

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Marjatta Rasi
Permanent Representative of Finland to the United Nations
and President of Economic and Social Council
to the Security Council meeting on Complex Crises and United Nations Response

New York, 28 May 2004

Mr. President,

It is an honour for me to participate in this Security Council meeting on complex crises and United Nations response.

I welcome today's debate on complex crises, which continues and consolidates the Security Council's debates held over the past years focusing on individual aspects of complex crises and international response. Complex crises necessitate collaborative responses in which the various organs of the United Nations have a complementary role.

Recently the most important contribution of the Economic and Social Council to the response by the UN to countries in crisis is its involvement in African countries emerging from conflicts. This involvement materialized with the creation of Ad Hoc Advisory Groups on Guinea-Bissau and Burundi, whose mandate is to examine the humanitarian and economic needs of the countries in question, review international support programmes and provide advice on their effectiveness as well as to make recommendations for a long-term programme of support based on a comprehensive approach to peace and stability.

The Economic and Social Council has started to assess the work of these Groups, in preparation for a debate to be held at the substantive session of the Council in July. The discussions held so far clearly highlighted the relevance and usefulness of the Groups as mechanisms to promote a comprehensive approach to peace and development and mobilize support to these countries to avoid their relapse into conflict. Although the Groups are mandated to work on countries emerging from conflicts, the lessons learned from their work are also relevant to other crisis situations, as what is at stake here is to ensure a coordinated approach between major stakeholders and a proper consideration of the multiplicity of causes behind a conflict.

Mr. President,

The ECOSOC Advisory Groups have fostered a coordinated approach to the situation in Guinea-Bissau and Burundi within the UN system at large, namely the UN Secretariat and its political, economic and social, and humanitarian branches, the Heads of the UN political offices in the countries concerned, the UNDP both at Headquarters and at the field level and the funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the UN. The Groups had to rely on them all to have a clear picture of the situation, make policy recommendations and propose mechanisms to support these countries. By doing so, the intergovernmental process has advocated and pushed for greater coherence in the work of the UN system. ECOSOC, as an open forum involving UN agencies, civil society and increasingly the private sector, is in a unique position for this task.

In addition, the ECOSOC Groups have engaged in close interaction with the Bretton Woods Institutions, a major aspect of the evolution of the work of the UN in the economic and social fields. Working relations between ECOSOC and the Institutions are a reality today in the Financing for Development Process and in the debates on sustainable development. They remain less systematic in the security and political fields and could be strengthened so that Bretton Woods Institutions' analysis and capacity of action be fully used in synergy with UN efforts. The role of these Institutions in the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration of ex-combatants, as it is the case in Burundi, also weighs for stronger ties between us.

Mr. President,

To ensure coherence, these initiatives by ECOSOC must be linked to the work of the Security Council. I am pleased, Mr. President, that our respective bodies interact in a more frequent and coherent way, as illustrated by the reference to the ECOSOC Groups in the Security Council's Presidential Statements on issues of common concern. We must not lose this progress through which our two Councils with their respective roles and responsibilities under the Charter, can make the comprehensive approach to peace and development that the UN system has called for, a reality.

Mr. President,

The UN Development Group / UN Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs Working Group on Transition, established by ECOSOC in response to the Secretary General's report on "Strengthening the UN" in 2002, recently submitted its report. The report on transition issues is based on experience from very different countries. It reflects a number of variations of transition and reveals clearly the problems in the system wide response. Key findings of the report, for which we now need to find concrete solutions, include the following:

Humanitarian assistance, rehabilitation, recovery and reconstruction can and will overlap. These actions must often be accompanied by continuous crisis mitigation and prevention to avoid setbacks. Peacekeeping and security must be part of the coherent approach.

Ownership at central government level and local level in the affected country is essential. As the responsibility rests with the country itself, capacity-building, participatory approach and strengthening of the decision making are key elements to real transition. Cross-cutting issues of gender and human rights must be taken into account in all planning and action.

Questions related to justice and the rule of law issues are often at the core of conflicts and their importance is becoming increasingly recognized in planning the response of the international community to various crisis situations. As addressing issues related to the rule of law is necessary throughout the conflict cycle, developing an effective response by the UN system to the challenges posed by complex crisis situations would benefit from increased cooperation between our respective bodies and throughout the UN system.

Adequate, flexible and sustained funding is required. There is important discussion going on regarding the external donors and conflict related assistance and this will be surely reflected in the various segments of ECOSOC as well.

Mr. President,

In concluding, I would like to draw your attention on the upcoming ECOSOC event on 12 July, as part of the ECOSOC substantive session, on the transition from relief to development. This event is a significant start and the first initiative of its kind at the intergovernmental level. It deserves an inclusive follow-up in some form. I trust that the debates and outcomes will be of great relevance also to the Security Council, as they will contribute to improved UN interventions in this critical phase of crisis situations.

Thank you, Mr. President

