

**Economic and Social Council**

Provisional

22 November 2002

Original: English

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**Substantive session of 2002**

General segment

**Provisional summary record of the 29th meeting**

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 18 July, 2002, at 10 a.m.

*President:* Mr. Šimonović . . . . . (Croatia)  
*later:* Mr. Rosenthal (Vice-President). . . . . (Guatemala)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.*

1. **The President** said that the Council's general segment was intended to cover operational matters in detail and enable the Council to provide guidance for its subsidiary bodies. Many new areas of activity had emerged in 2002, including the new Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, and the issues of gender mainstreaming and the least developed countries had been made the subject of new sub-items on the Council's agenda. He welcomed the Council's establishment of an ad hoc advisory group on African countries emerging from conflict and suggested that more such groups might be established in the future.

2. *Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

3. **The President** noted that the Council had only a few days left before the end of its session and a large amount of business to complete. He appealed for the cooperation of delegations and said that time would be devoted to informal consultations when necessary to ensure that the Council concluded its work on time.

#### **Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits**

(a) **Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits** (E/2002/48, 53, 57, and 64)

(b) **Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010**

4. **Mr. Civili** (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs) said that he wished to introduce several reports prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in order to help the Council to identify a common focus among the issues covered in the general segment. While the great variety of those issues made finding a common thread difficult, he suggested that follow-up to the Millennium Declaration and major conferences and events might offer a useful framework for the Council's deliberations.

5. In his statement to the Council at the opening of the session, the Secretary-General had spoken of the

challenge of focusing the Council's policy development and coordination efforts on implementing the millennium development goals. The Department's report to the coordination segment had described that objective as an example of the exercise of the Council's "managerial role". While some delegations had questioned the appropriateness of the term "managerial", he understood the term to refer to the Council's function of providing guidance and direction for the work of the Organization's economic and social structure, given that the general segment dealt primarily with the Council's functional commissions and other subsidiary bodies. The functional commissions had been at the centre of the major global conferences of the 1990s and were the forum for follow-up to those conferences. Because the Council had pioneered the concept of integrated follow-up to conferences, it would be judged on its ability to achieve that integrated follow-up.

6. The forthcoming General Assembly debate, called for in General Assembly resolution 56/211, on the format and periodicity of conference follow-up processes would provide an important first opportunity to assess progress. The Council's deliberations should contribute to that debate by addressing the respective roles of the functional commissions, the Council and the Assembly in conference follow-up, with a view to furthering integration and enhancing effectiveness.

7. The follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus was an important example of such a process and would be central to implementing the millennium development goals. However, that process posed two major challenges: the first was to produce follow-up arrangements that reflected the specific role of the Monterrey Conference when translating the millennium development goals into action, and the second was to make those arrangements an integral part of the Council's follow-up work for all conferences, preserving the important political momentum generated in Monterrey.

8. Two cross-sectoral issues that were important to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration and to coping with the challenges of globalization identified therein were the contribution of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to development and the promotion of partnerships for development. The launch of the United Nations ICT Task Force seemed certain to be regarded as a major achievement for the Council in that area.

9. Regional cooperation had an important role to play in conference follow-up, and the Council's annual dialogue with the Organization's regional commissions provided a useful forum. However, much more effort would have to be put into making the regional perspective a genuine part of the Council's activities, whether they were focused on supervision or on policy development and coordination.

10. The United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), like the Council, had placed the overarching development goals of the Millennium Declaration at the centre of its efforts. The global conferences of the 1990s had in many respects marked a turning point in inter-agency relations, increasingly reflecting a shared commitment to the achievement of common objectives. The Millennium Summit and Declaration had been both a culmination of that phase and the beginning of a new phase, since they had provided the organizations of the United Nations system with a policy framework to which they were individually and collectively committed. Awareness of that situation had led the Board to model its work closely on the programme of reporting by the Secretary-General on follow-up to the Millennium Declaration. The Board's report to the Council (E/2002/55) illustrated the many ways in which the organizations of the United Nations system were acting together to ensure that the support given to member States' development efforts benefited from the collective and mutually reinforcing contribution of those organizations. It was to be hoped that the Council, too, would be able to draw on the regular CEB report in its work.

11. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Brussels in May 2001 had marked a turning point in the efforts of the least developed countries and the international community's support for those countries. The resulting Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, which differed in many ways from the 1981 and 1990 programmes, provided a framework for strong global partnership for accelerated economic growth and sustainable development and for ending marginalization, focusing on a number of cross-cutting issues. The Programme's overall objective was

substantial progress towards meeting the Millennium Declaration goals of halving extreme poverty by 2015 and promoting sustainable development. The Programme of Action focused on seven specific areas of commitment: fostering a people-centred policy framework; good national and international governance; human and institutional capacity-building; building productive capacities to make globalization work for least developed countries; enhancing the role of trade and development; reducing vulnerability; and mobilizing resources.

12. The Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Countries and Small Island Developing States had been established, on the recommendation of the Secretary-General, by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/227. The Office sought to enhance the mobilization and galvanization of international support for the implementation of the Programme of Action and to ensure its effective coordination, monitoring and review. Efforts would focus on country-level implementation of the Programme of Action by least developed countries and donors alike, who would work closely with United Nations Development Group (UNDG) partners, especially the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to ensure that the Resident Coordinator system give its full support to the least developed countries. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and poverty reduction strategy papers (PRSPs) processes would also incorporate implementation of the Programme of Action.

13. His Office would work with all relevant entities of the United Nations family to ensure that they mainstreamed the Programme of Action in their activities and intergovernmental processes and established appropriate focal points for review and follow-up. It would also work with other multilateral organizations, especially regional and subregional organizations and regional development banks to ensure that they focused on the least developed countries' development efforts and, in particular, on the implementation of the Programme of Action. Lastly, his Office would work closely with civil society at the national and global levels and with the private sector to ensure that they all became full partners of the least developed countries and facilitated closer cooperation with those countries.

14. The Office's first medium-term plan (2002-2005), which had recently been approved by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), endowed the Office with substantive responsibility for following up and coordinating implementation of the Programme of Action. Its activities had commenced with a three-pronged attack: placing the issue of the least developed countries high on the intergovernmental agenda; centring its focus on Africa, particularly in the context of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) recently adopted by the African Union; and supporting country-level implementation arrangements, including the establishment of national forums, as contemplated in the Programme of Action.

15. The Office would perform its coordination, monitoring and reporting roles in support of a broader mandate to highlight the concerns and potentials of the least developed countries in a rapidly globalizing world. Emphasis should be placed on lessons learned and on specific proposals to the Council and the General Assembly in support of the least developed countries. The Council's role, as stipulated in the Programme of Action, was to create an annual agenda item on review and coordination, undertake regular reviews at its high-level segment and prepare for the annual review with the help of experts.

16. The annual reviews should include follow-up, monitoring and assessment of progress in the implementation of the Programme of Action at the national, subregional, regional and global levels on the basis of reports from Governments and other bodies. They should also foster international cooperation at all levels to support the Programme of Action and develop new policies and measures to keep pace with changing domestic and external circumstances. The governing bodies of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) had been invited to report to the Council on their progress in implementing the Programme of Action.

17. He recommended that the Council should undertake the annual review of the implementation of the Programme of Action in the general segment of its substantive session, setting one day aside specifically for the review, under a separate agenda item. The review should be the subject of creative and participatory arrangements, with the format and structure decided each year at the Council's organizational session and consideration given to

undertaking it on a thematic basis, in keeping with the seven commitments set out in the Programme of Action.

18. The Secretary-General was requested to submit, by the last week of May each year, a report on the progress made and the challenges faced by Member States, the United Nations and all other actors, including civil society, in implementing the Programme of Action, with specific recommendations and concrete measures for future implementation. All United Nations bodies and other multilateral organizations were invited to provide timely inputs for the report in their respective areas of mandate. After the review, all relevant United Nations bodies should be apprised of steps to be taken on the basis of the experience gained in the preceding year and the identification of best practices in least developed countries. The Council should bear in mind the special problems of landlocked and small island countries.

19. The Council might wish to reiterate the invitation of the General Assembly to organizations of the United Nations system and other multilateral organizations to mainstream their implementation of the Brussels Declaration and Programme of Action, in both their work programmes and their intergovernmental processes. It might also draw their attention to the importance of optimal coordination with his Office in their activities. He suggested that the Council should devote the high-level segment of its substantive session for 2004 to the review and coordination of implementation of the Programme of Action, in keeping with its decision 2001/320. The Council might also wish to request his Office to help in carrying out the recommendation referred to in paragraph 111 of the Programme of Action.

20. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme) said that the transformation of the Commission on Human Settlements into the Governing Council of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the Centre for Human Settlements into the Programme's secretariat, which the General Assembly had effected by its resolution 56/206, did not entail any change in the mandate, membership or *modus operandi* of the Governing Council. However, those changes, and the fact that the Committee of Permanent Representatives had been formalized as the Governing Council's intersessional subsidiary body, had strengthened the Governing Council's cooperation with

the governing bodies of other United Nations organizations and enhanced the capacity of UN-Habitat to serve as focal point and lead agency for implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium and the relevant sections of the Millennium Declaration.

21. The capacity of UN-Habitat to mobilize resources for seed capital and the financing of projects and programmes was key to the successful implementation of the Habitat Agenda. One of its central functions was to provide advisory services and implement shelter and human settlement projects and programmes at the request of Member States. The need to strengthen technical cooperation had been reiterated in numerous decisions of the Commission on Human Settlements and the General Assembly and in the Declaration on Cities and Other Human Settlements in the New Millennium.

22. UN-Habitat had participated as a full member in the meeting of CEB held in Rome in April 2002, and in other coordination machinery of the United Nations system. In so doing, it was expected to coordinate implementation of the Habitat Agenda and to forge inter-agency partnerships on shelter and sustainable human settlements development. Furthermore, its increased participation in the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) should lead to more productive cooperation with other United Nations agencies, funds, programmes and country teams, and should give human settlement issues increased visibility as a cross-sectoral dimension of development, with particular reference to the millennium development goal of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020. Lastly, participation in the work of UNDG should enhance the operational role of UN-Habitat by pursuing a stronger presence at the country level and should encourage members of UNDG, other United Nations funds, programmes, organizations and agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions to support regional, national and local urban observatories, networks and capacity-building institutions and to incorporate a specific chapter on shelter and sustainable human-settlements development into the common country assessment (CCA) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). The proposed Habitat Agenda Task Manager System should be well-placed to function as a

working group within the framework of the Environmental Management Group.

23. The Urban Environment Forum and the International Forum on Urban Poverty had been merged into a new World Urban Forum, which had held its first session in Nairobi from 29 April to 3 May 2002. The Forum, an open-ended gathering of experts chaired by the Ministers of Housing of South Africa and Sweden, had placed great emphasis on the participation of Habitat Agenda partners and had attracted over 1,200 participants, including government delegations from 81 countries and a large number of slum-dwellers. The focus of deliberations had been sustainable urbanization and the elimination of overlaps and identification of synergies among development agencies in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda.

24. **Mr. Christensen** (Observer for Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Turkey, said that he would confine his comments to issues relating to the least developed countries. The European Union welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States as a valuable basis for coherent follow-up to the Brussels Programme of Action for the least developed countries.

25. On the central issue of implementation: he noted that the Programme had clearly set out the tasks to be accomplished. Those efforts must be based on a partnership between the least developed countries and their development partners, which implied a need for nationally owned poverty-reduction strategies that involved the private sector and civil society as key stakeholders. The European Union urged the Council to devote a future high-level segment to the review and coordination of the Programme of Action, but believed it was essential that there must first be achievements to discuss.

26. **Mr. Aardal** (Observer for Norway) welcomed the establishment of the ad hoc advisory groups on African countries emerging from conflicts; however, as noted in paragraph 33 of the Secretary-General's report (E/2002/12), the success of such a group depended on the commitment of national Governments and

international partners and on the level and consistency of political and financial support for the implementation of such commitments. He agreed with the emphasis placed by the Secretary-General in his report on integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcome of the major United Nations conferences and summits, including the Millennium Summit (A/57/75-E/2002/57), on the importance of gender mainstreaming as a challenge faced in conference follow-up.

27. Global conferences had defined the normative agenda that the United Nations would pursue in the new millennium, and the substantive follow-up to those conferences should be channelled into the regular work of the Organization's main bodies, first and foremost the General Assembly and the Council. Follow-up should be closely linked to efforts to achieve the millennium development goals, monitored and coordinated by the Council and anchored in its functional commissions.

28. The Monterrey Consensus constituted an important platform for development policies because of the emphasis it placed on the role of national policies in attracting investment, exploiting trade opportunities and making direct use of official development assistance (ODA). The Council should strive to mobilize support for and political commitment to the Consensus by involving national ministries, the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), regional banks and development funds, investors, business leaders and non-governmental organizations, drawing on the experience gained in the process leading up to the International Conference on Financing for Development. The Council's annual meeting with the Bretton Woods institutions must become a significant political event; at present, too few ministers attended and there was little real dialogue.

29. **Mr. Maquieira** (Chile), addressing the question of financing for development, said that the Council's efforts to date to establish a firm basis for working with the Bretton Woods institutions represented the first step in an ongoing process. It was important for the Council to address issues relating to the Monterrey Consensus in the light of the positions adopted by those institutions.

30. On the subject of Haiti, he suggested that the Council should request the Secretary-General to find a

way of addressing development issues in the context of post-conflict peace-building. It was important not only to assess Haiti's economic and social development, but also to evaluate its overall functioning in the current situation.

31. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues was a source of pride for Chile, which had contributed to its formation. However, as it was not a functional commission of the Council, the Forum ought to follow a different reporting procedure from that followed by the commission.

32. In its work on integrated and coordinated follow-up to major conferences, the Council should resolve such pending issues as the frequency of follow-up activities, a matter that would doubtless be taken up by the Second Committee of the General Assembly. The Council should consider the substantive outcomes of major conferences with a view to their coordination and integration. His delegation supported the work of CEB and welcomed its strong endorsement by the Secretary-General.

33. **Mr. Siv** (United States of America) praised the high-level segment's focus on human resources development, a major cross-cutting theme at recent United Nations conferences. The Council was to be commended for promoting coordination that made it possible to attain the goals and objectives set at those conferences. Monitoring, which promoted accountability, was an important element of such coordination. With their simple, direct, concrete targets and benchmarks, recent United Nations conferences provided a framework for development, and the Council should help the United Nations and Member States work together to achieve those goals and monitor progress.

34. He expressed appreciation for the leadership displayed by the Statistical Commission in harmonizing the indicators used by the United Nations, and he encouraged the Organization, along with bilateral and multilateral donors, to provide technical assistance to enable Member States to build core statistical capacity. He also urged the Council to promote the use of statistics to support effective national policy development and good public administration.

35. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the International Conference on Financing for Development had established an innovative follow-up

mechanism. With the conclusion of the current cycle of conferences, the time had come to focus on implementation. The Council, together with the functional commissions, should prepare and hold the follow-up review meetings within its existing programme of work.

36. **Mr. Sun Xiaobo** (China) stressed that implementation of and follow-up to international development conferences and summits must be based on agreed objectives, principles, commitments and consensus. Without adequate resources, preferential terms of technology transfer and capacity-building, any discussion of implementation would remain empty talk. The Council should focus on implementing the Monterrey Consensus with the continued involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions and WTO.

37. His delegation took note of the report of the Secretary-General on basic indicators for the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits at all levels (E/2002/53). He agreed that the appropriate indicators were useful tools for measuring progress and could reflect the status of implementation in specific areas, contribute to comprehensive reviews and assessments and lessen the burden of data provision. However, pursuant to Council resolution 2000/27, a limited number of common indicators should be identified or developed with the full participation of all countries and approved by the relevant intergovernmental bodies.

38. The indicators used to monitor follow-up to major conferences should be those reflected in the outcomes thereof and should be applied in the light of the specific conditions, different levels of development and statistical capabilities of individual countries; they must not be imposed on States. The key to genuine functioning of the basic indicators lay in the effective strengthening of developing countries' statistical capabilities through international cooperation. The study of indicators should not focus solely on actions at national level, and the use of indicators for international cooperation should be further enhanced. The Council should also heed the views of the functional commissions regarding their respective areas of competence.

39. His delegation was unable to endorse some of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on coordinated implementation of the Habitat

Agenda (E/2002/48). The reference to "new partnerships" in paragraph 18 was very vague, and the recommendation that UN-Habitat should promote the recognition of cities and local authorities and their world associations as partners of the United Nations and enhance the dialogue among Governments and Habitat Agenda partners on all issues related to effective decentralization and the strengthening of local authorities (para. 19) was not consistent with the consensus reached in the Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements, the Declaration on Cities and other Human Settlements in the New Millennium or the relevant resolutions of the Commission on Human Settlements.

40. **Mr. Stanislavov** (Russian Federation) said that the Millennium Declaration, which incorporated the outcome of the conferences of the 1990s, constituted an excellent basis for an integrated approach to a review of those conferences. However, there might be a case for departing from the practice of conducting mid-term reviews automatically at five-year intervals. If such reviews were felt to be essential, their political level and the procedures for conducting them should be determined in a flexible manner. It might also be possible to make more effective use of existing intergovernmental machinery, for example in the form of ad hoc meetings in the context of the regular sessions of the General Assembly.

41. A review of the implementation of the decisions of the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had already been carried out in 2001, and his delegation would therefore be ready to consider possible alternatives for further enhancing the work of the Council in that important area with a view to building on the previous year's decisions in the light of the current debate on the coordinated and integrated implementation of the decisions of United Nations summits and conferences.

42. His delegation had supported the decision taken at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly to strengthen the mandate and status of the Commission on Human Settlements and considered that the enhancement of its status formed the basis for a qualitative improvement in international cooperation in the area of the sustainable development of cities and other human settlements.

43. His delegation was entirely satisfied with the implementation of the Habitat Agenda adopted at the

United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II). Major adjustments to international cooperation in that area had been introduced at the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Successful implementation of the objectives of that special session required, in particular, the introduction of more effective inter-agency collaboration. The revitalized Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) should play a leading role in that process.

44. The holding of the World Urban Forum at the initiative of Habitat had provided an innovative setting for dialogue between representatives of government, civil society, business and scientific circles. The future work of the Forum should focus on the exchange of views among professionals and the development of subject-oriented recommendations on sustainable urban development, protecting cities and other human settlements against the threat of terrorism as well as against hazardous natural and technogenic processes. In that connection his delegation saw opportunities for cooperation between Habitat and other bodies, such as the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG).

45. **Mr. Pradhan** (Bhutan) said that more than two decades had passed since the convening of the first United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries without any significant results having been achieved. His delegation was, however, encouraged by the recent efforts of the United Nations system to ensure that the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries was a real turning point in the everyday life of people in the world's poorest countries. It also welcomed the decisions adopted by UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) to incorporate the Brussels Programme of Action in their respective programmes of work and encouraged those organizations that had not yet done so to work towards that end.

46. Among the critical issues of concern to the least developed countries were those relating to trade and aid. Growing emphasis was being placed on mutual economic self-interest with trade, rather than aid, representing the ultimate goal of economic development strategies. However, the emphasis on trade alone was not a sufficient condition for sustainable development, as its success depended on the building of a dynamic export sector. In the case of

the least developed countries, which lacked efficient transport, banking and communications infrastructures, that was difficult to achieve. The availability of predictable and adequate financing for the social and economic sectors was thus crucial to their long-term economic growth. While those countries had the primary responsibility for their own development, the role of the international community in meeting the resource gap faced by the least developed countries in a timely and predictable manner was also essential.

47. The way ahead had been clearly outlined in the Brussels Programme of Action and at other major conferences, and coordination, implementation, review and, where necessary, the redirection of efforts had become vital tasks. His delegation urged the Council, in keeping with its mandate, to continue to assist the General Assembly in that regard and ensure that the tasks of the various stakeholders were undertaken in a coordinated and collaborative manner for the benefit of the least developed countries.

48. **Mr. Kogda** (Burkina Faso) said that the institutional arrangements to give effect to the Brussels Programme of Action for the benefit of the least developed countries had been completed, and it only remained for each party involved to play its part. In order to extricate the least developed countries from the trap of poverty, every commitment made in Brussels must be respected. The Monterrey Consensus was potentially of great benefit to the least developed countries, and the conclusions of the forthcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development, to be held in Johannesburg, should take into account the primary objective of reducing poverty in the most vulnerable countries.

49. While sound national policies were needed to reduce poverty, it was equally important that development partners should honour their commitments. With respect to ODA, capacity-building, debt alleviation and market access, the commitment made by donor countries in the Programme of Action could have a highly positive impact on the development of the least developed countries. The Council also had an important role to play in the implementation of the Programme of Action, and should continue to play it by including the same item on its agenda at the high-level segment until the year 2005.



50. **Mr. Sharma** (Nepal) said that previous reviews of follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits had stressed the need for coordination; isolated efforts had led to limited, disjointed progress and failure to meet collective obligations. The current situation was not conducive to the promotion of durable peace, sustainable development, justice or human dignity for all, and there was a growing realization of the need to bridge the widening chasm within the global community by streamlining and expediting efforts to achieve those goals. If the millennium development goals and other agreed objectives were to be met, frameworks and mechanisms must be developed and sustainable development must be addressed at the global, regional and national levels. All stakeholders must fulfil their commitments, and the Council must improve its coordination and monitoring and take remedial measures where needed.

51. He therefore welcomed the establishment of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. In the past two decades the least developed countries had become further marginalized; he hoped that the Brussels Programme of Action would receive the attention it needed for it to be a success. He also welcomed the proposal to establish ad hoc advisory groups on African countries emerging from conflicts and urged the Council and other international actors to facilitate that process at all levels.

52. It was urgent that the agreed conclusions of the Council's substantive session of 2001 should be implemented in order to bridge the widening digital divide between rich and poor countries and between the rich and poor citizens of developing countries. The entire global community needed to move forward in the same direction and at a similar pace. He endorsed the relationship between the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the millennium development goal of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by the year 2020 and hoped that the new institutional mechanisms in that area would be further sustained and strengthened. The international community was at a critical juncture in its efforts to implement the outcomes of international conferences, and he hoped that a strengthened Council would undertake the necessary reforms; the existing mechanisms were not adequate to the task ahead.

53. **Mr. Iwai** (Japan) stressed the importance of a clear division of labour between the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and UNCTAD. It was his delegation's understanding that the new Office would bear overall responsibility for coordination, advocacy, reporting, monitoring and review of implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010 and that project and programme implementation would be carried out by other United Nations bodies, including UNCTAD.

54. He strongly supported the recommendation that the Council should undertake regular reviews of the Programme of Action. In so doing, it must take a result- and country-oriented approach to ensure that tangible progress was made. He therefore welcomed the emphasis on country-level implementation as a framework for action.

55. **Mr. Aho-Glele** (Benin) welcomed the adoption of decision 2001/320, in which the Council had decided to include in its agenda a regular sub-item entitled "Review and coordination of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010". His delegation attached great importance to the Programme of Action and expected concrete results at the national, subregional and global levels. Other United Nations bodies must also include its implementation in their programmes of work; UNICEF and UNDP had already decided to do so.

56. The least developed countries wanted to see real results, and small delegations such as his own did not have time to study lengthy reports. He therefore requested the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to prepare a synoptic table of follow-up and implementation of the Programme of Action by all stakeholders, showing anticipated and actual results for each.

57. **Ms. Flannery** (Sisters of Mercy of the Americas) said that the external debt burden was a cross-cutting issue that was fundamental to any efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve even a minimal implementation of the millennium development goals. In recent years, NGOs had called for the cancellation of the external debt of the poorest countries, yet in spite of the

promises made in many multilateral contexts, that issue remained unresolved, with devastating economic and human costs in a number of countries.

58. It was only after hard lobbying by the NGO community that the Monterrey Consensus had included a reference to the possibility of debt cancellation. Unfortunately, the consensus document had reiterated its faith in the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, even though various studies had indicated that the initiative had already failed. Moreover, several organizations and highly regarded individuals had dismissed as unrealistic the debt sustainability analysis used by the World Bank. More recently, the Chairman of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)/World Bank Development Committee had admitted that several countries would be unable to achieve debt sustainability even when the HIPC process was completed.

59. Meanwhile, the debt burden was exacting a heavy toll on indebted poor countries. Its servicing was taking precedence over investment in education, health and other basic services, malnutrition was on the rise and poverty was spreading rapidly. The NGO community therefore wished to emphasize once again the vital necessity of immediate and unconditional debt cancellation for the poorest countries, particularly those classified by the United Nations as least developed countries, and the adoption, under United Nations auspices, of a fair and transparent arbitration mechanism to deal with the debt of all other indebted countries.

60. Debt cancellation for the poorest countries was an essential way of tackling the problem of poverty and inequality in the world. She called on the Secretary-General and all Member States to give due consideration to the proposal that would be submitted by NGOs at the current session of the Council. If there was to be any hope of achieving the millennium development goals, the international community must make a concerted effort to address the huge cost of debt in all heavily indebted countries without delay.

61. **Ms. Lubin** (International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres) endorsed the statement made by the previous speaker. The International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres was an NGO that operated in more than 45 countries and had a mandate to implement social services programmes. She was

concerned at the fact that, although the Council and other international bodies claimed to welcome NGOs and to seek partnership with them, there was no effort to negotiate genuine contracts that would provide the funds needed for that purpose. Most NGOs had experience in conducting self-evaluations and developing indicators to give donors an understanding of their projects, and they wanted to participate in the Council's discussion of procedures for implementation and follow-up. She therefore urged that the funding necessary for that purpose should be provided.

62. **Mr. Maradona** (World Association of Former United Nations Internes and Fellows (WAFUNIF)) said that his Association's current work programme focused on creating effective partnerships and policies to enable all countries, especially the developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to benefit from science, technology and the ICT revolution and on enhancing the economic, political and social position of the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States. Recent activities had dealt with the digital divide, technical cooperation and capacity-building and the imperative of equalizing the benefits of the economic revolution among all peoples.

63. The transfer and development of technologies, especially information and communication technologies, were essential components of a successful strategy for sustainable development. It was therefore vital to examine and put into practice effective procedures for the creation, development, provision of access to and transfer of technologies to developing countries, including access and transfer on concessional, preferential and non-commercial terms.

64. WAFUNIF was contributing to the dissemination of knowledge and learning in disadvantaged communities, particularly in developing countries. The centres established by the Association would focus on bringing computers, computerized learning strategies, education, training and opportunities to areas traditionally marginalized by technological advancement.

65. In March 2002, WAFUNIF had convened a symposium on financing information and communication technologies as an official side event to the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey. As a follow-up to the Monterrey symposium and as a contribution to the

World Summit on the Information Society, it was planning to organize an international conference for which the proposed theme was the elimination of the barriers of the digital divide via inclusive e-strategies and synergies with the humanities for sustainable development. The conference would consider new social and technological tools for the information age. As a contribution to the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, WAFUNIF had organized a workshop on bridging the divide through capacity-building and strengthening the role of young nationals of least developed countries in the drive for development. WAFUNIF fully supported the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries adopted by that Conference and looked forward to continued work in support of the United Nations system, and particularly of the Economic and Social Council.

66. **Ms. Gustavson** (United States of America) said that her country strongly supported a coordinated implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action and was honouring the commitments it had made at the 1995 Conference on Hunger and Poverty. Since the Brussels Conference, the fourth Ministerial Meeting of the WTO had been held in Doha and the International Conference on Financing for Development had taken place in Monterrey. The conclusions of those important meetings should be fully taken into account in respect of trade and other development financing issues affecting the least developed countries.

67. She welcomed the establishment of the new Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. Her delegation had previously expressed concern over a possible confusion of mandates between the new Office and the existing Office of the Special Coordinator for Least Developed, Landlocked and Island Developing Countries at UNCTAD as well as the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least Developed Countries, and it continued to believe that any wasteful overlap must be avoided. Since the Office of the High Representative had been established in order to concentrate responsibility for coordination of the implementation of the Brussels Programme of Action for the benefit of the least developed countries, the other offices should be restructured or dissolved.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*