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Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields.

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

Report of the Secretary-General on the modalities, format and organization of the high-level plenary meeting of the 60th session of the General Assembly

ADVANCED, UNEDITED VERSION

Report of the Secretary-General on the modalities, format and organization of the high-level plenary meeting of the 60th session of the General Assembly

1. Introduction and background

1. Five years ago, the leaders of the world came together to adopt the Millennium Declaration, building on a decade of major United Nations conferences and summits. That landmark document – captured the aspiration of the peoples of the United Nations to build a better and safer world for the 21st century – a more peaceful, prosperous and just world, united by the common values of freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility. And it set out a blueprint for achieving such a world through collective security and a global partnership for development.

2. Since the Millennium Summit, we have had other major conferences, including one on Financing for Development in Monterrey and one on sustainable development in Johannesburg, which added to the global consensus on a number of important issues.

3. Last year, in Resolution A/RES/58/291, the General Assembly decided to convene in New York in 2005, at the beginning of the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, a high-level plenary meeting of the Assembly, in which heads of State and Government would take part – in other words, a summit – on dates to be decided by the Assembly at this, its fifty-ninth session.

4. That summit will be an event of decisive importance. It will comprehensively review the implementation of the Millennium Declaration, and the integrated follow-up to the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields. But it must do more than that: it will give us a unique opportunity to inject new energy into the pursuit of the vision that is embodied in the Millennium Declaration. I, as Secretary-General, will spare no effort to make this a productive meeting.

5. The General Assembly asked me to submit a comprehensive report on the Millennium Declaration. I will present that report in March 2005. I hope that it will help the Member States in their deliberations. It will cover all areas of the Millennium Declaration, including a review of progress on the Millennium Development Goals and their financing.

6. That report will also draw, particularly in the area of peace and security, on the findings of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which I established a year ago and which will submit its report to me on 2 December 2004. I intend to transmit the Panel's report to Member States without delay, together with some comments and suggestions for discussing and deciding on the Panel's recommendations – outlining, in particular, which of them may require follow-up in different intergovernmental bodies within the United Nations system. But my report in March 2005 will cover the whole range of issues in the Millennium Declaration, and will indicate where, in my view, bold decisions are needed from Member States at the September summit in order to realize the Declaration's objectives.

7. Resolution A/RES/58/291 requested me to submit to the General Assembly at its fifty-ninth session a report on suggested modalities, format and organization of this major event for consideration and a final decision by the Assembly. This present report is a response to that request.

8. The Assembly also requested the President of the 58th Assembly to carry out open-ended consultations to inform my report. The President of the 58th General Assembly requested the Permanent Representatives of Guatemala and Norway, as facilitators, to conduct these consultations, pursuant to Resolution A/RES/58/291. The facilitators held various consultations during May and June and submitted their report to the President of the 58th General Assembly on 6 July. Their report was forwarded by the President of the 58th General Assembly to me.

9. The report of the facilitators was very useful indeed and I would like to thank the President of the General Assembly of the 58th session and the facilitators for their valuable contribution.

10. My recommendations in this report are based on the report of the facilitators and on the positive experience of the Millennium Summit, which took place from 6 through 8 September 2000, as well as on the experience accumulated to date in organizing Special Sessions, major United Nations conferences and summits, high-level dialogues and other General Assembly meetings.

2. Duration and timing

11. On the duration of the meeting, the facilitators indicated that a significant majority of Member States prefer a meeting that lasts three days. I agree and recommend that the General Assembly consider holding the high-level plenary for three days.

12. The General Assembly decided to hold the high-level meeting “at the commencement” of its 60th session. Given that the 60th session of the General Assembly will start on 13 September 2005, the Assembly may wish to consider holding the high-level plenary from Wednesday 14 September through Friday 16 September 2005.

13. The General Debate, which the General Assembly may wish to hold as usual, would then commence on Tuesday 20 September.

3. Structure and format

14. The facilitators indicated that the majority of delegations preferred a combination of plenary meetings and interactive sessions as was the case at the Millennium Summit. The Millennium Summit consisted of three days of plenary meetings, with two meetings on each day. During these three days, four roundtables took place.

15. The General Assembly may wish to follow the format and structure of the Millennium Summit and hold plenary meetings and four interactive roundtables.

16. Regarding the themes for the roundtables, the General Assembly may wish to consider two options. Each roundtable could cover the entire agenda of the Summit, which would repeat the practice of the Millennium Summit. This would have the advantage of allowing an integrated view and highlighting the interlinkages among the different issues under consideration.

17. The second option would be for the Assembly to assign specific themes to the different roundtables. This would allow for a more focused discussion with greater depth on specific aspects of the issues under consideration.

4. Participation

18. General Assembly Resolution A/RES/58/291 indicates that the meeting should take place at the level of Heads of State and Government. I strongly support that decision and encourage all Member States to participate at the highest level in the summit.

19. With regard to observer delegations, the General Assembly may wish to consider following the established practise of the General Assembly.

20. For the Millennium Summit, the General Assembly decided to invite a co-chair of the Millennium Forum, the civil society event that took place in May 2000, and the President of the Conference of Presiding Officers of National Parliaments to address the plenary of the Summit. The General Assembly may wish to follow a similar pattern for the high-level plenary in 2005.

21. For security reasons and space limitations within the United Nations building, broader participation of civil society is unfortunately not possible. However, I believe that civil society can make a valuable contribution to the preparatory process, both in terms of substantive contributions and in terms of creating awareness on the issues. The General Assembly, therefore, may wish to consider organizing hearings with civil society organizations before the high-level meeting in June 2005 in June 2005.

22. I had alluded to these hearings in my report in response to the report of the Panel on United Nations-Civil society relations (A/59/354). In it, I suggested that the General Assembly convene a two-day, informal, interactive hearing with NGOs before the opening of the Assembly each year. The comprehensive, five-year review of the Millennium Declaration would be an excellent opportunity to try out this suggestion.

5. Preparatory process

23. To prepare for an effective summit, the preparatory process would need to adhere to the following general principles. First, the process has to be open, inclusive and transparent. Second, it needs to bring together various contributions and produce a single integrated package of decisions to be presented to the high-level plenary. Third, the process needs to be flexible and efficient, making use of existing meetings and mechanisms as much as possible. And, last, but not least, given the importance and scope of the agenda, the preparatory process needs to be led with a view to achieving consensus and results. In view of the importance of the issues, Member States may wish to involve Ministers at the appropriate time.

24. For these reasons, the President of the General Assembly, in consultations with Member States, may wish to designate a dedicated, small "Steering Group" of countries consisting of representatives from all regions. The Steering Group would help the President guide the preparatory process. It is important that the Member States designate officials that are ready to devote a considerable amount of time to this process.

25. It would be important to have reached decisions on the timing and duration during the main session of the 59th General Assembly. It would also be preferable if decisions on the structure and format of the high-level plenary were reached before I present my report on the implementation of the Millennium Declaration in March 2005. An early decision on these organizational issues would leave sufficient time for Member States and the Secretariat to make the necessary organizational arrangements for the high-level plenary and allow Member States to focus on the substance of the high-level plenary once they have received my report.

6. High-level dialogue of the General Assembly on Financing for Development

26. In resolution A/RES/58/230, the General Assembly decided to hold the bi-annual High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development at the ministerial level in 2005. It also decided to set the time and modalities of the High-level Dialogue at the 59th session, taking into account other major events. I see great merit in holding this Dialogue before the summit so that it can provide an input into the preparatory process.

27. The High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development should take place at the Ministerial level and include Ministers responsible for various portfolios, including finance, trade and development, and deliver a concrete set of recommendations to the preparatory process.

28. There are several options regarding the timing of the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development. In chronological order, the first option would be to hold the High-level Dialogue in April 2005, for example immediately after the ECOSOC dialogue with the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization. This might increase high-level participation from Ministers who will be attending the meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions on 16-17 April 2005 in Washington D.C. However, a High-level Dialogue in April might be too early to have a decisive impact on the preparatory process of the high-level plenary.

29. The second option would be to hold the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in late June or early July 2005, immediately before the High-level Segment of the main ECOSOC meeting, which takes place in Geneva. This option would also enhance attendance at the ministerial level by the back-to-back timing of the two high-level meetings. It would also allow the Dialogue to provide a timely and concrete input to the preparatory process of the high-level plenary.

30. The third option would be to hold the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development immediately before the high-level plenary, possibly on Monday 12 and Tuesday 13 September 2005. However, high-level participation in the High-level Dialogue might be difficult, given that ministers will be traveling to attend the meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions on 24-25 September 2005 in Washington D.C.

31. The timing in late June or early July appears to be optimal for the High-level Dialogue to provide an input to the preparatory process as April would be too early and September too late. The General Assembly, therefore, may consider holding the High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development in late June or early July in Geneva.

7. Conclusion

32. As I already observed above, next September's summit will be an event of decisive importance. The decisions to be taken there may determine the whole future of the United Nations. Even more important, they offer us our best – perhaps our only – chance to ensure a safer, more just and more prosperous world in this new century, not only for our own sakes but for those of our children and grandchildren. That is what I meant when I told the Assembly last year that “we are at a fork in the road”. We must grasp this opportunity, and address head on the challenges that we face.

33. Therefore, I cannot too strongly urge Member States to take an active and positive interest in the issues before the summit. Indeed, I urge them to engage in the preparations for it at the highest level of Government, with an unshakeable determination to reach agreement on decisions that will truly fulfil the aims of the Millennium Declaration, giving

us a stronger and more effective United Nations as an instrument for achieving a better and safer world. Unquestionably, this is an ambitious agenda, but I have no doubt that it is feasible, if Member States have the will to do it. The weak, the vulnerable and the insecure citizens of this world look to this Organization for help and for protection. Let us not disappoint them.