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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 19 July 2006, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. ČEKUOLIS (Lithuania)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Hachani (Tunisia), Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania),
Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO MAJOR UNITED NATIONS
CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS (continued) (A/61/90-E/2006/84; E/2006/CRP.7)

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 50/227, 52/12 B AND
57/270 B (A/61/90-E/2006/84; E/2006/CRP.7)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to continue its consideration of agenda item 6 and to begin consideration of item 8, for which the Secretariat had prepared a joint report entitled “The role of the Economic and Social Council in the integrated and coordinated implementation of the outcomes of and follow-up to major United Nations conferences and summits, in the light of General Assembly resolutions 50/227, 52/12 B and 57/270 B”.

Mr. KHAN (Director of the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination), introducing document A/61/90-E/2006/84, said that the outcomes of the United Nations conferences and summits, or United Nations development agenda, were founded on a set of well-defined goals ranging from the eradication of poverty and hunger, gender equality, fighting disease, financing development, promoting environmental sustainability and social integration to building a global partnership. Those goals being interlinked, there was a widely recognized need for integrated and coordinated follow-up of the major United Nations conferences and summits.

Efforts by the Council to promote an integrated approach to the implementation of the development agenda included ensuring substantive coherence in the implementation and follow-up of conferences and summits. It was recognized, for example, that reducing child mortality depended not only on improving health services but also on raising literacy levels among mothers and enhancing access to safe drinking water. Similarly, improving roads and making water more accessible so that children would not have to fetch water from distant wells could improve school enrolment. The close interlinkages between the different aspects of development had been reflected in recent years in the Council’s selection of themes that cut across a spectrum of sectors.

The second element in the integrationist approach to which the Council, particularly its functional commissions, had contributed involved a number of initiatives to promote thematic coherence within its system, consideration of a multi-year work programme for its coordination segment, consolidated reporting on the outcomes of functional commissions' sessions, and greater interaction between the Council's bureau and those of the functional commissions. While the Council's efforts had resulted in some progress in the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 57/270 B and the 2005 World Summit, there remained a need for a platform or mechanism to counter institutional fragmentation, diversity of governance structures and the existence of many tracks for implementation of the United Nations development agenda.

As an outcome of the 2005 World Summit, the Annual Ministerial Substantive Reviews (AMRs) and the Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) provided the Council with vehicles to promote architectural and substantive coherence in the follow-up of the outcomes of major United Nations conferences and summits. In particular, the AMR would strengthen the Council's ability to operate as a system, tapping into the expertise of its functional and regional commissions as well as other organizations of the United Nations system. However, that would require the functional and regional commissions to align their activities with the Council's new functions, in particular to ensure that their activities related to the review of implementation were synchronized with the Council's agenda and workplan. That would in turn entail agreeing on themes for the AMR well in advance, for example by adopting a multi-year programme of work for the AMR policy review based on cross-sectoral policy areas common to the United Nations conferences and summits. The Council would also have to be more innovative in the way it interacted with its subsidiary bodies.

Closing the gap between the normative and operational work of the United Nations system was likewise critical for promoting integrated and coordinated implementation of the development agenda. While significant strides had been made in devising tools to promote comprehensive system-wide approaches in support of national development strategies, the diversity of approaches and uneven capacities to support a country-level presence continued to limit the United Nations system's capacity to develop an integrated and coordinated response.

The Development Cooperation Forum had the potential to address that gap and bring a wide range of new actors behind the implementation of the development agenda as well as to further system-wide coherence. The task of scaling up efforts to that end was vital to meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 and to fully realizing the United Nations development agenda.

Mr. ROSENGREN (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union (EU), the Acceding Countries, the Candidate Countries, the Countries of the Stabilization and Association Process and the potential candidates as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, said that the Council had made notable progress in recent years in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 57/270 B through its annual deliberations within the coordination segment. The Annual Ministerial Review was designed to upgrade the follow-up of United Nations conferences and summits and to form part, with the Development Cooperation Forum and High-level Dialogue, of the proceedings of the High-level Segment geared to implementation of resolution 57/270 B.

The EU welcomed the discussions at the April 2006 high-level meeting of the Council, the Bretton Woods institutions, WTO and UNCTAD on the theme of “Coherence, coordination and cooperation in the context of the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the 2005 World Summit Outcome”. As expressed in the statement on the European Consensus on Development, the European Union was determined to work to achieve the goals agreed on at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, as well as in other major United Nations conferences. It was committed to the principle of national ownership of development strategies and programmes and endorsed the view that developing countries had the primary responsibility for creating an enabling domestic environment for mobilizing their own resources. The developed countries also had responsibilities in that regard and had adopted a timetable for its member States to devote 0.7 per cent of gross national income to aid policies by 2015. The EU was similarly committed to finding solutions to unsustainable debt burdens, in particular to the outstanding debts of Heavily Indebted Poor Countries, post-conflict countries and those affected by exogenous shocks.

The role of trade in development was an important theme, particularly in view of the ongoing WTO negotiations, and the EU strongly supported a rapid completion of the Doha Development Round. It was committed to building and supporting the trade and productive capacities in poor countries, and its member States had agreed to strive to increase their collective trade-related assistance to €1 billion per year by 2010, which would bring its total contribution to 2 billion annually.

Mr. CHULKOV (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation shared the view as to the complementary nature of the main goals of the United Nations development agenda and the identification of the key instruments to that end. The implementation of those objectives called for a multisectoral and coordinated approach and for intergovernmental assessment and monitoring of the progress of the agenda. The Council had a particular responsibility for that process as a key coordinating mechanism within the United Nations system, and the Annual Ministerial Review (AMR) and Development Cooperation Forum (DCF) were important reinforcements for its statutory role in that regard. The Russian Federation endorsed the need for predictability in the subjects to be considered in the AMRs and the adoption to that end of a multiannual programme of work. The Annual Ministerial Reviews, with a thematic focus, could become an effective element in ensuring consistency in the review process and could provide a framework for overall assessment of progress.

His Government attached great importance to prompt implementation of the decisions taken at the 2005 World Summit with regard to the Council. The Council's new functions had important implications for the coordination segment in terms of its role in transforming the decisions of the High-level Segment into tangible guidelines for the United Nations development system. The Segment's thematic agenda should be related to that of the Annual Ministerial Review, perhaps by taking up the theme of the AMR at its previous session. Russia considered the functional commissions to be a key mechanism for pursuing the implementation of the recommendations of major conferences and summits. There was a need to ensure greater thematic coherence between the Council's activities and those of the functional commissions. Progress towards greater interaction between the functional commissions themselves likewise

remained insufficient, and the Annual Ministerial Reviews should offer new possibilities for increased cooperation in that regard. He supported the idea of including in the agendas of the functional commissions a standing item on their contribution to the Council's new functions. He likewise favoured strengthening the potential of the regional commissions to serve as coordination centres for national inputs to the Annual Ministerial Reviews.

Mr. MANINI (Intergovernmental Institution for the Use of Micro-Alga Spirulina Against Malnutrition) said that his organization was the result of an international convention signed by a number of governments on the use of algal proteins to combat malnutrition. To attain the goals of the major United Nations conferences on development, such as the Millennium Summit and the World Food Summit, there was a need for concerted strategies for locally based application of poverty-reduction mechanisms. To that end, all available technology must be employed, including the use of micro-alga Spirulina for food. Capable of rehabilitating an undernourished child in three weeks, the alga produced per hectare 270 times more proteins than cattle for 50 times less water. The Millennium Development Goals would be achieved once access to food, particularly in cases of emergency, was available for all, especially undernourished children. His Institution hoped that, in the meantime, the use of micro-alga Spirulina in furtherance of those Goals would finally be endorsed by the international community.

Mr. REILLY (International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)) said that the ICC, through Business Action in Support of the Information Society (BASIS), was committed to promoting partnerships to bring the benefits of the information society to people worldwide and to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. BASIS welcomed the Global Alliance and the prospect of its providing a multi-stakeholder forum on ICT and development, linking up with both the Council and the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD). The business community wished to request that any future consultative process on changing the CSTD mandate, format and agenda should follow a process similar to that for the establishment of the Global Alliance in providing for a longer consultative period to gather inputs. His organization looked forward to contributing business expertise to the Council and the CSTD in keeping with the procedures to be decided at that meeting.

Mr. KHAN (Director of the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination) said that the new instruments at the disposal of the Council should help promote an integrative approach to the development agenda. The draft resolution in preparation should mark a turning point in the way the Council pursued its corresponding mandate in future. To say that was not to undervalue all that had already been achieved at the country and operational levels, where thematic groups were already working with some success on topics such as HIV/AIDS, poverty reduction and gender issues. The main challenge now was on the normative side, where the work of the functional and regional commissions and, to some extent, that of the United Nations funds and programmes and Specialized Agencies should be brought together so that the operational and normative parts of the system came to form a harmonious whole. The first step towards that goal should be taken at the present session.

The meeting rose at 4 p.m.