

16 September 2002

INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Cooperation for Social Development: The International Dimension

United Nations, New York, 16-17 October 2002

AGENDA AND PROGRAMME OF WORK

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I. INTRODUCTION TO THE FORUM

The International Forum for Social Development is an initiative of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat. Its overall theme is *Open, Societies, Open Economies: Challenges and Opportunities*. Its aim is to promote the social development of developing countries, including their participation in and shaping of the globalisation process, and thus to contribute to orient this process towards the common good. This is the second meeting of the Forum. The first was convened in February 2002 of this year to debate *Financing Global Social Development*. The Report on this first forum is available.

The present Forum will have two parts. On 16th October and morning of the 17th, there will be a closed **Seminar**, involving all the invited participants. This seminar will be followed on Thursday afternoon, 17th October, by the **Forum per se**, where participants in the Seminar will have a debate with members of delegations to the United Nations, especially representatives to the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly. The Forum will be open to all persons having access to United Nations premises.

The subject of this second International Forum for Social Development is ***Cooperation for Social Development: The International Dimension***. International cooperation is, with the maintenance of peace and security and the development of friendly relations among nations, the *raison d'être* of the United Nations. Article 1 of the Charter states that one of the "Purposes" of the organization is "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion." Undertaken through a number of institutions, agencies, programmes and funds that constitute the "international machinery" also evoked by the Charter, international cooperation is a major feature of the contemporary world.

At this Forum, the modalities, challenges and problems in achieving the multifaceted aspects of international cooperation will be debated from the perspective of the social development of the developing countries. Social development, in line with the orientations of the World Summit for Social Development held in Copenhagen in 1995, has a broad meaning and includes the various aspects of people's well-being as well as the related elements of well functioning societies and a harmonious world community.

One of the purposes of the Forum is to contribute to the work of the Commission for Social Development, a functional body of the Economic and Social Council. This Commission has on the agenda of its forty-first session, in February 2003, the item "National and international cooperation for social development."

Three themes are proposed for discussion and elaborated below:

- *What contribution does international cooperation make to the social development of developing countries?*
- *Does international cooperation help developing countries to participate in and to shape the process of globalisation while promoting universal moral principles and a plural path to social progress?*
- *From the perspective of the social development of developing countries and the overall betterment of the human condition, in which directions could international cooperation be most usefully strengthened or expanded?*

II. ANNOTATED AGENDA

Theme 1: What contribution does international cooperation make to the social development of developing countries?

Recently, the agenda of international cooperation for development, from multilateral or bilateral sources, has been dominated by the question of the eradication of poverty. The United Nations system is mobilized for the achievement of one of the objectives of the United Nations Millennium Declaration which is “to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world’s people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water.” The Earth Summit of Johannesburg added a comparable target on the question of sanitation. The international financial institutions launched in 1999 the “Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers” that low income countries - a category established by the World Bank - are to prepare and submit to these institutions as a framework for domestic policy and external cooperation and assistance. Two key concepts are first the “ownership” by developing countries of their strategies and programmes involving multilateral and bilateral agencies and donors, and second “partnerships” governments ought to establish with other governments, international organizations, organizations of the civil society, and, most of all, the private business sector.

Yet, social development is not reducible to the reduction of material poverty, however crucial and morally and politically imperative this task is. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development has four main commitments dealing respectively with the creation of an environment - national and international - enabling people to achieve social development; the eradication of poverty; the goal of full employment; and the promotion of social integration. International cooperation has many forms and objectives affecting different aspects of the situation of developing countries, and there is a wide range of international action bearing on the social development of developing countries: there are the agreements that the IMF concludes with governments facing financial difficulties; the humanitarian assistance to the victims of natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies; the technical assistance provided in a large variety of domains including human rights and public administration; the efforts to curb pandemics such as HIV-

AIDS; or the interventions of ILO, UNESCO, FAO and UNIDO in their domains of competence.

This first theme might be addressed from a variety of angles, among which:

- *Is international cooperation making a difference in reducing poverty? Is it providing income, work opportunities, incentives and assistance for domestic economic initiatives?*
- *Is international cooperation helping the development of public social services? What is its impact on education, health, housing policies?*
- *Has international cooperation an impact on inequalities, on class structures, on political institutions and processes? Is it helping the promotion of human rights?*
- *Do the policy prescriptions and recommendations that developing countries receive from the various international organizations constitute a coherent whole from the perspective of domestic social development?*
- *The expression “International cooperation for social development” is rarely used. How significant this fact is?*

Theme 2: Does international cooperation help developing countries to participate in and to shape the process of globalisation while promoting universal moral principles and a plural path to social progress?

The current process of globalisation, partly driven by the creation of world markets and facilitated by scientific and technological innovations, embeds within it a model, or a set of values delineating the contours of what constitutes a good and successful life and society. It provides a particular vision of social progress for the world. For a developing country, to “integrate”, or “join” this process, is to adopt its premises and values. But active and meaningful “participation” is more than mere “integration”. It has to be the result of a choice, hopefully democratically informed and pondered. And it has to express the ability to question the globalisation process, to enrich it, and to shape it not only in relation to one’s own interests, but also in relation to one’s perception of what it means to be part of a world community.

Thus, an effective participation in the process of globalisation requires that countries other than those leading the movement have a degree of political freedom sufficient to make informed choices and decisions. This political freedom becomes real when a government has a say in the institutions setting the terms of multilateral relations and regimes - whether in trade, finance, human rights or sustainable development - and has the capacity to negotiate on its own terms with transnational economic and financial forces. International cooperation should help developing countries reach this degree of political freedom, or autonomy in decision-making vis-à-vis the process of globalisation. Such autonomy could be considered a condition for social development.

This theme might be addressed from different perspectives, including:

- *One of the main objectives of the operational activities of the United Nations system is “capacity building”; what can be said of this approach in relation with social development in a context of an increasingly globalised world economy?*
- *It is routinely said that “developing countries have the primary responsibility for their own development”; and it is generally recognized that the current process of globalisation de-facto reduces the margin of manoeuvre of most governments; does international cooperation help addressing this apparent contradiction?*
- *International cooperation through international organizations - and bilateral agreements - has a very significant normative content, hopefully derived from the moral principles and values embodied in the Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and ranging from the manner to define and reduce poverty, to the definition of good governance and the role of market mechanisms in society; how could the participation of developing countries in the elaboration and implementation of this normative corpus be enhanced?*

Particularly for the discussion of this theme, but also in relation with the other themes, participants might wish to draw examples from the *New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)*, adopted by the Assembly of Heads of States and Government of the Organization of African Unity meeting in Lusaka in July 2001. Some of the characteristics of NEPAD will be given in the *Background Note* that will be made available to this Forum.

Theme 3: From the perspective of the social development of developing countries and the overall betterment of the human condition, in which directions could international cooperation be most usefully strengthened or expanded?

The concepts underlying international cooperation and the modalities of its implementation are inevitably affected by ideological and political developments at the world level. In the last few years, international debates and blueprints for action have placed a strong emphasis on open markets and good governance as the two crucial elements that should bring prosperity to the developing countries and to the world as a whole. Governments of developing countries are called upon to remove obstacles to the free circulation of goods, services and capital, and to create internal political conditions that respond to certain democratic norms and are attractive to national and foreign investments. International cooperation tends to concentrate on the dissemination of these ideas and related strategies, and on the lessening of human suffering in developing countries through stop-gap measures rather than through more permanent mechanisms. In international parlance, the expression “emerging markets” competes with the traditional “developing countries”, as the former denotes dynamism and opportunity and the latter stagnation and uncertainty. A better distribution of the benefits and opportunities brought by the globalisation process is a more frequently stated objective than structural and institutional reforms in the world economy, which may be necessary as a precondition

before those benefits can be widely shared. Humanitarian assistance is a more in vogue concept than the promotion of social development or social progress, which involves long-term commitments before results become apparent. The elimination of poverty, often presented as encompassing most development issues and most aspects of international cooperation for development, is a goal and target largely deprived of negotiated and enforceable international agreements that could ensure its realization. The virtues of voluntary actions through “partnerships” are heralded whereas mandatory rules are strongly resisted.

There is therefore little doubt that the traditional concept and practice of international cooperation are confronted with significant forces of change and questioning. Judging from the decline of Official Development Assistance, from the lingering debt issue, from the situation of the least developed countries, from the various forms of inequality and marginalisation that are seemingly mounting in the world, from the prevalence of various forms of violence and conflicts, from the increase of expenditure on armaments, one could even argue that international cooperation is in crisis. Is it declining together with the idea that all nations, strong and weak, have an equal claim to exert their national sovereignty”? Is the principle enounced in the Charter of the United Nations that the “international machinery” should be employed “for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples” in danger of being neglected?

This is a useful crisis rather than a decline, others would argue, as international cooperation needs an overhaul made necessary by the objective, positive and hopefully irreversible facets of the globalisation process, by the welcome decline of various forms of state idolatry and technocracy, by the recognition that the private sector and organizations of the civil society are indispensable actors on the international scene, and by the realization that development can be helped from outside but still depends largely on local initiatives and efforts.

And one can also base an assessment of the current state and desirable future of international cooperation on the notion of a universal common good, of a long term view of the features of a viable international and global community, and of the principles, values and policies that are likely to be the most conducive to a peaceful and harmonious world. There is much violence and threats of all types on the international scene, but there is also a greater understanding of the links between cooperation for the maintenance of peace, cooperation for the promotion of human rights and cooperation for development. And the word “cooperation” means both “the process of working together for the same end” and the provision of “assistance”. A new balance between the requirements of a common pursuit of mutually agreed goals and the necessary unequal relationships implied by help and assistance has to be found. There are enormous potentialities in the development of what is now called the “South-South cooperation. Ultimately, true cooperation implies the conviction that each of the protagonists has something to give and something to receive.

Relevant questions to be addressed include:

- *Should the emphasis be on greater and more secure financial transfers from the North to the South? From public and private, traditional and innovative*

- sources? Should a system of solidarity and redistributive justice at the world level be imagined?*
- *Would it be desirable, and possible, to give a renewed vigour to the traditional idea that the primary objective of international cooperation for development is to close the economic gap between developed and developing countries, in terms of living conditions, economic opportunities, capacity for sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and power to set the rules of the game in the functioning of the world economy?*
 - *Should there be more legally binding agreements and treaties linking all countries of the world in an expanded array of obligations and responsibilities? And strengthened or new international institutions to administer this body of international law? And an international body with the power to statute on conflicting rules and obligations?*
 - *Alternatively, or in a complementary manner, is the social progress of developing countries and of the world to be sought in multiple and voluntary endeavours, or partnerships, between different forces and entities with different functions and motives but some shared interests and values? Through which processes and institutions should these shared interests and values be identified?*
 - *Are there new, or neglected avenues for international cooperation for social development that ought to be discussed and promoted? Does growing de-facto interdependence demands closer linkages between the various aspects of international cooperation?*

III. PROGRAMME OF WORK

SEMINAR

(Conference Room 8, First Basement, United Nations Secretariat)

Wednesday 16 October

9.30 h.: Introductory Remarks: Mr. Nitin Desai

10. 00 - 13.00 h.: *Theme 1: Contribution of international cooperation to the social development of developing countries*

Chair: Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury

10.00 - 11.30 h.

- Prepared statements (maximum of 4 minutes each):

Mr. Reynaldo F. Bajraj
Mr. Duncan MacLaren
Mr. Adama Diarra

- Discussion

11.30 - 13.00 h.

- Prepared statements (maximum of 4 minutes each):

Ms. Supara Janchitfah

Mr. Eugen Brand
Mr. Selim Jahan

- Discussion

14.30 - 18.00 h.: Theme 2: International cooperation to help developing countries participate in and shape the process of globalisation, and promotion of universal moral principles and of a plural path to social progress

Chair: Mr. Koos Richelle

14.30 - 16.15 h.

- Prepared statements (maximum of 4 minutes each):
Mr. Jeremy Hobbs
Mr. Jacques-Chai Chomthongdi
Mr. Kasirim Nwuke
Ms. Meri Koivusalo
- Discussion

16.15 - 18.00 h.

- Prepared Statements (maximum 4 minutes each):
Mr. Dominique Peccoud
Ms. Laila Gad
Mr. Roberto Martinez Nogueira
Mr. Kwasi Botchwey
- Discussion

Thursday, 17 October

9.30 - 12.00 h.: Theme 3: Social development of developing countries and betterment of the human condition: directions for the strengthening of international cooperation

Chair: Mr. Thomas Hammarberg

9.30 - 11.00 h.

- Prepared statements (maximum 4 minutes each):
Mr. Kwame Sundaram Jomo
Ms. Nadia Auriat
Mr. Hamid Al-Rifaie
Mr. Eduardo Aninat
- Discussion

11.00 - 12.00 h.

- Prepared statements (maximum 4 minutes each):
Mr. Ignacio Ramonet
Mr. Paul Collier (invited)
Mr Tony Colman
- Discussion

FORUM

(United Nations, First Basement, Room to be announced)

Joint Informal Gathering of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly

15.00 - 18.00 h.: *Open debate on the ideas expressed during the Seminar*

Co-Chairs: Chairman of the Second Committee and Chairman of the Third Committee

15.00 - 16.00 h.: *On theme 1, contribution of international cooperation to the social development of developing countries*

- Introductions (10 minutes each): Ms. Sheena Hanley
Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury
- Debate

16.00 - 17.00 h.: *On theme 2, international cooperation, participation of developing countries in the process of globalisation, and promotion of universal moral principles and of a plural path to social progress*

- Introductions (10 minutes each): Mr. Saad Nagi
Mr. Koos Richelle
- Debate

17.00 - 18.00h.: *On theme 3, social development of developing countries, betterment of the human condition and directions for the strengthening of international cooperation*

- Introductions (10 minutes each): Mr. Abdul Magid Osman
(to be decided)
- Debate
- Conclusion of the Forum

V. PROVISIONAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Mr. Hamid Al-Rifaie, Saudi Arabia
Mr. Eduardo Aninat, International Monetary Fund
Ms. Nadia Auriat, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)
Mr. Reynaldo Bajraj, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)
Mr. Christian Balsev Olesen, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
Mr. Kwasi Botchwey, Kenya
Mr. Eugen Brand, Switzerland
Mr Tony Colman, United Kingdom
Mr. Paul Collier, World Bank (invited)
Mr. Jacques-Chai Chomthongdi, Thailand
Mr. Iftekhar Ahmed Chowdhury, Bangladesh
Mr. Adama Diarra, Mali
Ms. Laila Gad, Egypt

Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, Sweden
Ms. Sheena Hanley, Canada
Mr. Jeremy Hobbs, Australia
Mr. Selim Jahan, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Ms. Supara Janchitfah, Thailand
Mr. Kwame Sundaram Jomo, Malaysia
Ms. Meri Koivusalo, Finland
Mr. Duncan MacLaren, United Kingdom
Mr. Roberto Martinez Nogueira, Argentina
Mr. Saad Nagi, Egypt
Mr. Kasirim Nwuke, Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)
Mr. Abdul Magid Osman, Mozambique
Mr. Dominique Peccoud, International Labour Organization (ILO)
Mr. Ignacio Ramonet, Spain
Mr. Koos Richelle, European Commission
Mr. John Weeks, United Kingdom