2009 ECOSOC High-Level Segment

High-Level Policy Dialogue with the International Financial and Trade Institutions on Current Developments in the World Economy

Informal summary

Monday, 6th July 2009, 3 – 5 pm

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) engaged in a high-level policy dialogue with the representatives of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UN Conference on Trade and Development, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organization during its high-level segment in Geneva on 6 July. The Director General of the International Labour Organization made a presentation on the “Global Jobs Pact” adopted at the 98th International Labour Conference, which intends to promote a job-intensive recovery from crisis, drawing on the decent work agenda and to shape a pattern for sustainable growth.

H.E. Ms. Sylvie Lucas, President of ECOSOC stressed that the current economic crisis has meant loss of jobs, increase in poverty, declining government revenues and restricted access to development finance. Countries will thus be hard pressed to make the investments necessary to achieve the MDGs. The drop in spending may cause setbacks in the hard-won gains made towards the MDGs. The financial and economic crises could jeopardize future progress.

One very clear lesson emerging from the events of the recent months is that sustained economic growth is the bedrock for the achievement of the MDGs. Our key challenge therefore is to put the global economy back on track, and to ensure that actions and responses to the crisis are commensurate with its scale, depth and urgency, adequately financed, promptly implemented, and appropriately coordinated.

Mr. Sha Zukang, Under-Secretary-General, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) emphasized that the crisis will continue to hit developing countries through several channels of transmission, from tighter conditions for international financing to higher costs of borrowing, a sharp fall in global trade, declining remittances and a possible fall in aid flows. Moreover, developing countries face a reduction in infrastructure investment, drop in social spending, increasing costs of achieving the MDGs and renewed external debt problems. Most of the HIPC countries and one third of the countries in sub-Saharan Africa are already at great risk of debt distress.

Significant steps have been taken in response to the crisis, which include fixing the financial system, unprecedented fiscal stimulus packages, and massive availability of new international liquidity. There is now an agenda for reform of financial regulatory frameworks and of the international financial institutions. Yet, much more concerted international action will be needed to overcome the crisis and its most potentially devastating effects, especially on development and developing countries.

- More fiscal stimulus and closer international coordination of the stimulus packages. This would help to reduce any leakage effects of fiscal spending measures and to enable a more comprehensive, long-term approach to economic policy making.

- Fiscal stimulus should work for all. At present, 80 % of the stimulus is concentrated in developed countries, while many developing countries lack the fiscal space to counteract the consequences of the crisis. More of the $1.1 trillion in extra emergency financing should be made available to developing countries, lending should be stepped up substantially, and donors should accelerate the delivery on aid commitments. Furthermore, temporary moratoriums should be placed on external debt obligations of those countries in severe financial distress.

- Trade protectionism tendencies should be resisted and efforts to achieve a truly developmental outcome of the Doha Round of trade negotiations should be intensified. Developing countries' access to trade financing must be restored and the promise of Aid for Trade fulfilled.

- Enabling a continued flow of remittances. It will help economic recovery in many developing countries and for humanitarian reasons as well, we must strongly resist more limits on migration and discrimination against migrant workers.

- The world, and the developing countries in particular, is facing multiple interconnected crises but these also provide opportunities. It is imperative that we use this opportunity of new, large-scale investments – including through stimulus packages – to set our economies and our planet on a more sustainable and equitable growth path.

He stressed that the Economic and Social Council this week will focus on the realization of the goals related to public health and the broad array of issues involved. While the financial and economic crisis poses many challenges, it should also be seen as an opportunity to reform health systems, and to rethink the direction and nature of financing for health care. Hence developing an agenda for health financing means not only more money for health, but also more health for the money.

He emphasized that it is essential to ensure the affordability, accessibility and the quality of health services to the poor and most vulnerable groups. There is no one-size-fits-all policy on health care financing. Yet, countries' varied experiences do seem to suggest a general lesson: the importance of reducing reliance on out-of-pocket payments and moving toward pre-payment and pooling of funds, in order to avoid catastrophic health expenditure – and as steps toward achieving universal health coverage. Even before the onset of the crisis, high reliance on out-of-pocket payments is estimated to have pushed more than 100 million people into poverty each year. The crisis threatens to reverse hard-won progress by developing countries toward the MDGs.

At a time when ODA will become only more important for developing countries, donors need to uphold their commitments to the health sector. Where existing commitments are tied to decreasing GNI, there may still be a drop in the value of aid. Donors need to ensure that this does not happen, especially in flows to the health sector.

Mr. Sha expressed his hope that the members of ECOSOC follow up on the decisions taken at the Doha Review Conference in December last year and at the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, which took place last month in New York. The document underscored that maintaining the principle of inclusiveness in the global response to the crisis and collective understanding of its impacts was of vital importance in this regard.

Mr. Pascal Lamy, Director-General, World Trade Organization (WTO) pointed out that international trade, although one of the most regulated drivers of economic activity, has also been hit by the worst economic crisis in generations. WTO predicts that trade volumes will fall by about 10 per cent in 2009. Trade is one of the main drivers of economic activity and has always been an insurance policy and a stabilising factor for traders around the globe, in particular for many developing countries. The poorest economies around the world, which have in no way precipitated this crisis, will be the hardest hit. Prices of many of the commodities, on which these countries depend for export earnings, are falling rapidly, exacerbating the negative impact of this global recession. The IMF warns that low income countries could face deterioration in the balance of payments of roughly $165 billion.

There are several reasons for this fall in trade volume. Firstly, while protectionism is a real threat, and so far there is no evidence of high intensity protectionism, several trade restrictive measures have indeed been taken by some countries in the form of tariffs, new non-tariff measures, anti-dumping and countervailing actions that exceed the number of trade opening measures. There are also bail-out packages and other rescue measures that are adopted to help specific industries. But these measures fall within WTO rules and so far they have not triggered a tit-for-tat chain reaction. But WTO remains vigilant as requested by its members. Three reports on such measures have been put forward by the WTO.

Secondly, there was a sharp reduction in available trade finance. The G20 has made a strong start in addressing this problem by pledging $250 million to support trade finance through export credit agencies and multilateral development banks. But the contraction of trade credit is part of the broader liquidity crisis and developing countries in particular report ongoing difficulties in obtaining the bank credits they need to finance transactions. He stressed that it was important that WTO monitors developments in this sector using its networks of banks, governments and international institutions.

Mr. Lamy stressed that the most significant step that the WTO could take to bolster the world economy is to conclude the Doha round. This would not require trillions of dollars, rather, renewed political attention and energy. Moreover, in order to fully reap the benefits of an open trading system, poorer countries need an accompanying Aid for Trade package to address their supply side constraints. The WTO is happy to see a 10 per cent annual increase in funds committed to that end. Developing countries have also begun to mainstream trade into their development strategies; the Enhanced Integrated Framework for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) is now up and running and the first two projects have been launched in Sierra Leone and Yemen.

While the crisis has hit all countries, we have to make sure that pledges and commitments are met. It is essential that we envision an opportunity in this crisis as well. The crisis presents a unique opportunity to reform the trading system into a more equitable one and, a trading system that is relevant to the commercial concerns of the 21st century.

Mr. Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), highlighted the dangers arising for developing countries from the current crisis and outlined a potential exit strategy from the present economic circumstances.

Consequences of the economic crisis for developing countries are twofold: Decline in trade and related flows and Decline in capital flows.

Decline in trade and related flows: Increasing openness of the international economic system not only facilitated economic growth across countries and regions but has also been the channel for the transmission of falling demand - the main second-round effect of the crisis affecting developing countries. As a consequence, UNCTAD predicts that global trade will fall by 6-8 per cent this year, affecting developing economies as a whole, as exports represent more than 50 per cent of GDP. In central Africa, this percentage exceeds 130 per cent as opposed to just 10 per cent in the US. Only larger emerging economies like China and India will be in a position to insulate themselves from the fall in trade, owing to the size of their internal markets and their unilateral policies on capital accounts and banking regulation, which have so far kept GDP relatively buoyant.

Other trade related flows have also declined as a result of the crisis. For example, credit for trade transactions, has contracted although the $250 billion made available for trade financing by the G20 may ease some of the immediate constraints. There has also been a steady decline in freight and shipping. Port traffic is down by 15 -25 % in the world's largest container ports, though a slight improvement in airfreight volume was reported this month.

Mr. Panitchpakdi cautioned that these encouraging signs in maritime transport, along with modest increases in stock markets, stronger account positions for some banks, accompanied by a slowdown in the decline of property prices in some developed economies have led to pronouncements of "green shoots", with the implication that economic recovery is within sight. Such pronouncements, according to UNCTAD are premature and alarming as they neither reflect the global picture, nor the "real economy".

He urged the international economy to survey the real economy as a whole. For example, global employment will rise by an estimated 50 million this year. In the US, half a million people lost their jobs in the month of June alone. If this trend continues, the country's unemployment will rise to an unprecedented level in recent history. The situation is much worse in developing countries, where the capacity for providing social safety net measures is limited and more than 4 million people are falling into hunger each week.

Decline in capital flows: Under normal circumstances, most of the developing countries supplement their narrow resource base with funds obtained from external sources, including development aid, concessional loans, FDI flows, remittances and export revenue. Unfortunately, the global recession has led to a cut back on all these sources of capital. For example, recent data from UNCTAD indicate that FDI flows fell by 54 per cent in the first quarter of 2009, compared to the same period last year and most of this decline can be attributed to developing countries This will damage countries' ability to upgrade their technological and productive capacities and generate employment.

This may also affect the investment plans of transnational corporations through a possible rise in protectionism by home-country governments. UNCTAD, along with the WTO and the OECD, is monitoring changes in their investment policies and their impact on investment flows. UNCTAD was happy to report that to date, many of the investment measures taken by home and host countries in response to the crisis are mostly non-discriminatory in nature unlike the rising protectionist trends in trade. He cautioned that this trend could change.

In addition to private capital flows, such as FDI and migrant remittances, ODA remains one of the most important sources of income and investment for many developing countries. Often, for many low-income countries, this is the main source (and in some cases, the only source) of financing needed to support a variety of economic activity such as develop infrastructure and supporting public sector programmes. Declining aid flows during the crisis therefore is a major concern, as this could result in the loss of hard earned productive and exporting capacities in many low-income countries. UNCTAD's analysis of previous banking crises suggests that aid budgets can fall by 30 per cent in the five years following a crisis; other studies put the figure between 10 and 60 per cent.

With insufficient aid, many countries may find it difficult to maintain the level of their imports and meet their debt service obligations. The debt burden for many countries already stands at over 40 per cent of GDP, and for more than half the LDCs, it is 100-150 per cent of GDP. UNCTAD has recently called for a debt moratorium for poorer countries, similar to the one introduced after the Asian Tsunami and Hurricane Mitch. This would potentially benefit all countries, as scarce foreign exchange earnings could be used to finance badly needed imports instead of servicing debt.

A potential exit strategy: Mr. Panitchpakdi identified the following key elements for a potential exit strategy in an increasingly interdependent world with its fast-changing national, regional and international economic systems.

"Policy diversity" or heterodoxy: There is a need for pragmatic and diverse policies to govern the respective role of the State and the market, the balance between regulation and deregulation, and the mix between fiscal and monetary policies and so on. Single policy prescriptions ("one size fits all" policies) for all countries are inadequate, even dangerous and that the so-called market efficiency cannot on its own correct the gross imbalances that precipitated the current crisis. In this regard, UNCTAD applauded the IMF's decision to relax ex-ante lending criteria and the G20's decision to make $250 billion worth of SDRs available through the Fund. This provision of liquidity will give developing countries access to cheaper credit and possibly assist them with the necessary countercyclical stimulus to their economies ad with social protection.

An inclusive approach: A workable exit strategy requires not just a global response, but also an inclusive approach, one that includes those who are suffering as a result of the crisis, but did not contribute to it. This requires a diversity of representation in the international economic governance structure. In this context current efforts to reform international institutions like the IMF and World Bank and to create a more inclusive financial stability board to replace the Financial Stability Forum are commendable.

In concluding, Mr. Panitchpakdi emphasized that some of the excesses that led to today's crisis could have been prevented, for example by a regulatory framework based on a clear understanding of the underlying mechanism. This would avoid the boom and bust cycles that we face repeatedly. Regulation in one area-trade is rendered ineffective if another interconnected system-finance is left unregulated. It is generally accepted that trade rules are necessary to make relations between trading partners fair. They also encourage stability through predictability and are non-discriminatory and transparent. Similarly, principles that govern trade should be applied to finance—for example with regard to the management of exchange rates and destabilizing short term financial flows. Exchange rate volatility and misalignment can have a far more distorting effect than tariffs. More importantly, it is imperative that there is a multilateral approach to the management of the international financial system.

Mr. Maurilo Portugal, Deputy Managing Director, International Monetary Fund (IMF) focused on the following six areas.

Overview of Global Economic Prospects: The updated Fund's projections for global growth for 2009-10 will reflect a modest improvement for 2010. This reflects improving prospects in emerging Asia, especially China and India, and the United States. However, the global economic recovery will be fragile, with risks tilted to the downside. Thus timing and pace of a durable recovery remain uncertain. Progress in returning the financial sector to health will be key. Inflation is likely to remain contained and upward pressures are not on the horizon, as output gaps continue to widen.

Policy interventions have helped conditions to improve financial markets, but the situation remains far from normal. Trade and financial protectionism continue to be a concern.

Policy Challenges and Exit Strategies: The main policy priority remains restoring health of the financial sector. Macroeconomic policies need also to stay supportive, but start preparing the ground for an orderly unwinding of extraordinary levels of public intervention. At the same time, there has to be a rebalancing of global demand from key current account deficit to surplus countries.

This will require coherent sequencing and clear communications by both fiscal and monetary authorities. Multilateral coordination is likely to be needed to mitigate cross border distortions during exit.

Both private and public savings will need to rise in the advanced economies for a sustained period to repair damage to balance sheets. Economies reliant on export-led growth in recent years need to adjust policies and become more supportive of domestic private demand. Greater exchange rate flexibility in some economies could also support the rebalancing of domestic and external sources of growth.

Labour market reforms to enhance flexibility and mobility would help speed the reduction in employment, while reforms in product and services markets to strengthen competition and productivity could help mitigate the effects of tighter investment financing.

IMF's Response to the Crisis: IMF has substantially increased lending, reformed and increased the flexibility of the lending framework, and undertaken a major advocacy effort to expand its financial resources, so as to enable it to respond to the strong increase in the demand for lending.

The IMF has introduced a quick-disbursing facility without ex-post conditionality for strong performing countries that borrow in international capital markets. For low-income countries, concessional lending is being significantly increased, debt relief initiatives are being continued, and lending policies are being reformed to allow for more flexible, short-term, precautionary and emergency financial assistance.

Programme design in IMF's financial assistance has also been adapted to the current global crisis circumstances. Recent programmes in crisis-affected countries provide for higher social spending, strengthening social safety nets, and better targeting of existing social protection systems.

The IMF has also given policy advice which focuses on two main areas: financial sector policies to stabilize the financial sector and re-establish the flow of credit in the economy; and a relaxation of monetary and fiscal policies, where possible, to help sustain aggregate demand. The IMF has recommended that all countries in a position to do so should engage to the extent possible in counter-cyclical measures.

Lessons for the Future of the International Financial System: Critical areas for reform of the international financial architecture have been identified. One of the priority areas is reform of the system of financial regulation and supervision in advanced countries to ensure that regulation and supervision cover all potential sources of systemic risk arising from institutions, markets and products that are systemic. The IMF has begun working with the Bank for International Settlements as well as the Financial Stability Board in this regard.

Equally important is to effectively oversee cross-border transactions, with careful international coordination of national regulation, oversight and resolution frameworks.

Another priority with respect to improving the international financial architecture is to improve and make more effective the international surveillance of countries' economic and financial policies and of the global economy. Surveillance must identify better sources of systemic risk, assess macro-financial linkages and spill-over effects across countries.

Governance Reforms: The crisis prompted several pleas towards reform of international economic governance, including governance of international financial institutions. The IMF supports efforts to strengthen global governance of international financial institutions, which should be based on three important principles: pragmatism, specialization and division of labour, and effective institutional cooperation amongst international organizations.

Reforming the governance of the IMF: IMF is accelerating the implementation of a package of reforms adopted in April 2008. These reforms include rebalancing of the IMF's quota shares to better reflect the relative positions of countries in the evolving world economy, and to give greater weight to the more dynamic emerging market economies. Ideas are also being considered for achieving a more interactive and effective participation of ministers and governors in providing strategic direction on key issues.

Ms. Joy Phumaphi, Vice President, Human Development Network, World Bank focused largely on two main issues. First, the global credit crunch and its impact on demand: Ms. Phumaphi explained that the credit crunch in combination with uncertainty about future demand has delayed investment and severely reduced demand for durable goods. As a result, global trade and output has plummeted; world industrial production has fallen 15 per cent over the six months since the financial crisis intensified. While GDP growth in developing countries is expected to remain positive this year, the reality is that when China and India are omitted, GDP in the remaining developing countries is projected to fall 1.6 per cent. The slowdown in economic growth and much weaker capital flows has intensified financing pressures on many developing countries, with their overall financing gap viewed to range from $350 to $365 billion in 2009.

Second, the impact of the financial crisis on low income countries: While initially cushioned from the direct impact of the financial crisis, low-income developing countries are now being affected as the crisis impacts have spread through other channels. World Bank projections indicate that that net private capital flows will not be enough to meet the external financing needs of many low-income countries, while the prospects for large increases in other sources of financing are poor. For instance, the bulk of new commitments by international financial institutions (IFIs) will go to middle-income countries; and remittance flows to low-income countries are projected to fall by 5 per cent in 2009. Therefore, without substantial increases in official finance, many low-income countries may be confronted with serious implications for their long-term development and poverty reduction.

While preliminary data from the OECD DAC suggest total official development assistance from DAC members rose to a record of $120 billion in 2008, we need to strive much more during this period of global economic downturn to support to support growth and protect the poor and vulnerable. This is imperative since projected economic growth in developing countries is now on average only about a third of that forecast before the onset of the financial crisis. Past trends show that a decline in the average GDP growth rate in developing countries by one percentage point can trap as many as 20 million more people in extreme poverty.

Experience from the East Asia crisis and others has shown that failure to protect existing infrastructure during economic downturns can be very costly resulting in substantially higher capital spending in the longer term. Also, while progress towards the MDGs will likely resume when growth recovers, achievement of the goals will be further delayed and long-run implications of the human development outcomes may be more severe than those observed in the short run. Moreover, many developing countries remain dependent on aid flows to expand spending on social services, including health especially to the poorest and the most vulnerable. It is therefore crucial that donor countries remain cognizant of this fact and respond to the needs of the poor countries to prevent a reversal of their hard won gains in development. Donors also need to demonstrate that they are accountable for the substantial pledges of new aid made during the recent G8 summits. At the same time they should embrace greater policy coherence and coordination, better alignment and harmonization in order to equip countries to strategically manage resources, especially during these difficult times in the global economy.

In charting the course ahead, policy makers must therefore consider three priorities, namely: (i) following up on the G20's promise to restore domestic lending and the international flow of capital; (ii) addressing the external financing needs of emerging market sovereign and corporate borrowers; (iii) and reaffirming pre-existing aid commitments and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

For its part, the World Bank has stepped up its help to middle and low-income countries to help them navigate their way through the worst of the global crisis. It has committed $58.8 billion in fiscal year 2009 to help countries struggling amid the global economic crisis, a 54 percent increase over the previous fiscal year and a record high for the global development institution.

Juan Somavia, Director-General, International Labour Organization, presented the 'Global Jobs Pact', which was unanimously adopted two weeks ago by the tripartite International Labour Conference after negotiations by national representatives of governments, business and trade unions of the member countries of the ILO. The Global Jobs Pact is an urgent call to put employment and social protection at the heart of recovery policies.

The Global Jobs Pact is the productive response of the real economy actors to the excesses and mismanagement of the financial economy that underlies this crisis. The Global Jobs Pact proposes actions that can be carried out immediately nationally and internationally. The central objective is to shorten the usual lag time of several long years between growth recovery and employment recovery.

Mr. Somavia stressed that given the current situation, unemployment will continue to grow into 2010 and up to 50 million jobs this year will be lost. Historical data and experience of past crises point to a 4 to 5 year lag time between growth and employment recovery. Therefore, it is crucial to act decisively immediately or else we will experience a potential jobs crisis of between 6 to 8 years from now.

Salient features of the Pact:

1. It is a collective policy commitment by ILO's tripartite constituency put at the service of governments and international policy coherence to make employment creation and social protection

a central element of all economic and social policies, and of extraordinary stimulus and recovery packages, underpinned by the tool of social dialogue and the respect of rights at work;

2. A portfolio of tried and tested policies, available to all parties wanting to adopt them. It is a set of practical policy options to choose from, for national and international decision-making. Adopted in a comprehensive and coordinated fashion, these policies can reduce social tensions, protect people in the downturn, stimulate investment and aggregate demand and prepare the growth of tomorrow;

3. The Pact is a productive vision to tackle the crisis through investment and enterprise promotion. For this we need a financial system that is well regulated, manages risks appropriately and is at the service of the real economy so it can create sustainable enterprises and decent work.

4. It is an ILO contribution to stronger policy convergence and coherence, in the decisions taken by the governance bodies of the UN System, with the Bretton Woods Institutions (BWIs), regional organizations and banks. It will also help respond to the important request of G20 countries, which called on the ILO to work with other relevant organizations and to assess the actions taken and those required for the future on employment and social protection issues. ILO has a similar mandate from the Chief Executives Board (CEB) of the United Nations.

5. Finally, the Pact is not an international legal obligation. It is an agreement on common policy approaches – eventually leading to national and international programmes and stronger multilateral coordination. It gives added support to the Toolkit to mainstream employment and Decent Work approved two years ago.

On resources, Mr. Somavia pointed out that it is not about how much more governments may need to spend, but how they concentrate policies on the issues that people care for. Each country will have to decide on the amount of resources to put away in a fiscally responsible way. At the same time, BWIs, and the United Nations system must play a reinforcing role. It will be essential to maintain development cooperation commitments and provide additional concessional credit lines to enable Africa and least developed countries and countries without the fiscal space to cushion the crisis and apply these policies as called for in the recent GA statement.

The Global Jobs Pact identifies several key follow-up areas where an active system-wide response is needed. These include:

- Moving forward in tandem with the nine joint initiatives on the crisis, approved by the CEB under the leadership of the Secretariat-General, the Global Job Pact being one of them;
- Further strengthening country coordination on job creation through UNDAF;
- Developing cross-system collaboration on key policy issues, eg. Social protection floor, green jobs, employment-intensive infrastructure investment, food security and others;
- Facilitating intergovernmental policy coordination through the General Assembly, ECOSOC, G8 and G20 and regional bodies such as EU, AU, ASEAN, OAS, Arab League, Islamic Conference.

Comments from the floor:

G77 and China pointed out that the recently concluded UN Conference on Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development should be a central point of reference for the discussions on policy issues pertaining to the crisis. The outcome document expresses the concerns shared by Member States on the adverse impact of the crisis on development. The outcome document recognizes that a lot more needed to be done. The G77 pointed out that many developing countries lack the policy and fiscal space to implement countercyclical measures that may be necessary to combat the effects of the crisis and ensure economic recovery. Calling for reform of the international economic financial system and architecture, the G77 believed that the unique perspectives and representativeness of the UN is critical for the legitimacy of its reform.

Accordingly, it called for enhanced policy cooperation, coordination and coherence between the UN, the BWIs and the WTO. In order to follow-up on the issues contained in the outcome document of the Conference, the G77 and China is fully committed to the establishment of an ad hoc working group of the General Assembly. While lending its support to the outcome document of the UN Conference of June 2009, **Brazil** called for improving on the Monterrey and Doha follow-up mechanisms, including by adopting during this ECOSOC substantive session an enhanced mechanism for coordination and dialogue between the Council and the BWIs. **Sweden on behalf of the European Union (EU)** stated that the UN Conference also brought coherence to the currently diverse processes and initiatives that are being established around the world at the national, regional and global levels.

Emphasizing the responsibility and ownership of partner countries for their own development, the **EU** stated that it will step up support for their efforts to mobilize domestic resources for development including through improving public financial management. They will also support developing countries in creating an enabling business environment in order to attract foreign investment. The EU will remain at the forefront in promoting free trade and increased market access for developing countries. The EU stressed that a rapid and ambitious conclusion of the Doha round was instrumental in this regard.