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**TO THE CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM**  
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Let me thank you for the opportunity to address this Civil Society Forum, organized on the occasion of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Commission for Social Development.

At the outset, I must congratulate the organizers on the title of the Forum, **“Reclaiming Copenhagen”**. This sends a very powerful message, particularly in the context of the ten-year review of the World Summit for Social Development.

When the United Nations decided ten years ago to hold its first World Summit for Social Development at Copenhagen, Member States raised hopes and expectations and made important and far-reaching commitments for the improvement of the human condition. The vision of Copenhagen continues to shine with distinct clarity a decade after it was adopted by the members of the United Nations.

Today, as in the mid-1990s, 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 puts human beings at the centre of development, one that considers 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 opportunities for improving the quality of life of current and future generations.

Subscribing to the notion that human beings are at the centre of development requires a multi-faceted approach to development. It should be socially sustainable by aiming to reduce poverty and inequality by promoting social justice. It should be culturally sustainable by conserving values, practices and symbols of identity that determine social cohesion and national identity through time. It should be politically sustainable by deepening democracy, transparency and accountability, thereby guaranteeing access and participation of all sectors of society to public decision-making. And, finally, it should be environmentally sustainable in relation to the access and use of natural resources and to the preservation of biodiversity.

This multi-faceted approach implies that the economic objectives of growth should be subordinated to the criteria of human dignity and of improvement in the quality of peoples' lives. Unfortunately, all too often the reverse is the case. The establishment of an enabling environment for social development in line with the vision set forth at the Social Summit, including the availability of financial resources, remains a formidable challenge.

The Secretary-General's Report on the Review of the further implementation of the World Summit for Social Development and the outcome of the Twenty-fourth special

session of the General Assembly projects an overall mixed record in fostering the people-centered approach embraced in Copenhagen.

There have been some positive developments, including the fact that the Summit succeeded 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.

On the other hand, many hopes and expectations have been left unfulfilled. Situations of inequality have remained pervasive. This has posed considerable obstacles to tackling the structural causes of poverty and has had direct negative impacts for disadvantaged and vulnerable sectors and for specific groups such as youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples, migrants and displaced persons.

Moreover, it is sadly but undeniably true that the comprehensive approach to social development as advanced by the Summit has been lost or severely weakened in the international policy-making arena. The enabling environment envisaged by the Copenhagen Declaration was conceived so as to create the economic, political, social, legal and cultural conditions for people to achieve social development. The commitments on the Summit's core issues of eradicating poverty, promoting full employment and fostering social integration were accompanied by far-reaching policy recommendations based on the conviction that the well-being of people should be at the centre of national

and international public attention. Its implementation ought to dominate and shape the agendas of national Governments and international organizations in order to reclaim the spirit of the Summit and to foster the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

This week, the high-level segment of the current session of the Commission for Social Development will review and evaluate the implementation of the commitments made in Copenhagen. Seven months from now, in September, world leaders will once again gather in New York to assess the national and international progress made in achieving the goals set out in the Millennium Declaration.

These reviews, now and later this year, must be followed by actions at all levels of decision-making and involving all actors. Thus, it is our duty to ensure that the political will mustered ten years ago to put social development at the centre of the international agenda is not rendered worthless, precisely now when the world faces unprecedented levels of socio-economic disparities and social injustice.

Social development implies the continuous promotion of a more equitable distribution of opportunities, income, assets, services and power in order to achieve greater equality and equity in society. Yet, this process can only succeed if it entails the active involvement of governments, international and regional organizations, as well as a broad cross-section of civil society, including the private sector, to promote greater inclusion and participation in building more democratic and equitable societies. Even

though the Social Summit emphasized that national governments bear the primary responsibility for social development in their countries, partnerships with, and participation of, non-State actors such as NGOs, the private sector and other civil society organizations were also recognized as important to the successful implementation of policies and programmes called for by the Summit.

During the last two decades, new types of civil society organizations and non-profit groups have flourished in an environment that favoured non-State actors and emphasized forging partnerships. Their participation in national and international arenas became crucial to defend the interests of groups whose voices otherwise might never be heard. In effect, throughout the major world conferences of the 1990's, including of course the Social Summit, civil society organizations have articulated new ideas and proposals, argued, negotiated and exercised political pressure, giving birth to an unprecedented, international public space.

However, much work remains to strengthen the authority, structures and processes of institutional machinery –including the United Nations bodies concerned with the integration of economic and social development issues—if the goals of the Social Summit and those of the Millennium Declaration are to be realized. Closer working relationships are required to adequately address the interrelationships of poverty, employment and social integration, and to sufficiently strengthen the broad-based coalition of organizations as a powerful force for equity and social justice.

It is my sincere hope that meetings such as this Civil Society Forum will offer much needed insights on how to realize Copenhagen's core goals. Your views and commitment are needed to help forge the "society for all" that guarantees full participation by all its members in the decision-making process and the actual accrual of benefits of economic growth, and of social and political development. Your energies and ideas are needed to help forge a society that embraces all key issues put forward by the Social Summit, from human rights to equality, peace, human dignity and ethical and spiritual values, all elements needed to promote the betterment of the human condition.

The people-centered development envisaged in Copenhagen, which we all want to reclaim, has a number of requirements, which I am sure you will be addressing in your meeting: the proper integration of economic and social policies, notably through the relationships between macro-economic policies and social development goals; a better understanding and better management of the social dimensions and consequences of globalization; and a renewed conception of the relations between the public and the private spheres and of the role of the State, especially in the formulation and implementation of social policies.

I wish your Forum every success, and very much look forward to learning about its outcome and its presentation to the Commission tomorrow.