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Chairman: Mr. Barnwell (Vice-Chairman) (Guyana)

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In the absence of Mr. Seixas da Costa (Portugal), Mr. Barnwell (Guyana), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

Agenda item 97: Sustainable development and international economic cooperation (A/56/221, A/56/222-S/2001/736, A/56/306 and A/56/362-S/2001/87)

- (a) **Women in development** (A/56/321)
- (b) **Human resources development** (A/56/162 and A/56/306)
- (c) **High-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership** (A/56/364 and A/56/482)
- (d) **Implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, and implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade** (A/56/306)

1. **Ms. King** (Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on Women in development: access to financial resources: a gender perspective (A/56/321), said that despite considerable advances in the achievement of gender equality in recent decades, discrimination on the basis of sex still existed in many aspects of life, including economic life. Gender inequality hindered economic development, and conversely, including gender dimensions in development strategies was good business sense.

2. The current economic downturn in industrialized countries, further intensified by the tragedy of 11 September, had resulted in economic impacts that would have adverse consequences for many, especially women. She urged the Committee to take the macroeconomic dimension of globalization and its impact on women into consideration in its discussions and decisions on economic or financial issues. Greater attention should be

given to the economic and social impact of globalization on vulnerable groups of countries, on vulnerable groups within those countries and, especially, on women.

3. In many developing countries, women still did not enjoy equal property rights, including the right to inheritance. That affected their access to credit and ownership of assets. Rural women, in particular, often lacked the power to secure land rights or access vital services such as credit, training and education, which were essential for their economic empowerment and the securing of sustainable livelihoods for their families and communities.

4. As pointed out in the report of the Secretary-General, microfinance institutions supported by national and international organizations often represented the most viable source of access to financial resources for women in developing countries. Vital to such microcredit programmes were services that complemented credit and savings facilities, such as training to develop entrepreneurial skills among women. The report called on governments to facilitate access to education and training for women and girls on an equal basis with men and boys, and access to information and communication technologies to ensure their full integration into economic development. While the report before the Committee focused mainly on women's access to microcredit, gender perspectives were also important in all areas of macroeconomics.

5. The importance of bringing gender perspectives to the centre of attention in macroeconomic policies had been one of the new elements highlighted at the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly. The preparations for the International Conference on Financing for Development, to be held in Mexico in 2002, offered a unique opportunity to focus on critical gender perspectives in relation to macroeconomic development.

6. **Mr. Kinniburgh** (Director, Development Policy Analysis Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), pointing out that the General Assembly had not requested any documentation for the discussion at the current session of the sub-item on implementation of the commitments and policies agreed upon in the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, recalled that two reports had been issued for the fifty-fifth session, one on progress in achieving the development goals for the 1990s (A/55/209) and one containing a proposed draft text of an international development strategy for the first decade of the new

millennium (A/55/89). At its fifty-fifth session, the Assembly had decided to postpone the further consideration of a new international development strategy until after completion of a number of development-oriented meetings that were being convened under the auspices of the United Nations. Three of those meetings had now taken place and each had marked a further step towards achieving some of the specific goals that had been universally agreed upon in the Millennium Declaration. Further progress was expected in additional meetings to be held in 2002.

7. At the current session, the General Assembly would be considering the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Road map towards the implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration" (A/56/326). In considering the "road map", one might ask what key lessons had been learned from the three previous international development strategies adopted by the General Assembly, the outcomes of which had been, on the whole, disappointing. The reasons for that could be placed in two categories — lack of political will to carry out commitments already given and insufficient resources. The active involvement of the overwhelming majority of Heads of State or Government in the adoption of the Millennium Declaration suggested a higher level of commitment in the present case; that high degree of political will would have to be sustained.

8. Previous global development efforts had been plagued by an inadequacy and a misallocation of resources. One of the key objectives of the International Conference on Financing for Development must be to identify ways and means of mobilizing and effectively utilizing, both domestically and internationally, the resources necessary to achieve the goals for the millennium.

9. The world as a whole was facing its most severe short-term economic setback in a decade. At the same time, international peace and security had suffered a major shock which could have even more profound effects on long-term global development prospects than the present economic slowdown. Although the overwhelming majority of the world's population had no responsibility for the changed circumstances, their prospects for longer-term improvement in their well-being had been negatively affected. Priority must be given to restoring international peace and security and to assisting the innocent victims of conflict. However, such efforts must be complemented by a re-invigorated

effort to ensure an overall improvement in the welfare of the poorer majority of the world's population. The quest for development and the fight against global poverty needed a degree of universal political will and a collective commitment of resources every bit as challenging as that required to overcome the present threats to international peace and security.

10. **Mr. Khan** (Director, Division for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that the second high-level dialogue of the General Assembly on strengthening international economic cooperation through partnership, which was summarized in document A/56/482, had taken place on 20 and 21 September, in the aftermath of the tragic events of 11 September. As a result, it had been necessary to compress the four events into two; the level of participation had also been affected. The fact that it had even taken place at all, given the circumstances, was a reaffirmation of the resilience of United Nations processes.

11. The main thrust of the dialogue had been the current slowdown of the world economy and its implications for developing countries and development. Discussions had also focused on forthcoming events such as the International Conference on Financing for Development, the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference and the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Some of the key issues that were on the agendas of those events had been discussed in a very informal setting; that was the strength of the dialogue format.

12. The question that needed to be addressed was how to preserve the comparative advantage and the innovative character of the high-level dialogue format. Two specific elements should be borne in mind. In the first place, the theme should be chosen in such a way that it moved the agenda forward. The item on globalization, for example, had been discussed twice, each time from a different angle. The question was how to move the agenda forward by selecting themes that would go beyond a general discussion of globalization. Secondly, a way should be found to maintain the innovative character of the event. Perhaps other stakeholders, such as civil society and non-governmental organizations, should be encouraged to participate. The idea of a "bottom-up" approach had been proposed; for example, individual regions or non-governmental organizations could organize events which would then feed into the work of the General Assembly. He would like to suggest that the Committee should address those two points, namely, the discussion theme

and the innovative character of the event, so as to ensure forward movement in the high-level dialogue.

13. **Mr. Kyazze** (Director of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Liaison Office in New York), introducing the report prepared by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) contained in document A/56/221, said that the first chapter was a consolidated, inter-agency report on the results of the seventh Round Table on Communication for Development organized by UNICEF, the objective of which had been to foster an exchange of experiences to improve inter-agency cooperation and identify focal points to facilitate dialogue in the field of communication for development. The remaining eight chapters consisted of reports by individual specialized agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations system on their strategies and activities for communication for development.

14. In addition to participating in the Round Table, UNESCO had undertaken a number of new initiatives in partnership with other United Nations agencies to facilitate dissemination of information relating to development by strengthening communication and information technology capacities in developing nations. UNESCO was providing a platform for international policy discussion and guidelines on the ethical, legal and societal consequences of information and communication technologies and on promoting universal access to information.

15. The eighth inter-agency round table on communication for development was being organized by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and would be held in Managua, Nicaragua, from 26 to 28 November 2001. Two main subjects had been chosen: the struggle against HIV/AIDS and the evaluation of community media projects.

16. **Mr. Vandemoortele** (United Nations Development Programme), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on advancing human resources development in developing countries (A/56/162), said that the meaning of human resources development had evolved and was now understood to include facilitating the development of human capabilities and promoting sustainable human well-being with the objective of widening the participation of the people in the benefits of the world economy. Rapid technological change required a different, more flexible and adaptive human resources development strategy.

17. One of the foundations for human resources development was adequate access to good-quality basic education. The progress made since the World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990, had been mixed. More than 70 developing countries had made good progress and several were on track to achieve the goal of education for all by 2015. But progress had been uneven. An estimated 113 million primary-school-age children — the majority of them girls — were not in school; that was about the same number as in 1991. More than 30 developing countries were very unlikely to meet the goal of education for all by 2015. There needed to be a focus on basic education if the gains that had been made were not to be quickly lost.

18. He drew attention to the six specific recommendations which could be found in paragraphs 36-41 of the report.

19. **Mr. Kamyab** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that gender mainstreaming should be a component of all aspects of financing for development at both micro and macro levels in order to ensure access by women to financial resources. Micro-credit programmes and small business ventures should help empower women and move them from subsistence activities to more established entrepreneurial ventures. Governments, the private sector and financial institutions needed to consider the short- and long-term goals of access by women to financial services. Education and training, particularly with regard to information and communication technologies, were essential for women's empowerment and poverty eradication. Widening economic inequalities, unemployment and the low level of official development assistance helped perpetuate systems in which women were deprived of their invaluable role in development.

20. The concept of human resources development had evolved and now called for comprehensive strategies which balanced local needs with global realities. However, adequate education and training remained the bedrock upon which broader interpretations of human resources development must be grounded. The overarching objective should be the provision of the necessary services to equip people with the requisite skills and knowledge to compete in the international market. As labour markets adapted to growing economies, human resources development strategies must balance the demands of new employment sectors

with the supply of required skills. Of paramount importance was access by developing countries, particularly poor countries, to information and communication technologies on a continuous basis.

21. The success of human resources development was dependent on a conducive international economic environment. International cooperation should be increased and additional resources mobilized by the donor community. United Nations agencies needed to harmonize the various human resources development initiatives while also adjusting them to specific country requirements.

22. Turning to the high-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership, he said that during the second such dialogue, held in September 2001, the Group of 77 and China had underlined that the still unfolding process of globalization continued to have an impact on the development policies of all societies. Globalization should not be seen as a force beyond the control of human beings or countries. To a large extent it was an interactive process and the result of policy choices and decisions. It was a process that needed to be harnessed and even directed. Cooperation across the board, particularly between and within North and South, was an absolute necessity. The Group of 77 and China had also emphasized that integration of developing countries into the world economy should be seen as a comprehensive process based on cooperation and partnership. It had also emphasized the importance of integrating the developing countries into the new and emerging global knowledge-based economy and of providing the necessary infrastructures and sound policies at all levels.

23. Turning finally to agenda item 97 (d), he said that in the past decade agreement had been reached on a wide range of actions to be undertaken by all partners to address the many challenges facing developing countries. The outcomes of a number of major conferences over the past decade had focused largely on the need for poverty eradication through clear agreed actions at national, regional and international levels. The main challenge for implementation of the outcomes of those conferences and summits had been a lack of resources at national and international levels. In order to achieve the ultimate goals of those conferences and summits the pace of economic growth in the developing countries should increase. A development process should be defined that was responsive to social needs, sought a significant reduction in extreme

poverty, promoted employment and the utilization of human resources and skills, and was environmentally sound and sustainable. International monetary, financial and trade systems should be reformed so as to support the development process in developing countries. There should be an environment of strength and stability in the world economy and sound macroeconomic management nationally and internationally. There should also be a decisive strengthening of international development cooperation, and a special effort to deal with the problems of the least developed countries. The forthcoming International Conference on Financing for Development had the potential to address most of those challenges: the development partners collectively should commit themselves to ensuring a successful outcome of that conference.

24. **Mr. Charlier** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and, in addition, Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that the report of the Secretary-General on women in development (A/56/321 and Corr.1) shed interesting light on the subject and should be taken into account in preparations for the International Conference on Financing for Development and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, as well as in efforts to achieve the international development goals set by major world conferences and the Millennium Declaration. The European Union welcomed the progress made by the General Assembly at its twenty-third special session, and considered that the cause of gender equality had made great progress in recent years even if there was still a long way to go before the objectives which had been set were realized. The analysis of gender issues and gender mainstreaming had become widely acceptable instruments in attempts to bring about equality of rights and opportunities.

25. Gender equality and women's participation in development lay at the very heart of the issue of the promotion of sustainable development and the examination of the impact of globalization. It was not possible to seek remedies for the marginalization of a large number of countries without paying heed to the marginalization and discrimination often suffered by women within those societies. The gender perspective must be integrated horizontally in all policies and all activities of the United Nations.

26. Education was the basis for all emancipation and economic progress. Education for girls was the most profitable investment to make in any development strategy. Without appropriate representation of — and participation by — women, in decision-making processes including at the political level, there was little chance their lot would improve: their votes must therefore really count and they must be able to have equal access to elected posts. National budgets needed to give priority to the fight against poverty, through the provision of basic social services, rather than to military expenditure. The feminization of poverty could be countered by giving absolute priority to poverty eradication. Women and children were the first victims of conflicts, so democracy and respect for human rights, which were the guarantees of peace, political stability and development, must benefit them first. The European Union encouraged all parties involved in conflicts to integrate women more effectively into peace negotiations, involving them at all decision-taking levels in the prevention, management and settlement of disputes.

27. In order to be able to invest and develop their meagre resources the poor needed to obtain real access to property, particularly land, and to credit in conditions of legal certainty not generally offered by the informal sector. The European Union therefore supported the Global Campaign for Secure Tenure launched by Habitat and reaffirmed its support for the formulation and strengthening of policies and practices to promote the full and equal participation of women in human settlements planning and decision-making. It also emphasized the importance it attached to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and its Optional Protocol. The European Union encouraged all Governments to increase their efforts fully to open their employment markets and to facilitate the creation of genuine employment opportunities for women of all educational levels, and to ensure equal pay for equal work and equality with men in conditions of employment and working conditions.

28. Microcredit programmes were worth developing since they were often the only chance of access to finance for women working in the informal sector. Microfinancing should be considered only as a point of departure; in the long term, aid should be targeted on improving paid activities for women to enable them to compete in current market conditions.

29. The gap between the sexes in the use of new information and communication technologies must be reduced; a first step would be to recognize the potential contribution of the new technologies to empowering women and reducing gender inequalities.

30. Women's full participation in development was conceivable only if they had true autonomy of action, including in matters of reproductive health, true freedom to take decisions within the family in all its forms, and if all their human rights were fully respected. The question of rights and health in relation to sexuality and reproduction remained a priority for the European Union. The situation of women in some countries — Afghanistan was a case in point — remained a matter of great concern.

31. It was no longer possible to talk of development without mentioning the AIDS pandemic. During the special session on HIV/AIDS, States had together stressed that equality between the sexes and the emancipation of women were essential conditions to reducing the vulnerability of women and girls to HIV/AIDS and, to that end, they had committed themselves to eliminating all forms of discrimination and violence against women and girls, including harmful traditional and customary practices, assault and trafficking in women and girls, and affirmed their determination to give women the means to exercise control over questions connected with their sexuality.

32. Finally, women must also be involved in the promotion of development at the United Nations. The European Union welcomed the activities of the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes on that issue. It reiterated its support for the promotion of gender equality within the Organization in relation to its human resources policy and welcomed the activities of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women.

33. It was essential to involve women in the International Conference on Financing for Development. Accordingly, gender equality should be integrated into all facets of the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

34. While promoting the participation of women in development was a question of justice and of human rights, it also made sound economic sense. To promote the participation of women was to promote development.

35. Turning to the high-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership, he wondered whether there was real added value in such an exercise, given that it addressed the same topics as those discussed in the Economic and Social Council and the Second Committee. The international community must sometimes be prepared to streamline its work, in order to be able to focus on those proceedings that attracted the most interest. The European Union would therefore prefer that the dialogue on international economic cooperation should be continued in the context of the ordinary proceedings of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

36. **Mr. Lee Kyung-Chul** (Republic of Korea) said that there was a broad consensus in the international community that the advancement and empowerment of women should be actively promoted in the process of economic and social development. Strengthening and diversifying women's financial services in economic activities might be one of the most vital elements for achieving gender sensitive development.

37. In that connection, his Government had taken a number of steps to promote the advancement of women, particularly in the public sector and in terms of information access. Not only did it now have an entire ministry — the Ministry of Gender Equality — devoted to addressing gender issues, but it had introduced a policy to ensure that a minimum percentage of those recruited by the Government through open competitive examinations were women. Since that policy was put into effect, the number of female recruits had surged, particularly in the foreign service. That upward trend in the number of women occupying higher positions in the public sector would enable the Government to better integrate the gender perspective into public policies.

38. The information technology revolution had also helped to promote gender equality and the empowerment of women. In terms of information access, his country had the fifth largest proportion of Internet users in the world, with over 40 per cent of the population enjoying Internet access. Women accounted for well over 40 per cent of the online population.

39. His delegation welcomed the United Nations achievements in the field of human resources development and believed that the goal of the Millennium Declaration to ensure primary schooling for all children by 2015 should provide guidance to all

countries in that regard. Well aware of the enormous importance of human resources to development, his Government had been implementing various international educational and training programmes for trainees from a variety of developing countries. Finally, he expressed the hope that the preparations for and agreements at the International Conference on Financing for Development would address the international community's common aspiration for development.

40. **Mr. Iwai** (Japan) said that, in the nineteenth century, when Japan had faced the challenge of catching up with the industrialized Powers of that time, it had concentrated on universal primary education. Over the years, with the help of international experts in the fields of law, medicine, engineering and agriculture, among others, and by providing opportunities for talented Japanese nationals to train abroad, it had accumulated much experience. It was therefore fully convinced of the value of human resources development and technical cooperation. To date, Japan had received roughly 200,000 trainees from the developing world and nearly 24,000 Japanese experts had been posted abroad through the Japan International Cooperation Agency. In addition, more than 20,000 volunteers had been working at the grass-roots level in developing countries.

41. With regard to agenda item 97 (c), his delegation regretted the fact that the high-level dialogue had not been more focused. It might be useful to reassess the aims of that debate and to consider holding the high-level dialogue on a more regular basis in order to allow Member States to follow up on the outcome of the International Conference on Financing for Development, while preserving the inclusive and holistic nature of the financing for development process.

42. **Ms. Lopez** (Venezuela) said that her country attached the highest importance to international cooperation for development that was tailored to its specific needs in areas such as education, partnership and trade. In the area of women in development, Venezuela had made impressive strides in the financing of microenterprises with a view to the integration of women in the productive process. In that regard, it had established the women's development bank, which promoted the activities of women microentrepreneurs, provided credit services and offered training and technical assistance to women. As far as human resources development was concerned, she supported the strengthening of the operational activities of the

United Nations system. Indeed, the development of such resources was one of the social priorities of her Government. In that regard, she emphasized the need to narrow the widening technological divide in the field of information, knowledge and communications which adversely affected the training of the rising generations in the less developed countries. Her delegation favoured human resources development policies that were geared to the needs of countries.

43. Concerning the high-level dialogue on strengthening international economic cooperation for development through partnership, her delegation supported efforts directed towards establishing partnership mechanisms at the national and international levels with the private sector to help the developing countries be integrated into the world economy. That could not be achieved without creating synergy among the interested stakeholders, to wit, the public and private sectors, civil society and non-governmental organizations as well as all the players in the international community.

44. The goals of the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade remained valid. The implementation of the Strategy required integrated and comprehensive implementation and follow-up of the recommendations and commitments made by the major international conferences, which in turn required vigorous political commitment on the part of the international community. The Government of Venezuela was convinced of the need to establish a new model for international cooperation which was more equitable and was informed by the concept of a modern, humane and competitive economy imbued with the noble goals of peace, progress and development. In that regard, Venezuela was implementing a programme of economic revitalization which sought to achieve new and better levels of development. Its objectives included halting the spread of poverty, promoting sustainable economic growth and preventing marginalization within the world economy. Those objectives could not be achieved without a favourable economic environment. She called upon the international community to strengthen the strategies that were needed for the construction of an integrated, fairer and more balanced world and urged the Secretary-General to promote new, effective and efficient measures in favour of cooperation, integration and solidarity.

45. **Archbishop Martino** (Observer for the Holy See), citing Pope John Paul II, said that the one issue

which most challenged human conscience was the poverty of countless millions of men and women. Poverty and its eradication were more than ever a pre-eminent issue and had moral implications. One way to reduce poverty was to promote growth based on national policies in favour of the poor.

46. He stressed the importance of implementing effective, equitable and productive agrarian reform aimed at alleviating rural poverty. However, agrarian reform could not be confined simply to redistribution of land. It must also operate as an instrument for extending private ownership of land, even if that meant taking into consideration common property, a feature of the social structure of many indigenous population. National policies should also promote the development of family-sized farms — which, inter alia provided the family sufficient earnings and ensured sustainability of the rural environment. Public authorities should ensure that the rights of rural workers were protected and establish education systems capable of providing the broadest possible range of knowledge, and the promotion of skills at various educational levels.

47. Rural poverty should also be addressed in the context of international trade. Negotiations on agriculture should bring about renewed commitment to the removal of obstacles to market access, domestic support and export subsidies for goods from developing countries. International cooperation must be enhanced to allow developing countries to intensify diversification, create infrastructure and apply technology in order to sustainably increase agricultural productivity.

48. Other issues requiring international action were the creation of a system of intellectual property rights that balanced the need to provide incentives for innovation with the need of poor countries to share the benefits of such innovation, the promotion of a sustainable management of biological resources and the right to food security.

49. **Mr. El Atrash** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that the twentieth century had seen a remarkable increase in the world's population and in economic development and in the impact of both on the environment. According to the report entitled "World resources 2000-2001 — people and ecosystems: the fraying web of life", growing demand for resources was continuing to cause damage to ecosystems and was likely to have a disastrous impact on human development and on the well-being of all species.

50. The world population had increased dramatically since 1950 and there had been an increasing trend towards urbanization. Currently, about half the world's population lived in towns. At the same time, there had been an enormous expansion in the production of goods and the provision of services throughout the world as well as technological advances leading to improved standards of living.

51. The impact of the increase in the world population on the availability and quality of water, urban environmental degradation, air pollution and the fall in the productivity of land were matters of concern at the international level. Perhaps the most alarming feature was freshwater pollution in the developed countries and the shortage of freshwater in the developing countries. Many countries had begun to take steps to improve their human settlement policies in both rural and urban areas. Some developing countries had also taken measures to ensure the equitable distribution of water but their capacities remained limited and they lacked the benefits of modern technology and know-how that were required in order to make their policies effective. It was to be hoped that the economically developed countries would make serious efforts to mobilize resources to improve the capacity of the developing countries in that respect.

52. His country had addressed its own need for water, both for human consumption and for economic purposes, by means of the Great Man-Made River Project which currently provided 4.5 million cubic metres of fresh water from the desert in the south of the country to the cities in the north. When the third phase of the project was completed in the near future, the daily volume of water delivered would rise to 6 million cubic metres. That project was a historic endeavour to provide water for human needs, for economic development and to combat desertification over a vast area of north Africa and his country was willing to share its experience and know-how in that respect with any countries that wished to benefit from it. In an endeavour to meet the future challenges of sustainable development plans that had been adopted, his country was also working to improve the efficiency of water use and management through measures that included water recycling and desalination.

53. Referring to the Secretary-General's report on advancing human resources development in developing countries (A/56/162), he said that the commitment made at the various major international conferences

held under the auspices of the United Nations were the main basis for international efforts to address global development challenges. A display of political will was necessary to follow up the conclusions of those conferences and to give effect to the financial commitments made by donors, both bilateral and multilateral, particularly as there had been a clear reduction in the provision of funding from all sources. The developing countries had made a commitment to mobilize their national resources for human resources development, for population projects in particular, but, because of the reduction in funds from donors, many of them were unable to fund their national population programmes.

54. In conclusion, he emphasized the need for effective participation by States and by private and non-governmental organizations in human development activities, and for greater political will on the part of the developed countries to mobilize resources needed to implement the outcomes of past and future conferences.

55. **Mr. Yahya** (Israel) said that, for generations, women had suffered from discriminatory practices; they now represented the vast majority of persons living in abject poverty. Israel had long considered investment in women's education to be crucial to sustainable development. For more than 40 years, it had organized training programmes to raise awareness of gender bias and the need for gender-sensitive policy decisions. Participants were encouraged to develop empowerment strategies and to increase interaction between women's organizations and public sector decision makers. The courses also focused on entrepreneurial activities in various spheres, ranging from small and medium-sized enterprises to agriculture.

56. Israel ranked among the most advanced countries with regard to legislation on women's issues. In addition to existing legislation concerning gender equality, a recent law had been enacted for the appointment of local advisers on the status of women. Although increasing numbers of women had entered political life and private industry, women were still underrepresented in key positions. He stressed that in striving to achieve more equal opportunities for women, it was necessary not to upset the delicate balance between the need to preserve traditional roles and the need for modern society to harness the capacity of women as a potential source of talented and skilled workers.

57. Turning to human resources development, he said that Israel had placed great emphasis on that and had shared its expertise with developing countries, through training programmes geared towards enhancing the quality of life of the rural populations. Experience had shown that industrial development was not restricted to countries that enjoyed an abundance of natural resources. Local industries could be developed through the development of human potential. Social development, education in democratic values and equal opportunities must evolve alongside technological and economic progress. Not only did democracy guarantee greater opportunities for all sectors of the population, but it also enhanced regional stability.

58. The current situation in the region had hampered the development of trade ties with other countries. Economic boycott had made it extremely difficult for Israel to import raw materials and to promote its exports; it had therefore developed industries that placed a high value on a qualitative pool of human resources rather than the ready availability of natural resources. Israel had also focused on developing industries employing advanced technology and agriculture, communications and a successful educational system with the aim of fostering long-term goals and economic development. It was equally important to invest in research and development and to promote small and medium-sized business ventures based on technological innovation.

59. The Kibbutz experiment had contributed substantially to the progress of Israeli society and the development of its economy. Although in recent years interest in the Kibbutz movement had declined, it was still an example of how developing countries could harness their human potential for the greater good of society. There should be further investigation into ways of implementing the development potential of the Kibbutz experience in other areas of the world.

60. **Mr. Valera** (Mexico) said that his delegation recognized the fundamental role played by women in national economic and social development and therefore assigned considerable importance to efforts being made at the national and international levels to create conditions conducive to enhancing women's contribution to the development of society. His country had recently hosted the Latin America and Caribbean Region Microcredit Summit. That Summit had addressed basic issues such as the viability of microcredit institutions and how to organize and

operate them, the impact of loans on people's quality of life and the design and implementation of national policies and institutions. In that regard, Mexico, which had established a system of financing based on microcredit and savings throughout the country, believed that the International Conference on Financing for Development would offer an ideal opportunity for carrying forward the development of mechanisms to promote microcredit and other financial instruments in developing countries, bearing in mind the need for a gender perspective.

61. Turning to the issue of human resources development, he said that, in his delegation's view, globalization did present opportunities for growth and development. Education and human resources development were the key to ensuring that all countries and all segments of society could avail themselves of those opportunities. Moreover, the strategies of the United Nations in that regard should increasingly incorporate access of the population and of developing countries to new information and communication technologies. Women, including indigenous women, girls and the disabled, should be given particular attention in that regard. He called for greater cooperation between agencies of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, with the private sector and other groups and bodies of civil society.

62. **Ms. Chenoweth** (Director, Liaison Office of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that female farmers in rural areas found it increasingly difficult to enjoy the benefits of globalization due, inter alia, to the lack of financial resources, access to credit and the fact that they were generally less educated than men. Moreover, the number of female-headed households had increased as a result of the growing migration of men from rural to urban areas. Consequently, women's income remained the mainstay of families.

63. After touching on some of the problems encountered with respect to privatization of land and other natural resources, she said that rural women's access to financial services was one of the main priorities on the FAO agenda. FAO promoted the need to develop a full range of financial services, including credit facilities, in order to strengthen sustainable financial capacities. It was dedicated to the development of viable financial institutions capable of serving large sectors of the rural population; that was bound to increase women's access to financial services.

In that regard, FAO focused its technical cooperation activities on three areas: designing and formulating financial policies and supporting the required legislation; advising on restructuring of financial systems, including institutions and mechanisms that could offer more effective operational linkages between savings and credit; designing and helping to implement practical systems and operational procedures aimed at providing effective and sustainable financial services to the rural population.

64. Moreover, in order to meet specific financial needs of rural women, FAO concentrated on organizing training courses on entrepreneurship, accounting and other related technical activities. For that purpose, it had established a Socio-economic and Gender Analysis (SEAGA) programme and developed a guide to gender sensitive microfinance. Furthermore, the governing bodies of FAO had scheduled for later in November 2001, a review of the Gender and Development Plan of Action 2002-2007. The Plan aimed at promoting gender equality in the access to agricultural support services, including financial services, as well as creating and managing employment opportunities in rural areas. In view of the vital role of rural women in developing countries and the obstacles they often faced in procuring the necessary resources to support their work, FAO hoped that the International Conference on Financing for Development would give substantive attention to that critical issue.

The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.