



## Administrative Committee on Coordination

7 June 2000

English and French

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### Summary of the conclusions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination at its first regular session of 2000

World Food Programme headquarters, Rome, 6 and 7 April 2000

*Summary: ACC conclusions requiring specific follow-up*

#### **ACC private meeting**

Executive Heads welcomed the report of the Secretary-General to the Millennium Summit (A/54/2000) and offered to utilize their forthcoming meetings and/or high-level contacts to help promote consensus and mobilize political will among their constituencies in support of the objectives and themes of the report. **It was suggested that ACC address the follow-up to the report at its next session in New York, following the Millennium Summit.**

#### **Demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment: implications of globalization for international economic cooperation and development**

##### **Globalization and the United Nations system: interrelationships between trade and economic, social and environmental dimensions**

Executive Heads emphasized the importance of the role of ACC in promoting a collective response by the United Nations system to the challenges of globalization. Globalization was more than an economic phenomenon. It had implications ranging from the application of labour standards and human rights to the management of population movements. It posed major challenges, from counteracting the spread of diseases to combating the expansion of criminal networks. Each organization had its own constituency and individual voice and was mandated to address specific aspects of the issue. It was only by working together that the United Nations system could tackle the overall challenge of globalization and help make it work for the world's people.

In the same context, Executive Heads underscored that the greatest challenge remained ending poverty and making it possible for all people to earn a decent living. The key contribution of the United Nations system was to set norms and establish principles. No market could work for the people unless it was underpinned by shared values and practices. The main task for the system was to advance such shared values and norms at the global level. International law and norms must become an integral part of the language of globalization. The system also needs to assist developing countries in capacity- and infrastructure-building at the national level and in defining and implementing a broad social agenda, with particular emphasis on opportunities for decent work. Developing countries and, in particular, the least developed countries, need full trade access. They also need debt relief to grow out of poverty. Market access and capacity-building are key to ensure sustainability of growth after debt relief. **In this context, Executive Heads recognized the critical importance of the Integrated Framework for the Least Developed Countries, agreed to accelerate its implementation and requested the World Trade Organization (WTO), as the lead agency, to report back to ACC at its next session.**

**Executive Heads encouraged the organizations more directly concerned to develop networking arrangements to follow-up on their discussion. ACC decided to review, at the next session, progress on how the system was working together to speed up the process of trade liberalization for the benefit of all countries and to promote globalization with a human face.**

**It was further suggested that ACC should also take up at its next session, in this broad context, the particular challenges facing the least developed countries during the run-up to the forthcoming conference on the subject.**

#### **Information technology**

Executive Heads recognized that sound management of information technology was critical to the effectiveness of the system in its support for Member States and in relation with its own functioning. They emphasized that the United Nations system should place the main focus on developing a knowledge-sharing and learning culture, rather than on information technology alone. They considered that it was knowledge and learning capacity, rather than investment in physical capital alone, that would increasingly determine development outcomes. United Nations organizations needed to become agencies of learning. This called for a comprehensive and coordinated system-wide approach to building an effective knowledge acquisition and dissemination capacity.

In the period ahead, United Nations organizations will need to cooperate more than ever before to avoid duplication of efforts and to enhance their ability to provide information technology solutions to Member States.

**Executive Heads agreed that the following ideas and suggestions needed to be pursued:**

- **Strengthening collaboration among organizations of the system, including at the country level, in computerization, networking and software development as well as in developing a national information technology support strategy;**
- **Organizing a system-wide community of information technology experts and users through innovative networking arrangements as a system-wide**

resource facility/service for information on options, costs, good practices and emerging developments for use by organizations of the system for their information technology needs and for operational activities for development;

- Promoting innovative use of information technology as a special opportunity to overcome the development barriers of isolated and distant areas, such as the Small Island Developing States Information Network (SIDSNET);
- Carrying out studies on the broader developmental, social and cultural impacts of information technology, with a view to developing appropriate content and provide advice to Member States;
- Developing strong partnerships with the private sector both for development activities and internal systems, reinforcing and drawing on the experience gained with the many initiatives under way, such as the health network and the disaster relief network;
- Developing an inventory of systems being used and evolved, particularly for communication between headquarters and the field, so that possible synergies could be better exploited.

Executive Heads agreed that the “ACC statement on universal access to basic communication and information services” adopted in 1997, should be updated to reflect subsequent developments and new technologies and actively followed up by the organizations of the system. In the same context, it urged organizations to contribute to the proposed world summit on the information society.

Taking into account relevant activities under way in the system and the conclusions reached by ACC at its current session on the future directions of the system’s work, ACC requested its relevant subsidiary bodies to follow up its discussions on the above issues at the inter-agency level. Executive Heads agreed to authorize the preparation of an ACC statement, to be finalized through correspondence and submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segment in 2000.

#### **Review of the Administrative Committee on Coordination**

The Secretary-General invited Executive Heads to communicate to him, by the end of April, their specific comments on the recommendations made by the review team. He indicated that at that time he would arrange for the preparation of an implementation plan, taking all such comments fully into account. The implementation plan would be made available to Executive Heads for their review by the end of May and agreed upon as soon as possible thereafter, preferably through correspondence, with a view to bringing this process to a close by the end of June.

## **Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome**

ACC stressed the need for a concerted effort to address the HIV/AIDS epidemic, noting that while the United Nations system is working increasingly together, the global battle against AIDS remains a major challenge.

Executive Heads reiterated their strong concern over the seriousness of the levels of AIDS infection in Africa. ACC also stressed the need for increased advocacy and action in countries where the epidemic was still at an early stage, particularly in South and South-East Asia, applying lessons learned in sub-Saharan Africa, where advocacy efforts had started too late. **The Secretary-General requested the secretariat of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to provide briefs on the most seriously affected countries in these regions by the end of May, to enable him, in concert with the system, to pursue strong advocacy with the countries concerned.**

ACC endorsed the general thrust of the recommendations of UNAIDS and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions recommendations, noting that a renewed effort should be made to consolidate the various guidelines for use by country teams through the resident coordinator system and the thematic groups as they relate to HIV/AIDS.

On the issue of United Nations staff and dependants living with AIDS, ACC agreed that high priority should be given to ensuring adequate insurance coverage and access to care for all United Nations staff, regardless of category.

ACC decided to:

- Urge organizations in the United Nations system to support and complement the efforts of the co-sponsoring organizations of UNAIDS, in particular by:
  - Considering the most effective way of integrating AIDS-related issues into their activities, in accordance with their mandates;
  - Bringing these issues to the attention of their respective governing bodies and seeking budgetary allocations, as appropriate, for action in this area;
  - Giving guidance to their country-based representatives (or headquarters and regional staff, as appropriate), to take part in joint planning and programming on AIDS in the context of the country-based United Nations system thematic groups on HIV/AIDS.
- Request the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions to give attention to the question of appropriate guidance for the resident coordinator system on a coordinated country-level approach to fighting HIV/AIDS, on the understanding that this should not add to the number of existing guidelines, but should help to focus and consolidate them, and would be consistent with the role and functions of HIV/AIDS theme groups;
- Request the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, in collaboration with UNAIDS, to ensure that work initiated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to develop strategies for the prevention and control of

**HIV/AIDS in conflict situations is coordinated with related ongoing work in the United Nations system as a whole, so as to strengthen national responses to HIV/AIDS;**

- **Encourage all organizations of the United Nations system to participate actively, together with the UNAIDS secretariat and UNAIDS co-sponsoring organizations, in the development of the United Nations system strategic plan on HIV/AIDS, 2001-2006.**

On issues relating to United Nations staff and dependants living with HIV/AIDS, ACC endorsed the thrust of the conclusions and recommendations before it on United Nations staff and dependants living with HIV/AIDS and, in particular:

- **Requested the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions), on the basis of a comparative study on medical insurance schemes for national staff within the United Nations system and current data on the number of HIV-positive staff and their dependants, to present to ACC at its fall 2000 session proposals for improving and harmonizing medical insurance coverage for national staff within the United Nations system.**
- **Requested the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, in cooperation with UNAIDS, to finalize and distribute to all resident coordinators and members of country teams the guidance note on "HIV/AIDS in the United Nations workplace" urging that as many as possible of the measures embodied in the note be put in place by the end of the year. The Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions was requested to report on the status of implementation of these activities to the ACC at its spring 2001 session.**

### **Staff security and safety**

Reiterating the need for organizations of the system to accord continuing high priority to the issue of staff safety and security, ACC:

- **Noted with satisfaction actions under way, both at headquarters and field levels, to enhance the security and safety of United Nations system personnel through inter-agency collaboration, and the efforts in this regard of the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) as overall coordinator of the United Nations system;**
- **Expressed appreciation for the renewed attention being given to staff security issues by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and, reaffirming the primary responsibility of Governments for the security and safety of United Nations system personnel, requested Governments that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and the statute of the International Criminal Court;**
- **Reiterated the commitment of members of ACC to continue to advocate the cause of staff security and safety before the intergovernmental bodies of the system and in their dialogue with Member States;**

- **Endorsed the intention to achieve a more secure and stable system of funding security expenditures, preferably through the regular budget, and stressed the need for additional funding for security training;**
- **Called for the expeditious implementation of priority security measures, including those relating to field security officers, training and communications;**
- **Decided to keep the matter under review and to consider further measures to enhance staff security and safety at its 2000 fall session.**

### **Follow-up to ACC decisions**

#### **World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance**

**ACC invited its members to participate actively in the preparatory process of the World Conference and to contribute fully to ensuring its success.**

#### **Forthcoming General Assembly special sessions on follow-up to global conferences and the Tenth Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders**

**Organizations of the system were encouraged to continue to support the preparatory processes as well as to participate in the activities of the General Assembly special sessions on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (New York, 5 to 9 June 2000), the follow-up to the World Social Summit (Geneva, 26 to 30 June 2000), the World Summit for Children (September 2001), and the review processes of the Economic and Social Council.**

**ACC was invited to contribute to sensitizing the international community on the importance of the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders and preparatory work for the draft United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its draft protocols.**

### **International Strategy for Disaster Reduction**

**ACC took note of the nomination of the eight organizations of the United Nations system (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Food Programme (WFP) that will serve on the Inter-Agency Task Force and noted the progress achieved in implementing the arrangements approved by the General Assembly. ACC invited the Task Force to place particular importance on building and strengthening the capacities of disaster-prone countries through scientific research and the training of experts, and requested a progress report at its 2000 fall session.**

## **Issues arising from the subsidiary machinery**

ACC adopted a statement on the United Nations 10-year programme of girls' education, as recommended by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, for presentation at the World Education Forum held in Dakar in April 2000. ACC emphasized the importance of girls' education as an essential component for the full realization of rights and for poverty eradication.

ACC took note of items arising from the work of its subsidiary machinery relating to: (a) the endorsement, on behalf of ACC, of the terms of reference of the Environmental Management Group by the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development at its meeting on 24 and 25 January 2000; (b) the adoption, following inter-agency consultations, of an ACC statement on gender as an input to the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women held from 5 to 9 June 2000 in New York; (c) the adoption by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, on behalf of ACC, of guidelines, entitled "The United Nations and human rights: guidelines and information for the resident coordinator system", and an ACC guidance note on capacity-building.

## **Other matters**

### **Media guidelines**

Executive Heads expressed appreciation to the Secretary-General for sharing the United Nations media guidelines with ACC members and encouraged similar measures, where relevant, within the system. **ACC requested the Joint United Nations Information Committee to promote appropriate follow-up action and to facilitate an active system-wide exchange of practices and experiences.**

### **Recruitment practices**

**The Secretary-General invited Executive Heads to share their experiences in the recruitment process and how it could be expedited and improved system-wide.**

### **Staff College**

**The Secretary-General stressed the importance of "ownership" by the system of the activities of the Staff College, and urged all United Nations organizations to strengthen their support for its work.**

### **Staffing of the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs**

The Secretary-General reiterated his appreciation to the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and heads of other concerned organizations for their essential contributions to the staffing of that office.

**Dates for the fall 2000 session of ACC**

**ACC invited its organizational committee, at its meeting immediately following the current session, to finalize dates for its session in the fall of 2000 in New York.** In this context, Executive Heads reiterated their wish to set the dates of ACC meetings at least a year in advance.

**Hosting of the spring 2002 session of ACC**

ACC thanked FAO for its offer to host the 2002 spring session of ACC.



1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held its first regular session of 2000 in Rome on 6 and 7 April 2000, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. The session was held at the headquarters of the World Food Programme, and co-hosted by the World Food Programme (WFP) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). In opening the session, the Secretary-General welcomed Mike Moore, Director-General of the World Trade Organization, and Koichiro Matsuura, the new Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), who were attending ACC for the first time. The agenda for the session was as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. The demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment — implications of globalization for international economic cooperation and development:
  - (a) Globalization and the United Nations system: interrelationships between trade and economic, social and environmental dimensions;
  - (b) Information technology;
  - (c) Review of ACC.
3. HIV/AIDS.
4. Staff security and safety.
5. Follow-up to ACC decisions:
  - (a) World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance;
  - (b) Preparations for the Millennium Summit in the General Assembly, forthcoming General Assembly special sessions on follow-up to global conferences and the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders;
  - (c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction;
  - (d) Issues arising from the subsidiary machinery.

6. Other matters:
  - (a) Media guidelines;
  - (b) Recruitment practices;
  - (c) Staff College;
  - (d) Staffing of the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs;
  - (e) Dates for the fall 2000 session of ACC;
  - (f) Hosting of the spring 2002 session of ACC.

## **I. ACC private meeting**

2. A private meeting of ACC members was held in the morning of 6 April 2000. Executive Heads welcomed the report of the Secretary-General to the Millennium Summit (A/54/2000) and offered to utilize their forthcoming governing body meetings and/or their high-level contacts to help promote consensus and mobilize political will among their constituencies in support of the objectives and themes of the report. A number of Executive Heads referred to important ongoing work or new initiatives in their organizations, for example, in the areas of agricultural biotechnology and of agricultural productivity in Africa, which were directly relevant to issues raised in the report. It was suggested that ACC address the follow-up to the report at its next session in New York, following the Millennium Summit.

3. During the private meeting, the Secretary-General also highlighted the importance of ensuring that the mission of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme as his Special Envoy to the Horn of Africa is accompanied by a renewed inter-agency effort to address longer-term food security issues in the region. On the initiative of the Secretary-General, an Inter-Agency Task Force on the United Nations Response to Long-Term Food Security, Agricultural Development and Related Aspects in the Horn of Africa, chaired by the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), was established. The members of the Task Force are the Economic Commission for Africa, FAO, IFAD, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World

Bank, WFP, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO). The report of the Task Force will be submitted to ACC at its next session in October 2000.

#### **ACC private audience with His Holiness the Pope**

4. In his statement at the private audience he gave to the Secretary-General and members of ACC on 7 April 2000, the Pope spoke of the work undertaken by ACC “for the good of peoples around the world” and cited the Secretary-General’s Millennium report as an “excellent framework for the Committee’s work”. He observed that the world’s challenges, wars, persecutions, poverty, disasters and epidemics, “require new ways of thinking and new types of international cooperation” in a period of increasing interdependence. The Pope noted that the United Nations system is the “natural forum” for achieving international cooperation and solidarity and underscored the “fundamental role” of ACC in this regard.

#### **World Health Day**

5. The Director-General of WHO recalled that the focus of World Health Day this year (7 April) was on “safe blood supplies” and was intended to draw the world’s attention to the need for reliable and safe blood supply. Each year, unsafe transfusion and injection practices cause an estimated 8 million to 16 million hepatitis B infections, 2 million to 4 million hepatitis C virus infections and 80,000 to 160,000 HIV infections. Eighty per cent of the world’s population has access to only 20 per cent of the world’s safe blood supply. Despite progress achieved in human health, safe blood supply is still out of the reach of millions of people around the world. ACC expressed full support for WHO’s efforts to raise awareness on the need for safe blood supplies.

#### **Presentations on poverty reduction strategies**

6. At the luncheon hosted by IFAD, presentations on their poverty reduction strategies were made on behalf of IFAD, as well as by the Vice-President of the World Bank and by the Administrator of UNDP.

## **II. The demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment: implications of globalization for international economic cooperation and development**

7. The Secretary-General recalled that the ACC discussions of this theme over the past year had been instrumental in helping achieve a common understanding of the scope and evolving nature of globalization and of the resulting challenges for the system. Consideration of the post-Seattle trade issues at the current session needed to be placed in this broader setting.

### **A. Globalization and the United Nations system: interrelationships between trade and economic, social and environmental dimensions**

8. A group of Executive Heads tasked with addressing inter-linkages between trade, environment and social dimensions met on the morning of 6 April 2000. The report of the group provided the main basis for the consideration of the topic by ACC.

9. Its report highlighted what it described as the globalization of anxiety and fear. Disparate groups, some protesting the “unfairness” of the process of globalization and others attacking the trade regime for tactical purposes to advance other agendas, had coalesced in Seattle. Social and environmental issues were at the core of concerns about globalization. Transnational organized crime and the drug trade were other aspects of globalization that generated anxiety and fear. Anxiety was also generated by rapid change on a global scale.

10. There was a great need to define a positive agenda to promote a better balance between the various dimensions of globalization and to help introduce a sense that, if managed properly, globalization could be a powerful force for human progress.

11. The United Nations system was confronted with a twin challenge of integration: first, how to integrate all countries to participate effectively in the global trading system, and second, how to integrate the economic

sphere at all levels, global, regional and national, with the social, cultural and environmental spheres.

12. The first challenge called for addressing the problems of market access for the developing countries, and in particular the least developed among them, in the context of both trade negotiations and the provision of assistance in the implementation of trade agreements. It also required addressing their supply problems by supporting them in improving infrastructure and increasing productive capacity, and, more generally, in helping them grasp the benefits derived from trade liberalization.

13. The second challenge implied advocating a value-based approach, as well as promoting the establishment of effective cross-sectoral linkages and a strengthening of global institutions in the environmental and social spheres. It also required direct engagement with the private sector. The Global Compact provided a key instrument to help corporations reorient their practices and thus advance the agenda on human rights, labour standards and the environment. This could help set off a demonstration effect throughout the world.

14. The system could meet this twin challenge through solidarity and mutually supportive approaches that could tap into each other's constituencies and broaden support for core values and the system's overall objectives. This called for a collective agenda built on the comparative advantages of the various parts of the system deriving from their complementary mandates, competencies and programmes. While there may be differences of views and approaches, organizations of the system needed to work together in a mutually reinforcing way.

15. In the ensuing discussion, Executive Heads highlighted a number of issues. It was emphasized that the process of globalization needed to be adapted and broadened to meet the needs of the world's people. In the aftermath of Seattle, WTO was working to increase participation and transparency and was seeking resources to improve such participation. The United Nations system needed to show leadership and to promote the core values of an open, multilateral, free and equitable trading system. The organizations of the system needed to work together to promote not only a new round of trade negotiations but also greater participation of developing countries to ensure that those who had been left out were brought in. Promoting development through greater equity was thus a key

core objective that the system should pursue to ensure that globalization will benefit all countries and not only those in already advantageous positions in world markets. This could only be achieved by active engagement to work together on a broad front.

16. The benefits of globalization were widely, but unevenly distributed. There was a large group of developing countries, particularly in Africa, that traded in very few commodities. Increased investment and capital inflows and strong support for capacity-building were essential to underpin their development efforts and advance their meaningful integration in the global trading system. The notion of interdependence and mutuality of interest between developed and developing countries was especially relevant in this regard, and should underpin a renewed effort to equip developing countries to participate in and benefit from the process of globalization.

17. It was noted that anxiety and fear of globalization was not limited to the poor and the marginalized. It affected individuals, families, communities and businesses everywhere and has had an impact throughout the whole fabric of society. There was thus a need for a major analytical and political effort to change the rationale of policy-making in order to redefine and adjust policies from the point of view of the people. The creation of employment and decent work remained the best way to address uncertainties and exclusion. To these ends, liberalization of trade and capital flows should be accompanied by the creation of opportunities for small and medium enterprises to generate more employment at the local level. Free competition should not be based on lowering social conditions. The need to preserve cultural and linguistic diversity was also emphasized.

18. It was noted that population movements, not only refugees and displaced persons, but also people who moved because of economic factors, were also increasingly emerging as an important issue. Thus far, this issue has been addressed mostly from the vantage point of control measures and the debate on trade liberalization has focused on the free movement of goods and capital. The movement of people, and especially semi-skilled and unskilled labour, should be addressed in the same perspective, and given renewed attention in this context by the United Nations system.

19. As regards the environmental and social agendas, it was emphasized that the WTO dispute settlement

mechanisms should not be overloaded. To advance those agendas, the main effort should be directed towards strengthening the existing institutional bases and mechanisms for the promotion and implementation of internationally agreed labour standards and multilateral environmental agreements. In this regard, a better knowledge base was needed to understand the connections between the various dimensions of globalization as a basis for consensus building. The Working Party on the Social Dimension of Globalization, established by the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization, was a useful instrument for that purpose, operating on the basis of open and informal exchanges and open to other international organizations. Ongoing work in the system to develop concrete case studies was relevant in this context and should be actively pursued.

20. Executive Heads emphasized the importance of the role of ACC in promoting a collective response by the system to the challenges of globalization. Globalization was more than an economic phenomenon. It had implications ranging from the application of labour standards and human rights to the management of population movements. It posed major challenges, from counteracting the spread of diseases to combating the expansion of criminal networks. Each organization had its own constituency and individual voice and was mandated to address specific aspects of the issue. It was only by working together that the United Nations system could tackle the overall challenge of globalization and help make it work for the world's people.

21. In the same context, Executive Heads underscored that the greatest challenge remained ending poverty and making it possible for all people to earn a decent living. The key contribution of the United Nations system was to set norms and establish principles. No market could work for the people unless it was underpinned by shared values and practices. The main task for the system was to advance such shared values and norms at the global level. International law and norms must become an integral part of the language of globalization. The system also needs to assist developing countries in capacity- and infrastructure-building at the national level, and in defining and implementing a broad social agenda, with particular emphasis on opportunities for decent work. Developing countries and, in particular, the least developed countries, need full trade access. They also

need debt relief to grow out of poverty. Market access and capacity-building are key to ensuring sustainability of growth after debt relief. In this context, Executive Heads recognized the critical importance of the Integrated Framework for the Least Developed Countries, agreed to accelerate its implementation and requested WTO, as the lead agency, to report back to ACC at its next session.

22. ACC encouraged the organizations more directly concerned to develop networking arrangements among them to follow up on the present discussion. It decided to review, at the next session, progress on how the system is working together to speed up the process of trade liberalization for the benefit of all countries and to promote globalization with a human face.

23. It was further suggested that ACC should also take up at its next session, in this broad context, the particular challenges facing the least developed countries, in the run-up to the forthcoming conference on the subject.

## **B. Information technology**

24. In his opening remarks, the Secretary-General emphasized that information technology was the key to the future. While this was not the first time that ACC had addressed the issue, the Committee was reverting to it in order to consider, in a more systematic and comprehensive manner, the contribution that information and communication technologies could make to advancing some of the basic objectives of the system: the integration of developing countries in the global knowledge society; enhancing efficiency and growth in key sectors of the economy; and supporting the social, economic and cultural goals of society.

25. A group of Executive Heads was established during the session to examine these issues and to report back to the Committee. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) provided updated statistics projecting growth trends in information technology, which allowed the group to base the discussion on sound background information.

26. In its report to ACC, the group recalled that, in 1997, ACC had adopted a statement on universal access to basic communication and information services. It further recalled that, at the April 1999 session, ITU had informed ACC of a proposal by its Plenipotentiary Conference to convene a world summit

on the information society, and that ACC had expressed support for the initiative.

27. The main focus of the group was on better coordination in the system's support for the developing countries in this area, as well as in the use of information technology for the system's own operations.

28. The group emphasized the great potential of information technology and the Internet for accelerating sustainable development and recommended that every effort be made to overcome the obstacles and inhibitions preventing their universal use. The group emphasized the key role of information technology in information and knowledge sharing and noted that its applications covered the whole range of the work of the system from improved agricultural productivity, health, education, generation of employment, industry, trade and finance and the empowerment of people, to the prevention and management of disasters. The organizations of the United Nations system were uniquely placed to assist developing countries leapfrog the digital divide.

29. The group reviewed the factors militating against the spread of information technology in some countries. In addition to lack of infrastructure and resources, concerns about security and privacy, cultural intrusion and loss of revenues to e-commerce, as well as language and cost barriers tended to inhibit the spread of information technology and its universal usage.

30. The group noted, at the same time, that many developing countries had been successful in tapping information technology for development. The scope for South-South cooperation was thus considerable. The United Nations system could facilitate exchange of experience and lessons learnt and disseminate best practices.

31. Since the private sector was the main engine for information technology development and Internet connectivity, the group considered it essential that the United Nations system, together with Governments and bilateral donors, should work closely with the private sector in the development of information technology. Closer collaboration and enhanced coordination would also need to be developed within the system itself, both in order to determine how best to support developing countries, in particular for capacity-building and education and training, and in integrating information

technology in the system's own operations at headquarters and in the field.

32. In the ensuing discussion, Executive Heads recognized that sound management of information technology was critical to the effectiveness of the system in its support for Member States and in relation with its own functioning. They emphasized that the United Nations system should place the main focus on developing a knowledge-sharing and learning culture, rather than on information technology alone. They considered that it was knowledge and learning capacity, rather than investment in physical capital alone, that would increasingly determine development outcomes. United Nations organizations needed to become agencies of learning. This called for a comprehensive and coordinated system-wide approach to building an effective knowledge acquisition and dissemination capacity.

33. It was noted that, while there were specific factors restricting the growth of information technology in some developing countries that needed to be addressed, this technology was, in general, cheaper and could be introduced more quickly than was the case for development interventions in many other sectors. Also, information technologies are accelerating the speed with which information is disseminated, adding to a requirement for rapid response to situations and for more timely decisions and action on the part of the system, a requirement that a more concerted and systematic use of information technology would greatly help the systems meet.

34. While many initiatives had been taken in the United Nations system to promote and use information technology as an instrument of development (for example, the Information and Development Programme (Infodev), the NetAid multi-city concert, Global Knowledge Gateway and World Bank-Softbank Corporation initiative) there was clearly a need to intensify these efforts and to enhance their coordination. It was generally felt that, in the period ahead, United Nations organizations would need to cooperate more than ever before to avoid duplication of efforts and to enhance their ability to provide information technology solutions to Member States.

35. Executive Heads agreed that the following ideas and suggestions should be actively pursued:

(a) Strengthen collaboration among organizations of the system, including at the country

level, in computerization, networking and software development, as well as in developing country information technology support strategies;

(b) Organize a system-wide community of information technology experts and users through innovative networking arrangements, as a system-wide resource facility/service for information on options, costs, good practices, and emerging developments; the facility should be drawn upon by organizations of the system for both their information technology needs and for operational activities for development;

(c) Promote the innovative and focused use of information technology to overcome the development barriers of isolated and/or distant areas, such as the small island developing States network;

(d) Carry out further studies on the broader developmental, social and cultural impacts of information technology with a view to developing appropriate content and provide sound advice to Member States;

(e) Develop strong partnerships with the private sector both for development activities and internal systems, reinforcing and drawing on the experience gained with the many initiatives under way, such as the health network and the disaster relief network;

(f) Develop an inventory of systems being used and evolved, in particular for communications between headquarters and the field, so that possible synergies could be better exploited.

36. ACC agreed that its statement on universal access to basic communication and information services, adopted in 1997, should be updated to reflect subsequent developments and new technologies and actively followed up by the organizations of the system. In the same context, it urged organizations to contribute actively to the proposed world summit on the information society.

37. Taking into account relevant activities under way in the system, as well as the conclusions reached by ACC at its current session on the future directions of the system's work, ACC requested its relevant subsidiary bodies to reinforce their information technology-related work and to actively follow up at the inter-agency level its discussions on the above issues. Executive Heads agreed to authorize that an ACC statement be prepared, finalized through

correspondence, and submitted to the Economic and Social Council at its high-level segment in 2000.

### **C. Review of ACC**

38. As a follow-up to relevant discussions at the two previous ACC sessions, as well as at the current private meeting, Executive Heads considered at the present session a report on the review of the role and functioning of the Committee and its machinery, prepared by Messrs. Ahmed, Blix and Thomas. They thanked the review team for a comprehensive submission and for its timely presentation. Discussions revealed broad support for the general thrust of the recommendations of the ACC Review Team. A number of comments were made on specific aspects of the recommendations including those relating to the duration of the private meetings, a proposed new name for the Committee, ACC annual retreats and the use of electronic communications, as well as on the consolidation of subsidiary bodies, their different secretariats and methods for their financing.

39. The Secretary-General invited Executive Heads to communicate to him, by the end of April 2000, their specific comments on the recommendations made by the review team. He indicated that he would then arrange for the preparation of an implementation plan, taking fully into account all such comments. The implementation plan would be made available to Executive Heads for their review by the end of May, to be agreed upon as soon as possible thereafter, preferably through correspondence, with a view to bringing this process to a close by the end of June.

### **III. Human immunodeficiency virus/ acquired immunodeficiency syndrome**

40. The Secretary-General recalled that last fall, ACC had decided to hold a substantive policy discussion on HIV/AIDS at the present session and had requested the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to present a policy paper with recommendations. ACC had also requested the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions) to submit a report on policy-level considerations and joint actions required in respect of United Nations staff

members and dependants living with AIDS. The Secretary-General stressed the importance of addressing HIV/AIDS as a key system-wide priority, noting that what the system was facing was not only a humanitarian crisis of staggering proportions, but also a development crisis that risked reversing decades of economic and social progress in many countries. At the international level — as was evident from the deliberations in the Security Council on HIV/AIDS in January 2000 and subsequent discussions at the Economic and Social Council on the impact of the crisis on global development — there was a heightened awareness of the magnitude of the epidemic and its devastating implications and a growing commitment among Member States to addressing it as a global crisis and a global challenge. This was increasingly the case also among national leaders, particularly in Africa. It was incumbent on the system to lend full support to these efforts.

41. The Executive Director of UNAIDS noted that HIV/AIDS is the single most serious development challenge in the world today, which systematically undermines the gains of five decades of investment in health, education and well-being of populations. While Africa is clearly the most affected region, Asia, the Caribbean and some developed countries have also been heavily impacted. AIDS is a truly global issue — it knows no borders and requires global solutions. It affects international cooperation and introduces new threats to human security and human development. The Executive Director viewed the deliberation at ACC on this issue as a valuable opportunity to bring the United Nations system together to respond to the challenges of the epidemic by extending collaborative planning, cooperating on a United Nations plan of work for 2001-2006, and, in particular, by working through HIV/AIDS theme groups at the country level, which already include organizations beyond the co-sponsors. The Executive Director of UNAIDS also drew the attention of ACC to the urgency of action by each agency on behalf of United Nations system staff and dependants to ensure that both international and national staff have access to the requisite care, services and, above all, adequate medical insurance coverage. The United Nations is burying its staff, particularly local staff, every day in some countries of Africa, and there is pressing need to ensure equity for all staff of the United Nations system.

42. As current chair of the committee of co-sponsoring organizations of UNAIDS, the Administrator of UNDP stressed the importance of the mobilization of the entire United Nations system, the international partnership against HIV/AIDS in Africa, the development implications of AIDS and the urgency of providing improved medical insurance to national staff.

43. ACC stressed the need for a concerted effort to address the epidemic, noting that while the United Nations system is increasingly working together, the global battle against AIDS remains a major challenge. Much more needed to be done both to improve preventive measures with a view to containing the spread of the disease and to care for its victims, with special attention to adolescents. There is also a need to do a better job on communications, to engage more effectively civil society, to mobilize South-South cooperation and to step up efforts at all levels, especially the country level.

44. ACC noted that AIDS was wiping out gains made in child survival and that there would be 13 million AIDS orphans by the end of 2000. The growing number of orphans meant that, increasingly, grandparents, particularly grandmothers, were becoming responsible for providing support to families. This had a range of implications, including for credit schemes that needed to be redesigned with this in mind. ACC welcomed the measures under way in this regard. The need for affordable drugs and equity in treatment was particularly highlighted. It was observed that even if the current cost of drugs presently available were to drop by 90 per cent, that cost would still be beyond the means of most of those affected.

45. Executive Heads reiterated their strong concern over the serious situation of AIDS in Africa. Particular reference was made to the worrisome situation developing in South Africa. ACC also stressed the need for increased advocacy and action in countries where the epidemic was still at an early stage, particularly in South and South-East Asia, applying lessons learned in sub-Saharan Africa, where advocacy efforts had started too late. The Secretary-General requested the secretariat of UNAIDS to provide briefs on the most seriously affected countries in these regions by the end of May to enable him, in concert with the system, to pursue strong advocacy with the countries concerned.

46. Concern was also expressed about the broad human rights dimensions of HIV/AIDS, including

issues of equal access to care and discrimination. It was reported that HIV/AIDS would be included in discussions in the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance to be held in Durban, South Africa, from 31 August to 7 September 2001. AIDS is also on the agenda of the Development Committee of the World Bank at its spring 2000 session.

47. The impact of HIV/AIDS on refugee populations was also addressed. It was noted that, currently, most country programmes are directed at nationals, leaving refugees without access to information, prevention and care opportunities. In this respect, ACC welcomed the active collaboration developing between UNAIDS and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and noted that new funding mechanisms would be needed to address this problem. Action on HIV/AIDS in the context of the workplace was also considered, especially as regards discrimination and the fear of disclosure. The special challenges posed by HIV/AIDS to the education sector were reviewed and discussed. Linkages between drug abuse and AIDS were recalled and the implications for close collaboration between the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP)/UNAIDS was highlighted.

48. On the issue of United Nations staff living with AIDS, there was an undisputed need to focus on prevention and on reducing discrimination among different categories of staff, in particular local staff, as regards insurance coverage and access to care and drugs. The Secretary-General expressed the hope that the results of the upcoming medical directors meeting would facilitate this process. In addition, there was an urgent need to ensure safe blood supplies, especially in the most affected countries.

49. ACC endorsed the general thrust of the UNAIDS/Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions recommendations, noting that a renewed effort should be made to consolidate various guidelines for use by country teams through the resident coordinator system and the thematic groups as they related to HIV/AIDS.

50. In the light of its consideration of the HIV/AIDS crisis, ACC decided to:

(a) Urge organizations in the United Nations system to support and complement the efforts of the co-sponsoring organizations of UNAIDS, in particular by:

(i) Considering the most effective way of integrating AIDS-related issues into their activities, in accordance with their mandates;

(ii) Bringing these issues to the attention of their respective governing bodies and seeking budgetary allocations, as appropriate, for action in this area;

(iii) Giving guidance to their country-based representatives (or headquarters and regional staff, as appropriate), to take part in joint planning and programming on AIDS in the context of the country-based United Nations system thematic groups on HIV/AIDS;

(b) Request the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions to give attention to the question of appropriate guidance for the resident coordinator system on the development of a coordinated country-level approach to fighting HIV/AIDS, on the understanding that this should not add to the number of existing guidelines, but should help focus and consolidate them, consistent with the role and functions of HIV/AIDS thematic groups;

(c) Request the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs, in collaboration with UNAIDS, to ensure that work initiated by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee to develop strategies for the prevention and control of HIV/AIDS in conflict situations is coordinated with related ongoing work in the United Nations system as a whole, so as to strengthen national responses to HIV/AIDS;

(d) Encourage all organizations of the United Nations system to participate actively, together with the UNAIDS secretariat and UNAIDS co-sponsoring organizations, in the development of the United Nations system strategic plan on HIV/AIDS, 2001-2006.

51. On issues relating to United Nations staff and dependants living with HIV/AIDS, ACC endorsed the thrust of the conclusions and recommendations before it on United Nations staff and dependants living with AIDS, and in particular decided to:

(a) Request the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions), on the basis of a comparative study on medical insurance schemes for national staff within the United Nations system and current data on the number of HIV-positive staff and



their dependants, to present to ACC at its fall 2000 session proposals for improving and harmonizing medical insurance coverage for national staff within the United Nations system;

(b) Request the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, in cooperation with UNAIDS, to finalize and distribute to all resident coordinators and members of country teams the guidance note on HIV/AIDS in the United Nations workplace, urging that as many as possible of the measures embodied in the note be put in place by the end of the year. The Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions was requested to report on the status of implementation of these activities to the ACC at its spring 2001 session.

#### **IV. Staff security and safety**

52. The Secretary-General recalled that, at its fall 1999 session, ACC had strongly deplored the intolerable increase in the number and seriousness of attacks and threats against United Nations personnel and had identified a number of issues requiring special attention. These included: the responsibility of the United Nations system to locally recruited staff; financing for security; relations with Governments regarding their responsibilities in relation to staff security and safety; and the adequacy and level of compensation for staff killed on duty. He invited the Deputy Secretary-General to brief ACC on the present security situation and ongoing actions to safeguard staff security and safety.

53. In her briefing, the Deputy Secretary-General observed that United Nations system personnel continue to come under attack almost on a daily basis. Since the last ACC meeting in October 1999, 18 staff members have been held hostage in six separate incidents and more staff members have been killed in Kosovo, Mozambique, Burundi, Rwanda and Kenya. However, a momentum is building to address the problems of staff security and safety. Member States are giving increased attention to this issue and further measures are under way to enhance staff security, including the appointment of a full-time Security Coordinator, measures to ensure that there are sufficient field security officers with essential equipment and greater emphasis being placed on training. She also highlighted the problem of funding, stressing that the present system of cost-sharing and

contributions in kind with little regular budget provision has proven wholly inadequate.

54. The Deputy Secretary-General further noted that the Secretary-General will be submitting a comprehensive report to the forthcoming General Assembly, which will include proposals to significantly strengthen the Security Management System, both in the field and at Headquarters. In the same context, the General Assembly will be requested to provide for the basic security management system from the regular budget. Meanwhile, a review of the Security Management System would be carried out by outside experts.

55. The Deputy Secretary-General further recalled that voluntary contributions amounting thus far to only \$1.2 million have been contributed to the trust fund for the security of United Nations personnel. These funds have been effectively utilized for security and stress management training in a number of countries and additional training would be provided during the year. She also reported that the benefits under the Malicious Acts Insurance Policy are being doubled to \$500,000 for Professional staff and raised to 10 times the annual salary for General Service staff. She appealed to those organizations that have not already agreed to the proposal to extend the coverage of this policy on a worldwide basis to do so as soon as possible.

56. ACC welcomed the initiatives outlined by the Deputy Secretary-General and expressed appreciation for the increased importance given by Member States to this issue. Stressing the responsibilities of Governments, ACC called for the early ratification of the Convention on the Safety and Security of United Nations and Associated Personnel and the statute of the International Criminal Court. It also noted that the legal advisers of the system are pursuing their consideration of relevant issues relating to the privileges and immunities of United Nations personnel. The Committee particularly appreciated further measures under way to enhance security at Headquarters and in the field and to strengthen the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD). Executive Heads agreed with the urgency of securing stable, predictable and continuous funding for staff security. They shared the view that the present system for the funding of security, with its almost exclusive reliance on voluntary and ad hoc contributions, was proving increasingly inadequate and was not sustainable, and expressed support for the Deputy Secretary-General's initiative aimed at strengthening

the regular budget base for this work. The need for additional funds for security training was also stressed. While efforts to secure stable funding are under way, ACC called for the expeditious implementation of priority security measures, including those relating to field security officers, training and communications. In this context, ACC welcomed the offer of UNHCR to second a staff member to UNSECOORD and the contribution of communications equipment by the private sector. The Committee expressed satisfaction at the increase in benefits under the Malicious Acts Insurance Policy, and noted the appeal to those organizations that have not done so to agree to extend the coverage of the policy on a worldwide basis.

57. The Secretary-General invited representatives of staff associations (the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations and the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System) to share their views with ACC. The staff representatives called for the early ratification of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and the statute of the International Criminal Court and called for a strengthening of measures to enhance staff security, including, stable funding, more security training, dissemination of essential information, the reinforcing of UNSECOORD and the provision of adequate communications and security equipment for field staff. The staff representatives thanked the Secretary-General and members of ACC for the opportunity to share their views on this important issue. ACC welcomed the convergence of views between members of ACC and staff representatives on staff security and safety. Executive Heads appreciated the procedure whereby staff representatives are invited to discuss specific issues with them and expressed the wish that the dialogue on such issues be as extensive and interactive as possible.

58. Reiterating the need for organizations of the system to accord continuing high priority to the issue of staff safety and security, ACC:

(a) Noted with satisfaction actions under way, both at Headquarters and at field levels, to enhance the security and safety of United Nations system personnel through inter-agency collaboration, and the efforts in this regard of UNSECOORD as overall coordinator of the United Nations system;

(b) Expressed appreciation for the renewed attention being given to staff security issues by the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council and, reaffirming the primary responsibility of Governments for the security and safety of United Nations system personnel, requested Governments that have not done so, to ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and the statute of the International Criminal Court;

(c) Reiterated the commitment of members of ACC to continue to advocate the cause of staff security and safety before the intergovernmental bodies of the system and in their dialogue with Member States;

(d) Endorsed the intention to achieve a more secure and stable system of funding security expenditures, preferably through the regular budget, and stressed the need for additional funding for security training;

(e) Called for the expeditious implementation of priority security measures, including those relating to field security officers, training and communications;

(f) Decided to keep the matter under review and to consider further measures to enhance staff security and safety at its 2000 fall session.

## **V. Follow-up to Administrative Committee on Coordination decisions**

### **A. World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance**

59. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights briefed ACC on the forthcoming World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, which is scheduled to take place from 31 August to 7 September 2001 in Durban, South Africa. She invited organizations of the system to participate actively in the preparatory process and to bring to it their own perspectives in dealing with racial discrimination, including inputs (in the form of background documents and studies) to: (a) regional seminars of experts; (b) regional preparatory meetings; (c) the two sessions of the preparatory committee of the Conference to be

held respectively from 1 to 5 May 2000 and in May 2001 in Geneva, and (d) the World Conference itself. In addition, organizations were invited to use their respective networks and experience at country level for informing their constituencies and sensitizing and mobilizing NGOs and civil society about the aims of the World Conference. Internet links to the World Conference web site of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights could also be introduced in the official web sites of United Nations system organizations. In the same context, the High Commissioner also sought the advice and assistance of ACC members who have organized similar world conferences in the past.

60. ACC invited its members to participate actively in the preparatory process of the World Conference and to contribute fully to ensuring its success.

**B. Preparations for the Millennium Summit of the General Assembly, forthcoming General Assembly special sessions on follow-up to global conferences and the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders**

61. The Deputy Secretary-General briefed ACC on the ongoing preparations for the Millennium Assembly, which will convene on 5 September 2000, and the Millennium Summit, which will take place from 6 to 8 September in New York. In addition, civil society organizations will organize and hold, from 22 to 26 May 2001, a "Millennium Forum" at United Nations Headquarters.

62. ACC also took note of the preparatory processes under way for the General Assembly special sessions on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women (New York, 5-9 June 2000) and the follow-up to the World Social Summit (Geneva, 26-30 June 2000). It was noted that despite the complexities of the processes, steady progress was being made in the preparatory bodies in negotiating the outcomes. A very large number of non-governmental organizations were participating and organizing parallel events. Organizations of the system were encouraged to continue to support the preparatory processes, as well as to participate in the activities of the special sessions. Executive Heads recognized that the two processes

were interlinked and that the advancement of women was not merely a gender issue but a question of social progress as well. In the same broad context, ACC's attention was drawn to the importance for the system of the process of preparations being launched for the 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

63. ACC further noted that the Economic and Social Council, at the coordination segment of its substantive session in July 2000, will undertake an assessment of the progress made in the United Nations system, through the conference reviews, in the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits. The Council's review will provide an opportunity for the organizations of the system to analyse the lessons learnt from these reviews and share their experiences in promoting conference goals and advancing a more integrated approach to the implementation. ACC urged its members to contribute fully to the special sessions and the review processes of the Economic and Social Council.

64. The Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund drew the attention of ACC to the special session of the General Assembly in September 2001 to review the achievements in the implementation and results of the Programme of Action approved in 1990 by the World Summit for Children. The special session will provide the opportunity for a review of previous commitments and for a consideration of further actions to be taken for children in the next decade. The Executive Director requested the advice and support of ACC members through, *inter alia*, their responses to her note of 24 March 2000. ACC invited its members to actively support these preparatory processes.

65. The documentation before ACC also drew the Committee's attention to the Tenth United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, which was held in Vienna, from 10 to 17 April 2000, as a timely opportunity to strengthen international consensus on a common framework to combat crime. The Congress adopted the Declaration on Crime and Justice: Meeting the Challenges of the Twenty-first Century. Work is also continuing for the submission of the draft United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its draft protocols, for adoption by the General Assembly, to be opened thereafter for signature by Member States.

ACC was invited to contribute to sensitizing the international community on the importance of these events.

### **C. International Strategy for Disaster Reduction**

66. Executive Heads expressed appreciation for an update on the actions taken to implement General Assembly resolution 54/219 of 22 December 1999, on the “International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction: successor arrangements”. During the discussions, the arrangements being made to organize the first meeting on 27 and 28 April of the inter-agency task force established under this resolution were welcomed. It was stressed that the task force should take into account the development and use of existing scientific and technical knowledge for effective disaster reduction and should make proposals towards strengthening the capabilities of disaster-prone countries for scientific research and training of experts. In planning its work, the task force should also note that weather- and climate-related disasters account for nearly 75 per cent of all natural disasters. It was emphasized that the inter-agency secretariat should preserve the multisectoral and cross-cutting nature of disaster prevention in its work and should function in a manner that would encourage cooperation from the United Nations system as a whole.

67. ACC took note of the nomination of the eight organizations of the United Nations system (FAO, WMO, UNESCO, the World Bank, ITU, UNDP, UNEP and WFP) that will serve on the inter-agency task force and noted the progress achieved in implementing the arrangements approved by the General Assembly. ACC invited the Task Force to place particular importance on building and strengthening the capacities of disaster-prone countries through scientific research and the training of experts, and requested a progress report at its 2000 fall session.

## **VI. Issues arising from the subsidiary machinery**

### **A. Administrative Committee on Coordination statement on the United Nations 10-year programme on girls’ education**

68. ACC adopted a statement on the above subject as recommended by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions for presentation at the World Education Forum, held in Dakar in April 2000. The text of the statement is in annex I of the present report. ACC emphasized the importance of girls’ education as an essential component for the full realization of rights and for poverty eradication.

### **B. Items arising from the work of the consultative committees**

69. ACC took note of the following items arising from the work of its subsidiary machinery:

#### **1. Environmental Management Group**

70. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development at its fifteenth meeting on 24 and 25 January 2000 endorsed the terms of reference of the Environmental Management Group on behalf of ACC.

#### **2. ACC statement on gender**

71. Following inter-agency consultations, an ACC statement on gender was adopted on behalf of ACC as an input to the special session of the General Assembly on the follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in New York from 5 to 9 June 2000.

#### **3. Guidelines on human rights and guidance note on capacity-building**

72. On behalf of ACC, the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions adopted guidelines entitled, “The United Nations and Human Rights: Guidelines and Information for the Resident Coordinator System” and a guidance note on capacity-building.

## **C. Other recommendations of the consultative committees**

73. The documentation before ACC also brought to its attention other recommendations of its consultative committees and of work in progress in these committees as follows:

### **1. Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality**

74. The Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality has invited ACC, in framing its future work programmes, to select gender-specific topics for its consideration on a regular basis. In the same context, the Committee indicated that it would welcome an opportunity to present to ACC the findings of a study on the role of gender-focal points in mainstreaming the gender perspective in organizations of the system; and to obtain ACC guidance on a future framework for the funding of the joint activities being promoted by the Inter-Agency Committee.

### **2. Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development**

75. The Committee stressed the need to ensure coordination between the Task Force on International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and the Agenda 21 task managers. It also underlined the importance of early system-wide preparations for the 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

### **3. Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions**

76. The Committee supported work under way in the United Nations Development Group for the elaboration of a concept paper entitled "Halving Extreme Poverty: An Action Strategy for the United Nations" and encouraged agencies to submit written comments with a view to finalizing the paper as soon as possible.

## **VIII. Other matters**

### **A. Media guidelines**

77. The Secretary-General referred to the United Nations media guidelines that he had forwarded to ACC members on 31 August 1999 and noted that many

Executive Heads had responded positively, some by sharing similar guidelines adopted by their organizations. He stressed the need for the system to learn to take advantage of the positive force of the media. While differences in mandates may require different approaches to doing so, all would benefit from establishing modalities for conducting relations with the media, sharing experiences, and exchanging information on practices. ACC expressed appreciation for the Secretary-General's initiative and encouraged similar measures, where relevant, within the system. ACC also requested the Joint United Nations Information Committee to promote appropriate follow-up action and to facilitate an active system-wide exchange of practices and experiences.

### **B. Recruitment practices**

78. The Secretary-General referred to a media report drawing attention to the extended period required to recruit staff in the United Nations. As the efficiency of recruitment practices was an important measure of the performance of the Organization, he was interested in learning from successful practices in organizations of the system. He invited Executive Heads to share their experiences in this regard to see how the recruitment process could be expedited and improved system-wide.

### **C. Staff College**

79. The Secretary-General stressed the importance of "ownership" by the system of the activities of the Staff College and urged all United Nations organizations to strengthen their support for its work. Funding arrangements are among the issues expected to be covered by the independent evaluation of the United Nations Staff College.

### **D. Staffing of the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs**

80. The Secretary-General reiterated his appreciation to the Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization and heads of other concerned organizations for their essential contributions to the staffing of that office.

**E. Dates for the fall 2000 session of ACC**

81. ACC invited its organizational committee, at its meeting immediately following the current session, to finalize dates for the ACC fall session in New York. In this context, Executive Heads reiterated their wish to set the dates of ACC meetings at least a year in advance.

**F. Hosting of the spring 2002 session of ACC**

82. ACC thanked FAO for its offer to host the 2002 spring session of ACC.

## Annex

### Administrative Committee on Coordination statement on the United Nations 10-year programme on girls' education

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) notes the progress made in basic education over the decade and, at the same time, registers that there is a need for the United Nations system to redouble its efforts so that this basic human right can be met. In registering this concern the ACC emphasized the role of basic education as a key component of poverty reduction and of human and economic development.

2. ACC gives its full support to the recent proposal of the 10-year programme on girls' education, which has been initiated by the Senior Management Group and developed by 11 members of the United Nations Development Group, in full collaboration with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Bank and has been designed for system-wide participation. The Girls' Education Initiative embodies a sub-set of the shared objectives of the United Nations system. A major strength of this initiative is its placement within, and, as a support to, the ongoing Education for All movement that was launched at the first World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. ACC gives its support in recognition of the broad range of social and economic benefits that accrue from girls' education, noting that the initiative is designed to reinforce the emphasis at recent international conferences (including Beijing, Copenhagen, Cairo, Rome, Vienna, the five-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Children) and in other forums on the fact that without girls' education the goal of gender equality will never be reached and progress in national and economic development will be restricted.

3. ACC acknowledges the importance of the key principles upon which this initiative rests. It is a collaborative effort, which the United Nations system is uniquely placed to lead and guide. The approach to education that serves as its technical foundation is consistent with the Jomtien expanded vision and its evolution over the decade since 1990. The firm grounding of most of the activities under this initiative at the country level, working through existing United Nations coordinating mechanisms, and coordinating

existing country-level resources into a coherent approach, is consistent with ongoing United Nations reform processes. In fact, the substance of girls' education is excellent content for these processes. Furthermore, the upcoming World Education Forum in Dakar, provides an excellent opportunity for the entire United Nations system to re-commit to education and a critical entry point for the institutions to be engaged in this initiative.

4. The time is right for an initiative of this magnitude. It cannot succeed in a vacuum. ACC notes the involvement of a wide range of United Nations entities and will put into effect actions that facilitate system-wide participation. Furthermore, girls' education is not only a means for contributing to poverty eradication, but is also a result, in part, of poverty, which forces families to make difficult decisions, frequently to the disadvantage of the girl child. In this regard, ACC acknowledges the importance of external environment in general and of resource allocation (defined broadly) in particular to achieving girls' education, and urges all entities, and in particular the Bretton Woods institutions, to ensure careful gender analysis of options before implementing programmatic reforms, especially fiscal ones.

5. ACC will take the required steps to support this initiative through common advocacy and support, including through providing clear guidance to the resident coordinator system and ensuring feedback through the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions on a regular basis.