said that the goal of the Development Forum had been to hold an in-depth discussion on the issues on the agenda of the high-level segment on the eradication of poverty and hunger and to ensure that the opinion of civil society was taken into account in the development of two new mechanisms: the Annual Ministerial Review and the Development Cooperation Forum. It had become clear in the discussions that none of the world's present problems would be resolved without partnerships at the intergovernmental and governmental levels and the involvement of civil society and the private sector. A new constructive dialogue among all stakeholders, which took into consideration social justice issues, the economy, the environment and human rights, was needed to eradicate poverty and hunger, uphold the right to food, guarantee economic security and create decent work.

19. **Mr. Khor** (Third World Network) said that the civil society representatives participating in the Development Forum had noted with considerable regret the drop in development aid brought about by the failure of the countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to meet the commitments they had made at Gleneagles. On the debt issue, Forum participants had noted with satisfaction the fact that 22 countries had already benefited under the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, but said that much still remained to be done. On the subject of international trade, participants had expressed concern at the fact that the demand for developing countries to liberalize their trade had become increasingly insistent and had said that the developed countries should gradually eliminate domestic support for agriculture. They had also voiced concern about certain provisions in bilateral free trade agreements and economic partnership agreements with African, Caribbean and Pacific States that threatened to force developing countries to open up their economies more quickly than they were really in a position to do. Lastly, they had called for a review of the conditions attached to the loans made by the international financial institutions.

20. **Ms. Ahmed** (Zenab for Women in Development) said that in conflict zones and areas where the number of refugees and displaced persons was high, women were living in particularly difficult economic situations. To reduce poverty, efforts must be made to promote peace, security and stability, to draft specific strategies for advancing towards the Millennium Development Goals in conflict and post-conflict zones and to forge international, regional and local partnerships, especially with the organizations working on the ground. New mechanisms should be devised to facilitate interaction between the United Nations and NGOs, and a special fund needed to be created to enable African NGOs, which had few resources and operated at the local level, to participate in international events such as the Forum.

21. **Mr. Cuarachain** (Action Aid) said that the number of persons suffering from hunger had not stopped rising since the adoption of the Millennium Declaration and 854 million people in the world were going hungry. The right to food should therefore occupy an increasingly important place in Government policies and programmes, and, in particular, States should adopt the FAO Voluntary Guidelines to support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security, as well as set up independent national monitoring mechanisms and enact and enforce legislation on the right to food. At the international level, there should be an optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the matter. States should also ensure that women had more access to land as they produced 80 per cent of the world's food but currently owned only 1 per cent of agricultural holdings.

22. It was regrettable that in four countries, Ghana, Cambodia, Ethiopia and Bangladesh, Action Aid and its partners had not been invited to participate in the preparatory work for the Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council. He called on Member States to make sure that civil society was more involved in the process in the future.

23. **Ms. Abbasi** (E-Worldwide Group) said that, to win the fight against poverty, States would have to change their aid strategies and focus on transferring technology so that the countries of the southern hemisphere would be able to achieve sustainable economic development and help disadvantaged communities make progress on the social front. The gender equality workshop she had attended at the Development Forum had put forward three recommendations for the Council: ensure that women's organizations were involved in the consultation process associated with the Annual Ministerial Review; lobby Governments to take women into account in their macro- and microeconomic policy planning towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals; and ensure sufficient resources were allocated to programmes to attain the Goals that involved women in particular.

24. **Mr. Romboli** (World Organization of the Scout Movement), noting that half the world population was under the age of 24 and that young people suffered disproportionately from poverty, said that Governments, the private sector and civil society should work closely with young people if they wished to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and hence eradicate extreme poverty. Young people needed to be involved in the political life of their countries, and the United Nations and national Governments should support youth-led programmes, particularly in the developing world, where there were few ministries with responsibilities for youth. United Nations Member States should take steps to have young people represented in the General Assembly and at important United Nations meetings so that they could defend their interests.

The meeting rose at 2 p.m.