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THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Written statement* submitted by the International Federation of Rural Adult
Catholic Movements, a non-governmental organization on the Roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is
circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 January 2003]

*This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from
the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The objectives of the Millennium

1 – In the chapter dedicated to development and fighting poverty, the Summit of the Millennium held in New York in September 2000 sets, in the declaration that was adopted, the objectives that the international community will have to try hard to achieve by 2015.

2 – As for the International Conference on Financing Development held in Monterrey, Mexico, in spring 2002, it proposes, to achieve the objectives, to build a stable and prosperous world and to make progress in the reduction of poverty and in the other development objectives for the Millennium.

3 – Nevertheless, the first figures seem to deny the ambitions declared. In the report 2002, the UN Development Programme (UNDP) assesses the possibility, for the countries of the planet, of achieving the objectives and it says that, in this case, the Gross National Product (GNP) should at least increase by 3.7% per capita and per year. Yet, only 24 developing countries experienced that rhythm in the years 1990. On the other side, more than 130 other developing countries, where 40% of the world population live, are making progress much more slowly.

To put democratic governance at the service of human development

4 – The authors of the UNDP report believe that "the potential advantages of the new era announced by the world integration are huge. Nevertheless, they will not materialize as long as a large part of mankind is left out." They conclude that the implementation of strong democratic governance modes, at all levels of society, is the best way to foster human development.

5 – Indeed, we could not deny the role of politics in development. In order to reduce poverty, the poor must have a political power as well as economic progress possibilities. The authors of the Report acknowledge that the new challenge has "considerable implications in terms of national and international policies for developed as well as for developing countries. They say the essential issue is maybe to associate more individuals to the decisions that affect their lives in the modern world and to allocate more widely the economic and social profits."

6 – Rural movements and the peasants' organisations of the FIMARC totally share the analysis and believe that putting democratic governance at the service of human development can greatly contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the Millennium.

Democracy enriches the human development process

7 – Even if the links between democratic governance and economic and social development are not automatic, we have to acknowledge that the principles of participation and transparency enrich the human development process. Indeed, political development is inseparable from economic and social development. The

economic development must aim at creating richness to improve the living standard and conditions of most people and has to foresee before all a fair allocation of resources that would make a better social development possible.

8 – Moreover, these perspectives of economic and social development cannot be considered without a political development. Indeed, through the latter, all individuals and communities will have a chance to take part to the elaboration of the decisions that affect them, become aware of their common interest and work on its realization for a harmonious development of society.

9 – Thus, those three dimensions of development are complementary and strengthen each other. Otherwise, they condemn themselves to inefficiency and endanger the real human development. The Johannesburg Summit, in September 2002, reminded that the sustainable development dimension also had to be taken into account as the fourth development dimension. Nevertheless, the FIMARC considers that this dimension is implicit and realized when the three above-mentioned dimensions are taken into account and implemented.

A World Meeting in Cotonou, Benin

10 – During three weeks, in November 2002, delegates of the organizations of the FIMARC, from 40 countries of 4 continents, met in Cotonou for their World Meeting. In the perspective of a harmonious development for all, they reflected upon the consequences of globalization for the rural world and the urgency to create a new era, alternative to the neoliberal economic system.

11 – They noticed that the opening of markets, as it is commonly said, is not a factor of shared growth and that the WTO agreement leading to a wide opening of the barriers to international trade is the first element to cause the crisis experienced by their agricultures. In the name of competition and free-trade, an intensive agriculture, very mechanized and widely subsidized, can only crush a traditional, manual and low profitability agriculture that still occupies most farmers of the planet. The theory of a totally liberalized market matches neither the development model they would like to realize nor the new era they are wishing for and on which they are already working.

Their vision of a new era

12 – First, the new era is not based on the potential advantages that would be announced by their integration in international trade but rather on a set of principles and essential values that would give them a chance, through their democratic participation, to have a hold over their economic and social situation in order to control it better.

13 – A new era would be:

- A new time in which all human beings can strengthen all their abilities and define their own development in their own social, cultural, political and religious context;
- A new time in which peace reigns, in which there is work for all and in which all human rights are ensured since they are indispensable conditions for a true development;
- A new time in which economic, political, social and cultural systems serve people and not financial powers and in which social relations are characterized by solidarity, regardless of differences of nationality, beliefs or religions;
- A new time in which the political power serves people, gives them a chance to express themselves, to be listened to and to participate to the decisions that affect their present and future;
- A new time in which the rules of good governance, at national level, do not aim first at the financial support and attention to investors from industrialized countries but at a good management of public affairs, under the control of democratic institutions;
- A new time in which, at global level, the international institutions work in the greatest transparency and in which developing countries do have the right to take part to the decisions that affect them.

14 – In the Cotonou World Meeting, the organizations of the FIMARC, in a final resolution, reasserted their commitment to achieving that new era, convinced that a real people's participation is an essential element of a successful and sustainable development.

Moreover, they approve one of the conclusions of the Working Group on the Right to Development that acknowledges the value of the efforts currently made by some States to define and strengthen practices of good governance, which can only make progress the effective implementation of the right to development.