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PROPOSED MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001

Perspective

1. The United Nations responds to the needs of its Member States and their peoples in the context of global concerns. The strength of the Organization lies in its universality and its impartiality in implementing its mandate to promote peace and security, economic and social development, human rights and international law as outlined in the Charter of the United Nations.

2. The United Nations, through its inter-governmental machinery and its Secretariat, carries out a wide range of activities:

(a) By providing a unique platform for dialogue, the United Nations helps to articulate shared values, enhance common understanding, elaborate multilateral agreements on norms and standards, and promote practical cooperation on a broad range of issues;

(b) By maintaining an independent capacity for information-gathering and analysis, the United Nations promotes and enhances this dialogue and cooperative action through its impartiality;

(c) Through diplomatic processes and such instruments as preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peace-keeping and peace-building, the United Nations facilitates agreements between parties and promotes the peaceful settlement of disputes and conflicts;

(d) Where needed and sought, the United Nations undertakes operational activities to provide developmental, humanitarian and political advice and assistance.

3. The Organization's experience over the past 50 years, its substantive, technical and support facilities, and its field network, make it an indispensable instrument for addressing the problems and possibilities of a

continually changing world situation and for harmonizing, to that end, the policies and activities of its specialized agencies. These attributes enable the United Nations also to complement, support and benefit from the activities of partners with related responsibilities, including regional organizations, non-governmental organizations, parliamentarians and academic and policy research institutions.

4. The medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 is designed to enable the Organization to address major global trends and problems that are likely to persist well into the next millennium. Globalization, fragmentation, democratization and marginalization will all have profound effects, both on the state of the world and on the role, expectations and activities of the world Organization. They provide a challenging context for the United Nations programme of work for the medium term. Nevertheless, in an era of unprecedented change, the next few years cannot be foreseen with precision. The United Nations must therefore have the capacity to adjust flexibly to the demands placed upon it in a rapidly changing world.

5. The concept of globalization has many aspects. It encompasses not only the globalization of financial flows, of production and trade and of information, but also of environmental hazards, of disease and of the trade in arms and illicit drugs. Freer flows of goods, services, finance and technology are yielding profound benefits to humanity. They have resulted in expanding markets and soaring productivity, reshaped economies and increased economic and social well-being in many countries. The international transmission of ideas is contributing to the enhancement of individual freedoms and is transforming cultural and political landscapes in every corner of the world. These developments complement the United Nations efforts to bring the peoples of the world together.

6. But there are also negative aspects to these phenomena. The dismantling of commercial boundaries has increased the vulnerability of weaker economies to events beyond their control. Environmental hazards, population movements and disease have all become transnational problems. Arms and illicit drugs are among the largest and most dynamic components of world trade.

7. Many former national concerns have become globalized, defying the capacity of any single State, or even of a group of States, to deal with them. States recognize the need for global and regional forums for debate, policy-making, standard-setting and action on a wide range of transnational issues. Recent international agreements on sustainable development, human rights, population, migration, social development and the advancement of women reflect this. States are increasingly using the United Nations for this purpose.

8. The globalization of the media is providing all peoples with increasing exposure to problems and successes in other parts of the world. This has given rise to greater expectations and demands from all sides for immediate action in resolving problems, in particular those of a humanitarian nature. For the underprivileged of the world, there is greater awareness of the situation in the developed countries, resulting in raised aspirations and calls in global forums for goals and standards regarding increased prosperity, a secure and healthy life, human rights, social justice and gender equality.

9. Fragmentation has many aspects. The acceleration of globalization has been accompanied by forces tending towards decentralization and privatization. The tendency to turn towards smaller groups in the search for solutions can promote the healthy growth of civil society, as evidenced by the burgeoning of citizens groups and non-governmental organizations acting in pursuit of common interests. Fragmentation has positive aspects to the extent that it can lead people everywhere to demand more accountability and participation in decisions that affect their lives.

10. Fragmentation, however, has brought powerfully negative consequences. The erosion of authority by political, social, economic or technological forces seemingly beyond anyone's ability to control can lead to a sense of hopelessness. It can accentuate inequalities, economic deprivation and social and political exclusion for some individuals and groups. At the extreme, the results have been fanaticism, isolationism, separatism, ethnic hatred and violations of basic human rights - tendencies that have become more widespread in recent years. The world has witnessed breakdowns in the State and society ranging from civil disorder to terrorism to civil war. In a few cases, government authority has disappeared altogether.

11. Fragmentation has resulted in a growing number of conflicts taking place within, rather than among, States. There has been a growing recognition that breakdowns of this nature, even if they occur within one State, can have serious effects on neighbouring countries and the international community as a whole, and thus pose a threat to international peace and security. There has been a correspondingly enhanced willingness of Member States to call on the United Nations to intervene in intra-State disputes. In the years to come, fragmentation will have a direct bearing on the United Nations responsibility for maintaining international peace and security.

12. The global trend towards democratization, and the increased empowerment of the individual and of groups within society was not only a cause but also an effect of the end of the cold war. Recent years have witnessed a wave of democratization at the national level, as an increasing number of countries have adopted multi-party systems, organized free and fair elections and begun the movement towards more open, more participatory societies, frequently with the requested electoral assistance of the United Nations. Democratization can counter the negative consequences of fragmentation by allowing for decentralization and the involvement of people in political and social processes, giving individuals more control over their lives. As part of its efforts to prevent the negative aspects of fragmentation and to make societies more cohesive, the United Nations has to build upon this trend towards democratization, individual empowerment and participation.

13. The United Nations also has to promote procedural safeguards, institutions of accountability and representation, and a culture of democracy, without which rapid political and social change may undermine traditional mediating practices, open avenues to crime and disruption and have seriously destabilizing effects on society and the future of democratization.

14. At the international level, the universality of the United Nations is a key asset. During the period covered by the current plan, democratization of the

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international community has been bolstered by universal and high-level participation in the international conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations. Through these conferences, Member States have demonstrated their willingness to adopt a global democratic approach in the determination of common positions and policies on a wide range of key global issues. In the period ahead, the General Assembly must sustain this willingness of Member States to address major global concerns in an open and equitable manner.

15. While globalization, fragmentation and democratization have both positive and negative characteristics, marginalization has only a negative dimension. It is for this reason that marginalization will require the Organization's utmost attention during the period covered by the plan.

16. Marginalization is one of the negative consequences of globalization and fragmentation. A highly competitive global economy is advantageous to the strong but can be detrimental to others who are not as well placed to maintain their positions or reap the benefits of new opportunities. For some countries, segments of society and individuals, globalization has resulted in more vulnerability, insecurity and uncertainty. The effects are not only economic: cultural heritages can also be deeply affected.

17. There is no automatic self-correcting mechanism to offer hope to most of those who fail to share in the benefits of progress, particularly in developing countries. Unless remedial action is taken, the vulnerable will increasingly be marginalized and forced into a situation from which there is no easy escape.

18. The marginalized individual has little say in his or her own destiny. The marginalized State may experience a collapse of its sovereign authority and find itself no longer a full member of the world political community. An entire region may find its political presence vastly diminished on the international scene. There are also marginalized "orphan conflicts" that destroy the lives of tens of thousands but are overlooked by the international community in favour of struggles that seem to have more political interest or are given more media exposure.

19. The least developed countries are at greatest risk of marginalization in the world economy. This was recognized in the United Nations as long ago as 1971, when the international community identified a list of the countries that warranted special attention. Despite unprecedented global progress, despite the efforts of those countries themselves and despite considerable support from the international community, the number of people living under least developed conditions continues to expand.

20. Over the past two decades, much of Africa has become increasingly marginalized. To some extent, this is attributable to the fact that global economic growth has not resulted in commensurate demand for the primary commodities on the export of which Africa is so heavily dependent. In addition, a multitude of other factors, notably the recent expansion in trade and private sector financial flows, have meant that the economies of many African countries have stagnated or even regressed, making it difficult for those countries to reap some of the benefits of globalization.

21. The experience of several countries in Africa and elsewhere, including land-locked, small-island or drought-stricken States, demonstrates how marginalization can proliferate in the absence of development. A major task of the United Nations is to ensure that such handicaps do not prevent those countries from being full participants in global development.

22. The phenomena of globalization, fragmentation, democratization and marginalization that define the environment within which the United Nations must operate are thus closely linked. The precise outcome of the interaction of those forces in the future - and others that may emerge - cannot be accurately predicted, but existing trends provide a perspective. These trends point to the need for the international community to address, in an integrated way, the challenges arising from globalization, to reduce the negative impact of fragmentation, to support democratization and to offset the forces of marginalization. Because of its comprehensive mandate to promote peace and development, the United Nations is uniquely placed to meet these challenges comprehensively and effectively.

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23. The United Nations is unique both in its universality of membership and in its integrated treatment of issues. Reflecting its universal character, the United Nations has to provide a framework for the treatment of global issues and to encourage Member States to take the international consequences of their actions fully into account. Reflecting its multidisciplinary role, it has to ensure that all dimensions of human progress are incorporated into international policies and actions.

24. With globalization, all countries have a greater stake in the functioning of international society and in the rules, institutions and understandings that govern it. Globalization therefore prescribes an enhanced role for the Organization. The United Nations has to provide a framework to bring States and their peoples together so that they can forge a consensus on global issues and on the actions, national as well as global, needed to address them.

25. In the period covered by the medium-term plan, the United Nations will strengthen action in the areas of international economic relations, international environmental management, global information flows and cooperation with new global actors, in particular to ensure full consideration of the concerns of developing countries. The United Nations will extend its central role in collecting and providing global development data and developing universal standards and methods for measuring progress in the human dimensions of development that have been the focus of the recent global conferences.

26. Some of this growing spectrum of global issues is within the purview of other international institutions in the United Nations system. Because of the inseparability of many of the issues that need to be addressed, a major objective for the period covered by the plan must be to enhance cooperation between the United Nations and those other bodies, at the intergovernmental as well as the Secretariat levels. In most of these areas, the United Nations will have to cooperate with other global actors and to develop a framework that provides for all concerned to participate individually as well as collectively.

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27. Achieving sustained growth and sustainable development must remain a major global objective. Such problems as the lack of safe water, threats to biological diversity, ozone loss, global warming, declining land productivity, desertification and reduced food security persist. Despite geographical concentration in some instances, these are global problems and often require negotiated agreements on the sharing of scarce resources or environmental space. The Organization should contribute to raising international awareness of environmental trends and their negative consequences. In the absence of international understanding, environmental disputes will become more prevalent. To avert this, the United Nations must build on the basis for sustainable development laid down in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and work towards collective solutions through binding commitments on global environmental and resource issues.

28. Particular attention will have to be given to the negative aspects of globalization, including financial and economic disturbances, refugee flows, drug trafficking, terrorism, global health threats, illicit flows of arms, transnational crime and money laundering. The further development of international law, including international trade law and the law of the sea, and the establishment of norms and standards will be a central pillar of many of these activities.

29. Recent years have seen a dramatic increase in calls for international action to fight drug abuse and illicit trafficking. The United Nations will continue to develop and maintain international norms and standards for drug control and to monitor, promote and coordinate international drug control efforts. These efforts will include providing advice and assistance to Governments. The Organization should also develop, in close cooperation with the concerned agencies, its response to newly emerging diseases and the global HIV/AIDS pandemic through policies designed to increase awareness and address the socio-economic consequences of the spread of the disease. The struggle against HIV/AIDS will be integrated in all relevant programmes of work of the United Nations, including peace-keeping and humanitarian activities, as well as development cooperation.

30. In response to the information revolution and its increasing importance for the foundations of peace and development, the United Nations must be an active partner with media and communications channels, not only as an outreach to the peoples of the world, but also as a means of influencing decision-making. One of its challenges will be to capitalize on the media-heightened awareness of some crises while also ensuring that attention, resources and energies are not diverted away from areas of equal need where the media spotlight has not fallen. Another will be to continue to sensitize public opinion on the indispensability of international cooperation and solidarity. The United Nations will also need to confront the reality that media attention is focused on failures and shortcomings and that inadequate coverage is accorded to successes and accomplishments.

31. Regionalization can serve as a building block for globalization, a starting-point for broader international cooperation. Some issues, however, are best addressed at the regional level: a global approach may be unnecessary or inappropriate. The United Nations regional efforts are pursued through its

regional commissions. When necessary, the Organization will bring the regional perspective to bear on global problems.

32. The United Nations should also expand its cooperation with regional organizations and arrangements, as provided for in Chapter VIII of the Charter. Identifying regional actors and extending the areas of cooperation are features of democratization at the international level. For example, in today's complex humanitarian emergencies and multifaceted peace operations, the United Nations cannot be the only player. It is necessary to define more precisely the respective roles of the United Nations and the regional organizations in peacemaking and peace-keeping where they have traditionally not played a major role. The United Nations, by ensuring the complementarity of regionalism and its own multilateral approach in all dimensions of work, will serve not only practical purposes but also the democratization of the international system.

33. A major thrust of the United Nations efforts has always been to prevent the global spread of weapons of mass destruction. Even though the probability of nuclear annihilation has been reduced with the end of the cold war, the very existence of these weapons continues to pose a potential threat to humanity. The United Nations efforts towards disarmament must be sustained, despite the relaxation in international tensions.

34. At the other end of the armaments spectrum, globalization and fragmentation have given rise to a proliferation of smaller weapons. Small arms transfers are a phenomenon that respects no borders. As such, they are a cause and an effect of instability and fragmentation. Greater efforts are needed to cope with the proliferation and trade of small arms. Landmines, which are now killing or maiming 2,000 people a month and cost as little as \$3 to produce and as much as \$1,000 to remove, are not only an immediate threat to individuals, but also an impediment to the long-term economic and social rehabilitation of the countries concerned. The United Nations must continue its efforts both to coordinate the long-term global programme to remove landmines and to establish a total ban on the production of and trade in landmines and their components.

35. A world of increasing fragmentation resulting in political instability will witness ever larger numbers of refugees and displaced persons. In addition, environmental degradation and population growth are likely to increase the number and magnitude of humanitarian emergencies. Under such circumstances, the United Nations role in providing and mobilizing humanitarian relief will increase and will need to be more effectively combined with peace-building, social and economic reintegration of returning refugees and disaster preparedness. As part of its response to mitigate the harsher consequences of natural and man-made disasters, the United Nations should seek to mobilize resources more effectively, improve coordination of humanitarian agencies and obtain binding acceptance of international humanitarian laws and protection of relief workers.

36. The wave of democratization has had a major impact on the work programme of the Organization. Calls for the United Nations to support the process represent a sea change in perceptions about the role of the Organization.

37. During the period covered by the plan, the United Nations work in democratization must take into account the problems, as well as the positive potential, of the process. Strengthening public administration and enhancing the institutions of civil society will be major aspects of the Organization's activities to counter tendencies towards fragmentation.

38. The United Nations responds to calls by Member States for assistance in democratization and in encouraging and providing for the active participation of citizens in the political process. This response has been most visible in requests for electoral assistance. A number of recent peace-keeping mandates have included support for both elections and the protection of human rights. Member States will continue to seek support from the United Nations to draft constitutions, create independent systems for the administration of justice, establish police forces respectful of the rule of law and set up national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights.

39. Beyond the work in individual countries, United Nations work in democratization should include a more proactive and consistent approach to human rights abuses and universal standards of human rights. The United Nations must strive for the universal ratification of human rights treaties, their incorporation into national law and subsequent implementation, the integration of women's rights into all human rights procedures, the promotion of the right to development and an end to impunity. A permanent international tribunal should be established, ready for rapid activation when necessary, with clear jurisdiction and competence to apply international legislation in the field of war crimes and crimes against humanity. A world public information campaign for human rights should be a part of the United Nations human rights strategy.

40. Democratization among States and of the international system is another dimension of the process. Although the United Nations must await requests of individual Member States to offer assistance for national democratization, it can and must take the initiative in encouraging all States and all actors on the international scene to extend democratic principles and processes to the international arena - to the various organs of the United Nations, to other international organizations and to the daily practice of international politics and decision-making. In the coming period, progress in this direction will consolidate the role of the United Nations as a force for democratization internationally.

41. Along with other international organizations, the United Nations has a responsibility to play a catalytic role in offsetting the forces of marginalization. It must play the lead role in analysing the particular needs of the most marginalized countries, in galvanizing the international community in their concern and in providing a framework that enables issues of marginalization on a world scale to be addressed and actions to be taken by those in the best position to do so.

42. The cycle of world conferences and summits convened by the United Nations in recent years has played such a role with regard to the multifaceted and interrelated issues of the environment, population, social development, crime, the advancement of women, human settlements, trade and development and public administration. The programmes of action that emerged from those conferences

illustrate the role of the United Nations in forging a consensus on new or evolving issues of marginalization.

43. The United Nations now must ensure that the agreements reached are translated into practice. This will require directing the actions of the United Nations itself towards the new goals and assisting Member States to do so. The United Nations will have to monitor progress, distil the lessons learned and provide guidance to those responsible for implementation.

44. Within this overall effort, the development of Africa must become an even greater priority. The Organization will be a central actor in this respect for the foreseeable future, not simply because of its role within the international community, but also because Africa's problems encompass political, economic, social and environmental dimensions that require the integrated approach that only the United Nations can provide. Although progress is evident in a number of African countries, it is tenuous in many cases. Huge efforts will be required to see that recent breakthroughs are sustained and replicated elsewhere. The System-wide Special Initiative on Africa and related programmes will serve to enhance the coherence and impact of the system's efforts in this respect.

45. Beyond the issue of marginalized countries, the United Nations must address the marginalization of groups and individuals within their own societies. These include, in many countries, girls and women, certain ethnic and religious groups, indigenous peoples, refugees, migrant workers, people with disabilities, the ageing and, in war-torn areas, such groups as ex-combatants, mine victims and orphans.

46. Marginalization can be a major source of social and political unrest. To fulfil its role in the broadest sense, the United Nations must examine and promote the ways in which marginalization of the individual can be remedied. Throughout its history, the United Nations has been a major catalyst for support of economic and social development of developing countries and of the disadvantaged and marginalized. These activities must be bolstered in accordance with the growing magnitude of the problem. To some extent, the United Nations can assist directly by providing advice and assistance. However an important role lies in identifying and analysing problems and stimulating the willingness and capacity to take action, both nationally and cooperatively, among nations.

47. Poverty is the single most important factor resulting in the marginalization of individuals within their societies. Addressing poverty is primarily a national responsibility, but the problem has become global in nature and must be addressed, in all its dimensions, by the United Nations. The United Nations has designated 1996 as the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty. Even with low incomes, some countries have made progress in alleviating poverty. Human well-being is not only a question of income, but also of access to potable water, education, medical help and other common services. A central issue is the disproportionate number of women among the world's poorest.

48. The United Nations must ensure that the advancement of women is integrated as a central objective in all aspects of its work. The United Nations and its partner agencies must sustain developing countries in their efforts, supported by donor agencies, to build an indigenous capacity, including gender-sensitive institutional mechanisms, to combat poverty and deprivation. A key function of the United Nations, at both the intergovernmental and Secretariat levels, will be to ensure a unity of purpose within the United Nations system in achieving these goals.

49. Failure to address marginalization can result in an effort by disaffected groups to take matters into their own hands. With the global availability of arms, military solutions are increasingly being adopted. In view of this, the United Nations must enhance its capacity to prevent such situations from escalating into armed conflicts. This is no simple task, as parties to a dispute are often reluctant to internationalize it by bringing the matter to the United Nations at a stage sufficiently early to prevent full-scale war. There must be a greater disposition by all concerned to accept the principle of preventive action, as well as the findings of impartial good offices missions that may be sent to examine crises in their incipient stage.

50. The United Nations should never refuse a request to provide its good offices where they can be used effectively, but the active involvement of the United Nations in disputes that are not ripe for mediation or settlement risks bringing the peacemaking role of the Organization into disrepute. Even where the conditions are perceived to be favourable, there is a need to temper public expectations with a sense of reality about the prospects for mediation and peace-keeping efforts.

51. During the period covered by the plan, the United Nations will continue to be assigned multidimensional operations involving the re-establishment of effective government in accordance with peace agreements or peace processes. Even consent-based operations will probably entail politically and militarily demanding tasks in view of the complex situations in which they are deployed. The United Nations must enhance both its peacemaking methodologies and the capacity and capabilities of its staff. There is a need for further training in analytical work and for improved coordination of the United Nations system in peace-building.

52. If peace-keeping is to be effective in future, the United Nations has to take action in a number of critical areas. The Security Council has to ensure realism and clarity in its mandates and has to back them with adequate resources. Greater efforts are needed to ensure that national contingents are adequately equipped and trained. The concept of unified command and control has to be more rigorously upheld. Some form of rapid reaction capability should be at the disposal of the Security Council to prevent delays in deployment. In order to discourage attacks on United Nations personnel that can sap the will of the international community to react to political and humanitarian crises, Member States should consider the formulation of a binding convention that would make it an international crime to attack United Nations personnel.

53. The experience of the United Nations has demonstrated that a negotiated peace that does not take into account the roots of the conflict and development

imperatives, or does not seek to restore the authority of the State based upon popular participation, cannot endure. United Nations efforts at peacemaking and peace-keeping must be accompanied by systematic efforts to ensure that the resources of the United Nations system are brought together in peace-building programmes. It is only by addressing the underlying economic and social causes of strife that peace can acquire a meaning greater than the mere absence of conflict.

54. A challenge for the Organization in all aspects of its operations in the coming years will be to identify and reach intergovernmental consensus on those areas and activities where it can and is required to play a major role. As part of this process, it will be increasingly important to integrate regional bodies and new global actors, including non-governmental organizations and other key actors of civil society, into policy-making deliberations and standard-setting initiatives of the international community.

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55. Although the transition phase of the post-cold-war era is nearing an end, a new international system has yet to emerge. As the world community strives to build a multilateral structure attuned to the needs of the twenty-first century, the United Nations must be equipped, in the spirit of the Charter, to fulfil the role established for it by its founders. This means maintaining the Organization's enduring values and building on its experience.

56. But the challenges of globalization, fragmentation, democratization and marginalization also call for change in the Organization if it is to continue, into the new century, to promote peace and security, economic and social development and human rights, to respond effectively to humanitarian emergencies and to encourage respect for and the progressive development of international law. The shape of the United Nations set out in the Charter remains valid and provides room for creative approaches to an ever-changing world. The structures of the Organization also provide a strong foundation upon which to address the new issues of the future. The four major trends and persistent problems outlined in this perspective can be effectively comprehended within the structures now available. At the same time the evolving demands and experience in dealing with those issues will require a constant readiness to reform the Organization as may be needed.

57. Before the end of this planning period, the United Nations will enter the world of the twenty-first century. The demands made of the Organization in the next millennium will be greater in number and complexity. They will pose a correspondingly enlarged challenge to both the Secretariat and Member States. The programmes of the medium-term plan (see annex) as described in the following sections are the Secretariat's proposed response to the challenges outlined above, in line with the mandates of Member States.

58. However, the effort to ensure that the United Nations of the twenty-first century is equipped to rise to these challenges is a joint responsibility. It will require the preservation of a strong, independent international civil service of the highest calibre. And, it will depend, above all, on continuous, predictable and assured political and financial support from Member States.

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Uncertainties of either kind will not only have a deleterious effect on the activities outlined in the present plan, but will also inhibit the continuous process of reform and restructuring that every organization must undergo in order to be effective in a constantly changing world. In endorsing the plan, Member States will convey to the world their willingness to confront together, through their United Nations, the challenges of today and of tomorrow.

ANNEX

Chapters of the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001*

<u>Programme No.</u>	<u>Title</u>
Programme 1	Political affairs
Programme 2	Peace-keeping operations
Programme 3	Outer space affairs
Programme 4	Legal affairs
Programme 5	Policy coordination and sustainable development
Programme 6	Africa: New Agenda for Development
Programme 7	Economic and social information and policy analysis
Programme 8	Development support and management services
Programme 9	Trade and development
Programme 10	Environment
Programme 11	Human settlements
Programme 12	Crime prevention and criminal justice
Programme 13	International drug control
Programme 14	Economic and social development in Africa
Programme 15	Economic and social development in Asia and the Pacific
Programme 16	Economic development in Europe
Programme 17	Economic and social development in Latin America and the Caribbean
Programme 18	Economic and social development in Western Asia
Programme 19	Human rights
Programme 20	Humanitarian affairs
Programme 21	Protection and assistance to refugees
Programme 22	Palestinian refugees
Programme 23	Public information
Programme 24	Administration
Programme 25	Internal oversight

* Programmes of the medium-term plan will be submitted under the symbols A/51/6 (Progs. 1-25).