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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development

and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:
priority theme: rethinking and strengthening social development
in the contemporary world

Statement submitted by Centre africain de recherche industrielle, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



Statement

Rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world

Social development in the contemporary world could have been a pointless subject, in view of the progress of global civilization in our age. Objectively, pervasive economic and social globalization and scientific, technical and social progress attest to humanity's considerable achievements.

Humanity has remarkably advanced in technology, particularly by harnessing the forces of nature. Such control has offered to civilization the benefits of a scientific and technical revolution whose extent and intensity are not comparable with those of any scientific or industrial revolution of the past. Such conditions could have prompted unprecedented social development. Unfortunately, at the same time, humanity is unable to thwart such negative developments as the appearance of thermonuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, prevent serious environmental degradation or tolerate diversity among human beings and their cultural background, inter alia with regard to colour, worship practices, attitude to sexuality, political systems, and the historical evolution of the family.

Certain States possess significant natural resources, others few and still others practically none. Intolerance and refusal to accept differences among persons and peoples cause conflicts that annihilate all achievements and keep causing humanity to regress back to square one.

The twenty-first century is characterized by social development higher than in any earlier historical period.

Thus, in the last 80 years, the population of the earth increased by more than 3 billion, compared to 1.2 billion during the previous 30 centuries since the beginning of our era. Moreover, in the last 150 years, global industrial production grew by a factor of approximately 15, and experienced profound qualitative changes: within a period far shorter than human history, man mastered electrical and atomic energy, radically transformed the means of production and processing tools, and learned to create new substances, some with programmable properties.

For the first time in history, human beings crossed the threshold of the universe, began to explore it, penetrated the secrets of the oceans and made considerable progress towards using their resources. Automobiles, aircraft, radio and television offer formerly unknown material possibilities for communication between persons, countries and peoples.

The twentieth century had already been characterized by important social changes, opening new prospects in terms of the access by hundreds of millions of persons to active social life, culture and the achievements of global civilization.

Unfortunately, these improvements have not been accessible to all peoples. Where there have been gaps in good governance, as in Africa, human beings live in utter destitution, without access to such basic services as, inter alia, housing, food, water, electricity, health care and education.

Accordingly, rethinking and strengthening social development in the contemporary world means worldwide advocacy of a culture of peace, of the advantages of diversity among persons and peoples and, therefore, of well-conceived solidarity between peoples and generations.
