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**TO THE 43RD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR SOCIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

9 February 2005

Development and the social progress of individuals and societies have been inextricably intertwined at the very foundations of the United Nations Charter. The long and fertile path followed by Member States since the early years has been continuously strengthened through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenants on Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the outcomes and agreements adopted by the international conferences organized by the United Nations.

Central to these values, principles and goals are equality of rights, conditions and opportunities, which refer broadly to the ways in which people are able to participate in society as citizens, to exercise their entitlement to resources, and their ability to contribute to the well being of themselves, their families and their communities. These core values embody the policy framework and were further brought to the forefront of the international development agenda when the international community decided to convene the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen in 1995.

The struggle for social development has been going on for centuries, and has continuously enlarged the prospects for equity and equality in human relations. Copenhagen was neither the starting point nor the final destination of social development.

What was unique to the Summit was the political will mustered by all governments to give an integral treatment to the social challenges of development, which until then had often been dealt with in a sectoral fashion. Even if the understanding that social development was much more than the aggregate result of social policies was not new, the Summit enshrined this framework in international relations and multilateral decisions.

Nonetheless, ten years after the Social Summit, the comprehensive and demanding vision of social development agreed upon in Copenhagen and reaffirmed five years later in Geneva has yet to receive the attention it deserves. The enabling environment envisaged by the Copenhagen Declaration was conceived so as to create the conditions for people to achieve social development. The economic, political, social, legal and cultural dimensions embedded in it are especially important. The commitments on eradicating poverty, promotion of full employment and social integration were accompanied by far-reaching policy recommendations based on the axiom that the well-being of people should be the centre-piece of national and international public attention.

This people-centered approach to policy-making has not lost its relevance, but it is neglected in many quarters, and threatened by recent developments on the international scene. Its implementation ought to dominate and shape the agendas of national governments and international organizations in order to revive the spirit of the World Summit and to foster the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

Much has been said about the growing *implementation gap*, or *delivery gap*, with respect to the obstacles that still thwart progress in bringing into fruition internationally adopted decisions, and the Social Summit has not been immune to this. In reviewing the further implementation of Copenhagen and the outcome of the 24th special session of the General Assembly, it is clear that the establishment of an enabling environment for social development in line with the vision set forth at the Summit, including the availability of financial resources, remains a formidable challenge.

It is equally pertinent to recall that on an aggregate basis there has been progress, as measured by statistical indicators, in some areas of social development, including a noticeable reduction of extreme poverty and greater overall access to primary education. Nonetheless, this progress has been less than expected and has often been uneven between regions, and even more so across countries. In particular, in Sub-Saharan Africa, there has been little if any improvement, and conditions on some fronts have worsened.

Furthermore, situations of inequality have remained pervasive. This has posed considerable obstacles to attacking the structural causes of poverty and has had direct negative impacts on disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors and specific groups such as youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and displaced persons.

Overall, a ten-year review of Copenhagen reveals a mixed record. There are some positive developments, including the fact that the Summit did succeed in raising

awareness and emphasizing the importance of addressing social development issues and implementing social development policies, culminating in the inclusion of several social development objectives in the Millennium Development Goals. At the same time, many hopes and expectations have been left unfulfilled.

One of the most disquieting aspects of today's reality is that the all-encompassing approach to development as advanced by the Summit has been lost or severely weakened in the international policy-making arena. It is essential that the three core issues of the Summit –eradicating poverty, promoting full employment, and fostering social integration– continue to be central in policy decision making. Furthermore, efforts to address the root causes and manifestations of poverty must not be abandoned.

This assessment cannot be completed without an explicit recognition to the 24th special session of the General Assembly, held in Geneva from 26-30 June, 2000, to take stock of progress over the five year period since the Social Summit and to formulate policy guidelines and new initiatives to further implement the outcomes of the Summit. At Geneva, Governments reaffirmed their commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, including their determination to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration. They also adopted a number of new initiatives to further advance the social development agenda.

The Special Session called attention to the effects of globalization and rapid technological advances on social and economic growth and development, with particular

emphasis on their impact on developing countries. There was wide recognition of the need for collective action to anticipate and offset the negative social and economic consequences of globalization and to maximize its benefits for all members of society, including those with special needs. The Special Session also underscored the importance of universal and equitable access to quality education and health care for all in order to foster and develop productive human potential.

Against the background of a reduced capacity on the part of many Governments, especially those of developing countries, to raise resources through taxation in the context of the high mobility of capital flows, a number of initiatives to mobilize resources for social development at both the national and the international level were agreed upon, including further studies on innovative sources of financing and supporting Governments in establishing guidelines for generating domestic revenue for social services, social protection and social programmes.

One of the most significant contributions made by the 24th Special Session was the introduction of the goal of halving the proportion of the people living in extreme poverty by 2015. This explicitly stated goal continues to resonate strongly in the first Development Goal of the Millennium Declaration.

Finally, but no less importantly, the Special Session stressed the need to reassess market-oriented macroeconomic policies in the interest of greater employment-generation and poverty reduction. It thus called for a coherent and coordinated international strategy

on employment, supported the convening of a world employment forum by the International Labour Organization, and reaffirmed the support for existing instruments and programmes on basic worker's rights and quality-of-work issues.

All these values, principles, commitments and policy recommendations remain as valid today as in 1995 and 2000. The fact remains, today as in the 1990s, that no human being should be condemned to endure a brief or miserable life only because of his/her class, country, religious affiliation, ethnic background and gender.

Overcoming these biases requires a normative and policy approach that places human beings at the center of development, and views economic growth as a means and not as an end in itself. The ultimate goal of such an approach is to increase, protect and attain the opportunities for improving the quality of life of current and future generations.

Martin Luther King once made a direct plea to each person on earth. It was his contention that through our scientific and technological genius we had made this world a neighbourhood. Now, he maintained, through our moral and spiritual genius, we had a duty to make it a brotherhood. It is clearly within the realm of human possibilities to realize this ambition. We must do so, as individuals, as citizens, and as national leaders. We should thus seize every opportunity, including this 43rd Session of the Commission for Social Development, to take bold and decisive actions to reverse the negative trends of the decade since Copenhagen. The situation of the world today requires no less than that from world

leaders, notably if we remain committed to fostering social integration and thus preventing the crystallization of segmented societies that would inevitably lead to more social conflict.

The tenth anniversary of the Social Summit in effect launches this crucial year of 2005, in which the international community has before it the task of revitalizing the United Nations. This task is guided by the vision of San Francisco as well as of the Millennium Declaration, at the heart of which are three aspirations dear to humanity: peace, human rights and development. You have, before you, Mr. Chairman, the challenge of placing once again the goals of Copenhagen at the centre of the *raison d'être* of the United Nations. Allow me thus to extend to you and members of the Bureau and the Commission my best wishes as you embark on the work of this very special and important session.