



Report
Of the Consultative Meeting
On Regional and Global
Coordination in the
Promotion of
Social Integration

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. The overall orientation of the programme of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs is to strengthen international economic and social cooperation and to promote development in a rapidly globalizing world. The programme consolidates capacities for analytical and normative work as well as relevant advisory services and technical cooperation activities. Of special importance in this regard is the promotion of social integration policies and programmes.
2. The mandates for the programme of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs derive from the Secretariat's responsibility to provide substantive support to the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Commission for Social Development in addition to resolutions concerning international cooperation in the social field. The overall policy framework for the programme is based on the programmes and platforms of action adopted by the General Assembly.
3. The Copenhagen Programme of Action endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly in 1995 directs attention to the goal of social integration of societies. The Copenhagen Programme of Action [Chapter 4, "Social Integration"] states that the aim of social integration is to create a "society for all" in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play. It also refers to the quest for humane, stable, safe, tolerant and just societies and to the special needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.
4. Regional Commissions have been key players in social development and have addressed social integration problems in their respective regions in pursuance of global mandates as well as specific regional programmes of action and declarations in the areas of ageing, youth, disability and the family. The ability of the Regional Commissions to interact constantly with the various national authorities and civil society on development issues, uniquely place them to assess the situation and tackle emerging needs at the regional and sub-regional levels. In this regard, the Regional Commissions serve three important functions: as providers of inputs to the global work programme; as catalysts or facilitators for regional cooperation efforts in their respective geographical areas; and as a forum for articulating regional perspectives on global and regional issues, including organizing regional preparations for, and follow-up to, global conferences.
5. As the regional pillars of the United Nations, the Regional Commissions contribute to the Organization's global work programme. The Regional Commissions are an important mechanism for articulating regional perspectives on global issues as they occupy a critical niche in the institutional landscape of their respective geographical area. The Regional Commissions, as well as the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, direct their attention to ensuring that social development objectives are incorporated in areas of governmental decision-making. As such, social policy is a priority area of work for them. In this regard, the development of social programmes in the areas of ageing, youth, disability, family, intergenerational relations and conflict prevention are part of the overall ongoing priority. Moreover, the Regional Commissions are collaborating closely

with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the areas of ageing, youth, disability, conflict prevention, and the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

II. ORGANIZATION AND OTHER ASPECTS

A. The Objectives of the Meeting

6. The basic purpose of the Meeting was to develop with the Regional Commissions a focussed and coordinated approach towards social integration issues at national and regional levels encompassing topics concerning ageing, youth, disabled persons, families, intergenerational relations and conflict prevention. It is expected that cooperation between the United Nations Secretariat and Regional Commissions in this regard will contribute to essential strategic agreement between them, and the strengthening of national capabilities in the formulation and implementation of social development policies and programmes.

7. The Meeting also responds to a mandate to prepare and observe the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2004), endorsed by the United Nations General Assembly at its session in 1999 and the 2nd World Assembly on Ageing in 2002. In addition, the Meeting addresses concerns developed in the international plans of action for youth, ageing, and disability as well as a new initiative identified by the United Nations General Assembly Special Session 2001 on conflict prevention.

8. The specific objectives of the Meeting were:

- (i) provide a forum for representatives of Regional Commissions to present experiences on various critical social integration issues in their regions;
- (ii) develop a common approach for the preparations and observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in the areas of advocacy and promotion, research and information exchange; and
- (iii) develop joint positions and analytical perspectives on social integration issues to promote interaction and agreements on priority issues and policy approaches;

B. Attendance

9. The Meeting was attended by representatives of the Economic Commission for Europe, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, and Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, a representative from Department of Public Information and Regional Commissions New York Office as well as the staff of the Social Integration Branch. Please see Annex.

C. Adoption of the Agenda

10. The following agenda was adopted:
1. Social Integration: conceptual and operational frameworks at the global and regional levels.
 2. Collaboration on the preparations for and observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (2004).
 3. Collaboration with the Programme on Youth.
 4. Collaboration with the Programme on Disability: Discussion on the 4th Review and Appraisal of the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons.
 5. Conflict Prevention: Collaboration on an Expert Group Meeting on “Structural Threats to Social Integrity: Indicators for Conflict Prevention” to be held in December 2001 in New York, UN Headquarters.
 6. Collaboration with the Programme on Ageing.

D. Documentation

11. The following documentation was made available to the Consultative Meeting:
- (a) Reports of the Secretary General on the respective programmes of the Branch;
 - (b) Resource papers prepared by Meeting participants.

III. POINTS OF AGREEMENT

12. After careful consideration of the issues involved, the Meeting made the following suggestions and points of agreement:

Social Integration

- (i) With respect to overall Social Integration issues under the purview of the Regional Commissions and the Social Integration Branch, there is a need for effective coordination between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the Regional Commissions to assist Member States in articulating strategies for social integration and for socio-economic development of their societies.

- (ii) There is a need for meeting between the Regional Commissions attending and the Social Integration Branch prior to sessions of the Commission for Social Development.
- (iii) An advisory group consisting of national decision makers, academic experts, and NGOs could be established to guide activities in social development with particular reference to social integration in order to *inter alia* review major linkages between global and regional issues that can best be planned, developed and coordinated to assist Member States in the implementation of social policies and programmes.
- (iv) There should be a nominal focal person in every Regional Commission and one focal person in New York for social integration issues.
- (v) Every effort will be made to keep the Regional Commissions informed on major activities and vice-versa with the assistance of the Regional Commissions New York Office.
- (vi) The focal points for the Social Development Divisions within the Regional Commissions should meet annually for inter-regional coordination with the Chief of the Social Integration Branch of the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This should be funded bi-annually by the Social Integration Branch and every other year by the Regional Commissions.
- (vii) The final report will reflect the proceedings and points of agreement of the Consultative Meeting and will serve as a basis for follow-up action by the Regional Commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

Preparations for the observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family

Joint consultations

- (viii) Regional Commissions will hold informal consultations at the regional level with representatives of relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, regional and non-governmental organizations. The objectives of these consultations would be the exchange of information and coordination as necessary for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004.
- (ix) Statements, communications and background information to forthcoming sessions of Inter-governmental bodies beginning in 2002 will be prepared by the Programme on the Family for use by the Regional Commissions.

Advocacy and promotion

- (x) The execution of a global public information and promotional campaign in close cooperation with Department of Public Information, the Regional Commissions and the Programme on the Family was agreed upon. It was suggested that such a campaign would encompass: the active involvement of the mass media and selected sponsors; an information kit; posters in the official UN languages; press release coverage of family related meetings; a special series of programmes on the Tenth Anniversary to be produced by UN Radio; promoting the observance of the Tenth Anniversary by UNIC offices world wide.
- (xi) The Programme on the Family in cooperation with the Regional Commissions will strive to promote dialogue and consensus for furthering international cooperation on families. This would be facilitated by the appointment of focal points within each Regional Commission for the Tenth Anniversary. The Regional Commissions are encouraged to actively promote the observance of the International Day of Families (15 May) annually. This takes on added importance in light of the Tenth Anniversary of IYF. In this regard, in cooperation with the Programme on the Family, the Regional Commissions could disseminate within their respective regions informational material. The concern for the annual International Day of Families should be part of the terms of reference of the focal point.
- (xii) For purposes of advocacy and promotion of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family, the Regional Commissions are encouraged to create web site links from their respective home page with the web site of the Programme on the Family and vice-versa.
- (xiii) A directory of national machineries regarding family issues will be issued by the Programme on the Family in cooperation with the Regional Commissions.

Research

- (xiv) The Regional Commissions and the Programme on the Family agree to undertake a joint analytical study on major regional trends affecting families. They also agreed to exchange views on key research issues, to identify priority topics and problems for in-depth analysis.

Technical Cooperation

- (xv) With respect to technical cooperation activities, the resources of the UN Trust Fund on Family Activities and other technical cooperation support will be used to support catalytic and innovative family-related activities, which will be submitted by the member governments and NGO's of the Regional Commissions.

- (xvi) Expert symposia/meetings should be promoted to exchange expertise and experiences within the context of the Tenth Anniversary.

Programme on Youth

- (xvii) Regional Commissions are urged to be supportive, through substantial institutional and financial resources, of regional youth and student forums. As part of the information exchange exercise between the Regional Commissions and the United Nations Programme on Youth, it is necessary for the Regional Commissions to update the information contained in the Youth website on national youth policies, youth projects and governmental and NGO youth focal points.
- (xviii) With regard to a new initiative emanating from the Millennium Declaration, namely the Secretary General's Youth Employment Network, it was agreed that the Regional Commissions could play a supportive role in the implementation of the recommendations endorsed at the first high-level panel of the Network, held at Geneva in July 2001.

Programme on Disability

- (xix) With respect to the fourth review and appraisal of the Implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, Regional Commissions are urged to cooperate with the Social Integration Branch in the monitoring and evaluation processes at the regional level.
- (xx) The incorporation of a disability dimension in the interregional initiatives on information technologies, transport, human rights, natural disasters, where different Regional Commissions have been identified as focal points or lead commissions will be explored by the Regional Commissions.
- (xxi). In connexion with the possibility of incorporating a disability dimension in existing programmatic work like gender, generations, employability, human settlements, statistics, etc., it was suggested that the situation and special concerns of persons with disabilities be addressed. Based on the premise that "all" includes persons with disabilities, expert group meetings, reports and publications may provide the needed forum.
- (xxii) The Programme on Disability indicated its disposition to support initiatives at the regional level. In connection to this, and within the context of the fourth review and appraisal of the implementation of the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons, assessments of the socio-economic situation of persons with disabilities, group training, seminars and workshops to include a disability dimension in policy, were mentioned as potential areas for cooperation, including funds from the United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability and the Development Account.

Programme on Conflict Prevention

- (xxiii) With regard to the new initiative of Conflict Prevention, “Structural threats to social integrity: Social roots of conflict and indicators for prevention”, the Social Integration Branch will keep the Regional Commissions informed of the project’s progress. Specifically, it will provide the Commissions with a report on an expert group meeting (EGM) to be held on 18 to 20 December 2001 at United Nations Headquarters on this topic. The Branch is looking forward to and welcomes the Regional Commissions providing:
- (a) examples of endogenous conflict prevention in their regions, as available (e.g. Jordan, Yemen, Indigenous peoples of south America, etc.);
 - (b) contact details for schools/professionals in the new area of Violentology (e.g. Colombia);
 - (c) contact details for OSCE experts who could contribute to and participate in the December EGM;
 - (d) reports, studies and names of experts of relevance to the social roots and consequences of violent conflict – with a particular focus on the family and social groups (persons with disabilities, older persons, youth).

Programme on Ageing

- (xxiv) Collaboration with Regional Commissions is sought in the development of indicators to monitor the implementation of the Strategy.
- (xxv) Encouragement of the establishment of regional monitoring groups consisting of governmental experts, Academics, NGOs etc., to serve as advisory panels to the UN Secretariat on issues related to the promotion and monitoring of the International Strategy for Action on Ageing.
- (xxvi) Collaboration of Regional Commissions is sought on preparations for the Inter-Regional Meeting (2002-2003) to address the promotion and monitoring of the Strategy on a regional basis.
- (xxvii) Identification of a focal point on issues specifically related to ageing within each Regional Commissions, particularly in ECLAC and ECA.

IV. GENERAL DISCUSSIONS

13. The Meeting was opened by the Chief of the Social Integration Branch, Division for Social Policy and Development, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, who served as moderator. In her opening remarks, she expressed her desire that cooperation between the Branch and the Regional Commissions would be strengthened in the social development field in order to achieve greater effectiveness in the planning and implementation of social integration related activities of both the Regional Commissions and the Secretariat.

14. Recognizing the vital role and importance of the Regional Commissions, she emphasized her strong desire to give increased attention in the coming years to enhancing cooperation and liaison with the Regional Commissions in the area of social integration. This will encompass concerted action and effort across sectoral concerns, including linking sectoral areas of interest. The intention is to forge a new direction and a fresh approach to interconnect the activities of the Regional Commissions more effectively with the initiatives and activities of the Social Integration Branch.

15. She highlighted with appreciation the ongoing experiences and expertise of the Regional Commissions in the social arena. The capacity of Regional Commissions in bringing global concerns to their regions and regional concerns to global forums was a vital and valuable vehicle for effective cooperation in the areas of social development and social integration.

16. She stated that she recently joined the United Nations Secretariat as Chief of the Social Integration Branch, Division for Social Policy and Development of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. The programmes for ageing, persons with disabilities, the family, and youth are part of her responsibilities. She reaffirmed that the overall orientation of these programmes and activities of the Social Integration Branch is to strengthen international cooperation in the social development arena, and to promote and facilitate inclusion of social integration policies, programmes and strategies into national development planning. In this regard, the Regional Commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs share the objective of assisting the international community in responding to long-term and emerging issues in the areas of social and economic development. The overarching shared objective is to assist Governments in implementing the commitments contained in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, the 24th Special Session of the General Assembly, and the Millennium Declaration, as well as major international and regional plans of action specific to ageing, youth and persons with disabilities.

17. The Chief of the Social Integration Branch underlined that although social integration is viewed as a means to social development, it can also be interpreted as a goal of social development itself. The term “integration” is used to connote cohesion in diversity without coercion, in contrast to exclusion. She noted that social integration pays attention to the fate of special groups in the development process, including people who are ageing and/or who have disabilities, families, and youth, as well as ethnic, religious and other minorities. Dimensions of social integration include democratisation, non-discrimination and tolerance, equality and social justice, social needs of special groups, needs of all de-located populations, criminal violence, traffic and abuse of drugs, and social responsibility for the family.

18. The Chief of the Social Integration Branch observed that the broad scope of the Copenhagen Programme of Action allowed for opportunities for expansion of initiatives, projects and programmes. This also led to the grafting of the Copenhagen Programme of Action with the programme of the Branch as well as the grafting of UNGASS with the

Branch's specific mandates. Thus, the Branch has a responsibility to ensure that no gaps should be allowed as we address our tasks.

19. Following the representation of the Chief of the Social Integration Branch, the representatives of the Regional Commissions described recent activities of their Organizations in the area of social integration. Several representatives noted that the issues and problems encountered were similar in all of the Regional Commissions present. There was consensus that closer cooperation could be achieved in a variety of areas, notwithstanding the fact that some Regional Commissions do not have specific mandates or programmes comparable to the Social Integration Branch.

20. The Regional Commissions informed the participants that they cooperate closely with other regional organizations. ECE cooperates with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe on economic and environmental dimensions of security. ECE also cooperates with the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the Central European Initiative and the Council of Europe. ECLAC has expanded cooperation with the Organization of American States, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Caribbean Community and MERCOSUR. ESCWA has also cooperated, in a spectrum of areas, with a number of regional and sub-regional organizations such as the League of Arab States, the Arab Gulf Programme for UN Development Organizations and the Gulf Cooperation Council.

21. The representatives of the Regional Commissions made several insightful observations with respect to Social Integration. They also offered ways and means for cooperation, based on their own expertise, experiences and the particular circumstances within their own respective regions. For example, it was noted that social integration was linked to social transformation, or viewed in terms of social disintegration. In this regard, topics such as a culture of peace, ethnic identity, discrimination, indigenous groups should be studied, particularly since, paradoxically, social integration promotes both equality and distinctions.

22. The Regional Commissions were receptive to undertaking cooperative and joint endeavours with the Branch. Consequently, it was also agreed that the Meeting was in itself an important initiative, which has improved awareness of activities among Organizations and also opened areas for closer complementarity.

23. The participants welcomed the opportunity to review linkages between global and regional-level actions that can best be planned, developed and coordinated. It was felt that the opportunity for linking activities of the Regional Commissions more closely within the compass of the activities of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the social integration field was enhanced.

24. Their accounts reveal both the capacity and ability of the Regional Commissions to interact constantly with the various national authorities and civil society on development issues, uniquely place them to assess the situation and tackle emerging needs at the regional and sub-regional levels. It was observed that both the Regional

Commissions and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs direct their attention to ensuring that social development objectives are incorporated in all areas of governmental decision-making.

25. Some Regional Commissions do not have specific mandates, structures or resources in all of the areas under the purview of the Social Integration Branch. Nevertheless, the Regional Commissions were receptive to undertake cooperative and joint endeavours with the Branch. There was agreement that the Meeting was in itself an important initiative, which has improved awareness of activities among organizations and also opened areas for closer complementarity.

26. The Chief of the Programme on the Family introduced the family topic by stating that the preparations for the observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004 was a priority issue and the intention was to develop joint activities for the successful preparations of this event. He observed that this Meeting is important because: First, it is convened at the genesis of the preparations for the Tenth Anniversary; Second, the capacity of Regional Commissions in bringing global concerns to their regions and regional concerns to global foras is valuable and necessary for effective cooperation; and Third, the Regional Commissions played a vital role in the preparations and observance of the International Year of the Family in 1994 in the form of Regional Meetings in 1993. Indeed, the success of the Year was due in large measure to the Regional Commissions.

27. The Chief of the Programme on the Family stated that activities from now to 2004 will focus on catalytic actions for the preparation and observance of the Tenth Anniversary. Areas of concentration will be on: Technology and its impact on the Family; Approaches to the development of family policies; Indicators and statistics for family well being; Parental roles and intra-familial support system; and HIV/AIDS and its impact on Families. These areas encourage reflection on the type of strategies and policy options needed. During 2001-2004, Technical papers will be prepared for policy planners in the above-cited five critical areas. In 2001, three major papers are being finalized: The Most Affected HIV/AIDS Families in Selected Countries; Information and Educational Technology and its Impact on Families (Ireland and Malaysia); and Indicators and Statistics for Family Well Being. In addition, the following studies have been published: Families and the World of Work and Approaches to Family Policy Development.

28. A discussion ensued about promotion and information activities, particularly the annual observance of the International Day of Families [IDF]; the UN Family website at www.un.org/esa.socdev/family/index.html; and the "Family Matters", a bi-monthly newsletter informs about new developments within the arena of family affairs. The representative of Department of Public Information proposed that reference could be made to a global public awareness campaign in a forthcoming resolution at the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. She suggested the following: "Requests the Secretary-General to continue to provide the preparatory process for the observance of the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, with all needed support,

including a Secretariat commensurate with the level of the event and adequate staff and other resources, and including the launching of a global public awareness campaign through the Department of Public Information, with as much support as possible from public/private partnerships.”

29. The representative of the Department of Public Information also suggested the need for a simple, clear and succinct message or motto for the Tenth Anniversary. There was agreement for the need to convey a positive perception of families, which denote their constructive role as pillar of society, agents of development and a locus of cohesion and stability. The selected final motto will be decided upon in cooperation with the Regional Commissions in particular with respect to translation into official languages of the United Nations. It is agreed that a mandate concerning a public information campaign for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family is to be sought from the General Assembly.

30. The participants were informed that a global trends study would entail an analysis of eight trends, which pose challenges to families worldwide. These trends are: (1) Smaller size households, (2) Delayed marriage and childbearing, (3) Changes in family structure (Increases in divorce and single parenthood), (4) Rise of migration, (5) the Demographic ageing and retirement, (6) Advancement of technology and science, (7) HIV/AIDS pandemic, and (8) Impacts of globalization. The Family Unit offered funds for consultants carrying out the research in the respective sub-regions. It was proposed that from October 2001 – March 2002, the Family Unit and the Regional Commissions review and consider the proposed trends and researchers are to be identified and selected by the Regional Commissions. An outline of a research proposal is to be developed. From April 2002 – December 2002, the consultants will conduct their research and send their first draft by September 2002 as well as the final product by December 2002 to the Family Unit. Between January 2003 and December 2003, an inter-regional symposium discussion major research findings (assessment of findings and implications for global and regional actions) is proposed. The study will be published in December 2003.

31. The representatives of ESCWA, ECE and ECLAC welcomed this initiative and offered their collaboration in this regard.

32. The participants paid particular interest concerning the UN Trust Fund on Family Activities, especially with respect to financing projects from least-developed and developing countries, and countries with economies in transition. It was suggested that the projects be chosen to support the goals of the Tenth Anniversary.

33. It was observed that the Tenth Anniversary preparatory actions at the national level will be facilitated by the dissemination of suggestions/guidelines to relevant focal points and partners at all levels. At the intergovernmental level, the Family Unit will encourage the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to review the preparatory process.

34. The participants agreed that cooperation could entail promotion and advocacy, research and information exchange as well as technical cooperation. The representatives of the Regional Commissions noted the need for Governments to set up a mechanism for the Tenth Anniversary of the International Year of the Family to stimulate, plan and coordinate activities by the appropriate governmental and non-governmental bodies and agencies and to liaise with the United Nations regarding the programme for the Anniversary.

35. It was recognized that governments should undertake, as part of their activities for 2004, sustained action at all levels concerning family issues, including studies and applied research, and concrete measures and approaches to promote the role of families in development and pursue national priorities related to family issues. It was emphasized that governments could prepare an agenda for national action for the anniversary, identifying specific family needs and proposing action programmes for implementation in 2004. Non-governmental organizations and institutions devoted to family issues, family-related research and family policy concerns should be provided with widest possible opportunities to participate as partners in family-related work of the United Nations system.

36. The participants noted that the Tenth Anniversary, as cited in operative paragraph 13 of the Secretary General's report E/CN.5/2001/4, could be launched in December 2003 at a plenary meeting of the General Assembly. The observance of the Tenth Anniversary during 2004 could also culminate in the holding of plenary sessions of the Assembly on the topic of families. Results sought from the plenary session of the General Assembly in late 2004 would be devoted to: (a) an assessment of global trends that impact on families; (b) a review of progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the implementation of objectives of the IYF since 1994; (c) a reaffirmation of commitments made and the identification of further actions, including encouraging the incorporation of effective family policies and programmes into national development strategies; and (d) encouraging regional institutes to promote and undertake research and development of policies related to family issues.

37. It was recognized that the Programme on the Family will need the assistance of the Regional Commissions to: (a) urge Governments to view 2004 as a target year by which concrete achievements should be made to identify and elaborate family-related issues and also to set up and strengthen mechanisms to plan and coordinate Tenth Anniversary activities; and (b) encourage and assist Governments in the selection of their objectives and in the preparation of a nationwide programme to be implemented by 2004.

38. The representative of ESCWA informed the participants about the importance that Member States in the region give to family issues in general and the empowerment of families in particular. The representative of ECLAC stated that the issue of domestic violence is high on the ECLAC agenda. The representative of ECE noted that the focus of his Organization was on the analysis of family formation and behaviour, fertility and family surveys, gender and intergenerational relations. He also emphasized the need for

a more focussed combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to the study of family issues.

39. The representative of the Regional Commissions' New York Office informed the participants that the Office serves as a focal point for all liaison work concerning substantive and operational activities of the five regional commissions with departments, offices and programmes at United Nations Headquarters. It also maintains contact, on behalf of the Regional Commissions, with permanent missions of Member States to the United Nations, relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and the public in New York. It is also called upon to analyze and synthesize developments as they occur during the course of meetings of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council and their subsidiary bodies. The representative of the Regional Commissions New York Office expressed her willingness to provide information concerning family-related issues between the regional commissions, Headquarters, permanent missions of Member States in New York and the general public and coordinating services among the regional commissions.

40. Dr. Mark Belsey, formerly of WHO, who serves as a Consultant to the Programme on the Family briefed the participants about a study on the adverse impact of HIV/AIDS on the family. He noted that HIV/AIDS constitutes three epidemics: an epidemic of HIV infection that silently progressed over a decade; an epidemic of AIDS and AIDS-related diseases; and, an epidemic of fear, which is particularly important as it fuels and aggravates the epidemics of HIV infection and AIDS. It has distorted the cultural cohesion of communities, and, denied individuals, families and communities the knowledge, skills and tools to protect themselves. The adverse impact of HIV/AIDS on the family has changed family composition and the way communities function. It affects food security, destabilizes traditional support systems and destroys social capital, leading to still more widespread and extreme poverty. Dr. Belsey observed that heretofore, there has been no systematic, cross-cultural examination of the impact of AIDS on the family. Increasingly "households and families bear the brunt of the misery caused by AIDS. Families are also subject to discrimination if they have members who are HIV-positive, often facing reduced access to publicly available social and economic benefits." In some settings the functions and functioning of families, and even the family as a social institution have been threatened or undermined.

41. The discussion centred around the fact that both a framework and an intersectoral perspective are essential to address the complexity of family policy issues and HIV/AIDS. Such a framework, it was felt, must simultaneously take into account: the epidemiological and trend analysis of HIV/AIDS, with particular note of the number and characteristics of families affected by HIV/AIDS; the structure and functions of the family – particularly as they affect and are affected by HIV/AIDS, and the economic, social and cultural context and the specific impact of HIV/AIDS in those contexts.

42. The Chief of the Programme on Youth, in his introduction, focussed on three dimensions: strengthening the institutional capacity of governments dealing with youth; strengthening the institutional capacity of youth organizations; and mobilizing youth

organizations for global events. The Programme on Youth has focussed to a large extent on organizing a number of activities with and for youth organizations, most notably four sessions of the World Youth Forum of the United Nations System. The fourth session of the Forum, held at Dakar, Senegal in August 2001 was assisted greatly by the active participation of the Regional Commissions.

43. The Chief of the Programme on Youth stated that reports by the Secretary-General on youth, submitted to the General Assembly on a biannual basis, reviewed progress achieved by governments to design, build and implement comprehensive and integrated national youth policies, in accordance with the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Such progress was attributed to the political will of governments to establish national youth policies, coordinating mechanisms and programmes.

44. He also noted the need to strengthen the institutional capacity of regional and national youth organizations. Since the early 1990s, a new grouping of regional clusters of national youth and student organizations has emerged. Many of these are issue-oriented and not focussed on providing services to young people. It was observed that there is a large gap between regional organizations with a large resource base, particularly from developed countries, and more loosely organized entities in need of substantial institutional and financial strengthening, often regional youth and student bodies from developing countries. It was suggested that Regional Commissions can be highly supportive in this regard.

45. He observed that the Fourth World Youth Forum contributed to the implementation of the Programme of Action by the identification and promotion of joint initiatives to better reflect the interests of youth through a participatory approach. He reflected that the outcome of the fourth session of the Forum, the Dakar Youth Empowerment Strategy, includes a number of concrete recommendations, strategies and tools to empower young people to participate in the decision-making process. He also stated that a number of regional fora were held in preparation: An African Youth Forum, organized by ECA, in Addis Ababa from 1- to 14 April 2000; An Asia-Pacific Youth Forum, organized by ESCAP, held from 3 to 8 June 2001 in Bangkok; and An Arab Youth Forum, organized by ESCWA, in Beirut on 26 and 27 June 2001.

46. The representative of ESCWA stated that the youth issue is politically sensitive in the region. The representative of ECLAC noted that there is no specific Youth Unit, even though the Population Division currently deals with youth-related issues. He observed that the Ibero-American Youth Organization is an important partner in the region. The representative of ECE emphasized the importance of youth employment for the region. He informed about a project on the promotion of youth employment in countries with economies in transition. He also suggested that the Gender and Generations Unit of ECE could serve as a point of entry regarding the youth issue. He observed that the issue of youth and migration is a salient matter for review by the international community.

47. The Officer-in-Charge of the Programme on Disability remarked that work focuses on the political economy of development and a broad framework of human rights. Its work is guided by two main international instruments adopted by the General Assembly, the World Programme of Action concerning Disabled Persons and the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Current priority areas identified by the General Assembly, and other subsidiary bodies, are accessibility (both to information and the environment), social services and safety nets, and sustainable livelihoods with special attention to the rights and concerns of children with disabilities and their families, the gender aspects of disability and the situation of persons with psychiatric and developmental disabilities.

48. The Officer-In-Charge of the Programme on Disability stated that the fourth review and appraisal will examine the context of demographic, economic, social and technological trends that have occurred since the end of the United Nations Decade of Disabled Persons, in the light of data emerging from the 2000 census round. Some of the trends to be examined include: a general worldwide movement towards adoption of Internet technologies; adoption by several countries, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, of market-oriented economies; increasing awareness and concern over the environment; a general move towards accountability for results in governmental programmes; and global ageing. On the basis of currently available data, it is expected that the fourth review and appraisal will highlight several important developments in the field of disability at regional and interregional levels:

49. The report of the Secretary-General on Regional Cooperation on the Social and Economic Fields (E/2001/18, and Add. 1, 2 and 3) provided the context for the discussion. Within existing mandates, both disability-specific actions and the incorporation of a disability-dimension in the ongoing work of the Regional Commissions were addressed. However, due to the absence of disability-specific mandates and limited resources, possibilities of incorporating a disability perspective received greater attention.

50. The participants agreed that substantive activities of the United Nations system reflect a growing recognition of the rights of persons with disabilities and their contributions as agents and beneficiaries of development.

51. It was also noted that disability-specific policies and programmes and a disability dimension in planning, monitoring and evaluation are central to further the goals of equalization of opportunities for and participation of persons with disabilities. The role of the Regional Commissions was highlighted by examples of inter-regional and regional level activities organized or supported by the Programme on Disability.

52. To set the ground for discussion on potential activities at the regional level, the framework for the fourth review and appraisal was presented. The extent to which structures are in place, and in their absence, how they can be established, in the context of the work and mandates of the Regional Commissions, received particular attention.

53. The issues of prevention, particularly of acquired disabilities, and the impact of broader developmental issues, like safe water, adequate nutrition, access to preventive health services, etc. in the incidence of disability, were considered. Also, the disparities among countries in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of legislation, policies, and programmes, as well as, in the level of awareness about the rights of disability were noted as factors affecting progress in the equalization of opportunities for persons with disabilities. The potential of disability action, as an investment in development, was also discussed.

54. The representative of ESCWA stated that there is a high rate of disability in the region due to the armed conflicts since 1980. Thus, considerable attention was directed towards disability issues. It is placing special emphasis on promoting accessible environments and information technologies and on providing sustainable livelihoods to persons with disabilities. It is working with the Government of Lebanon and the non-governmental community in the establishment of a regional Braille computer training centre in Beirut. ESCWA also has continued to organize pilot training workshops to promote the empowerment and self-reliance of, and sustainable livelihoods for, persons with disabilities, which have focused on starting a small-scale business, advocacy and promotional techniques and vocational training for young persons with disabilities.

55. The representatives of ECLAC and ECE stated that their organizations had neither programmes or mandates in this field. Though recently little has been done on disability, in 1993 ECLAC supported the publication of a chapter on statistical data on disability in the region. It was noted that the trends reported varied greatly, possible due to the definition of disability used, data collection methods, and the demographic structure of the population in the different countries. He added that in order to avoid duplication, it would be useful to know what is being done by other regional organizations within each region. The representative of ECE said that disability could be mainstreamed into the work of the commissions, and noted that non-governmental organizations and networks can play an important role at all levels.

56. The Chief of the Programme on Ageing discussed the Second World Assembly on Ageing (Madrid, Spain, 8-12 April 2002) and its follow up, specifically measures to promote the implementation of the future International Strategy for Action on Ageing. He invited the representatives of Regional Commissions to familiarize themselves with the draft International Strategy for Action on Ageing (2002), particularly its Section III entitled "Implementation and Follow up". He stated that the Regional Commissions are key partners in promoting the implementation of the new Strategy and discussions are necessary on the role of the Commissions in the future processes of implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the Strategy.

57. The Chief of the Programme on Ageing noted that the new strategy attempts to involve the international financial institutes and regional development banks in the process of implementation. He invited Regional Commissions to share ideas about steps that could be taken to bring the issue of ageing and the new Strategy to the attention of regional development banks. He emphasized that the draft Strategy also calls for its

translation into regional action plans. The representatives of Regional Commissions discussed the possibility of developing and/or updating action plans in their regions, bearing in mind that an ESCAP regional plan already exists and an ECE regional plan is under preparation

58. It was emphasized that preparations for the Second World Assembly on Ageing in April 2002 are taking place throughout the United Nations system, including at the regional level. Several Regional Commissions have planned activities leading up to the Second World Assembly.

59. The participants were informed that an ESCWA regional expert group meeting in February 2002 will review the International Strategy and that a declaration or a Regional Plan of Action on Ageing is expected. The ESCWA representative emphasized that ESCWA will participate actively in the monitoring process.

60. The representative of ECLAC cited paucity of resources as the reason for ECLAC's lack of full engagement in the Second World Assembly on Aging. Nevertheless, it was pointed out that NGO's in the region are quite active in this regard. ECLAC will participate in a meeting in Santa Cruz, Bolivia organized by the Government of Spain in November 2001, as part of the preparatory process for the Second World Assembly on Ageing.

61. The representative of ECE informed the participants about the forthcoming Ministerial Meeting on Ageing in September 2002, whose outcome will be an action-oriented implementation strategy of the agreed ISSA in Madrid, adjusted to regional conditions. Topics of the Meeting are: active ageing; pension reform; migration; income security; housing work; and intergenerational issues.

62. The Chief of the Social Integration Branch opened the discussion and provided background and context for its work in the area of conflict prevention. Conflict prevention, resolution and post-conflict management were included in Copenhagen + 5: Specifically, in the "Further initiatives for social development" agreed at the Twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly (paragraphs 74 and 75 of General Assembly Resolution S-24/2 of 15 December 2000 [A/RES/S-24/2]). Five years earlier, the World Summit for Social Development had provided foundations for conflict prevention work in its Commitment 4 on Social Integration where it called for fostering societies that are "stable, safe and just" .

63. The Branch outlined its preparations for an Expert Group Meeting on Structural Threats to Social Integrity: Social Roots of Violent Conflict and Indicators for Prevention, to be held on 18 to 20 December 2001 at UNHQ. The meeting's Aide Memoire was distributed and RC Colleagues' views were invited on, among others: (a) the 'upstream' structural social roots of violent conflicts in their regions -- such as tensions caused by uneven development and modernization; ethnic patterns in relation to citizenship, migration, refugee asylum and population displacement, and history of ethnic warfare or genocide; specific conditions preceding and following natural disasters;

institutional vulnerabilities and the implementation of endogenous, traditional or current conflict-prevention mechanisms, particularly those of civil society; and (b) indicators for prevention.

64. Organizing the dangers of social disintegration in their regions, and the need to address it upstream at its origins, the representatives of the Regional Commissions agreed that throughout the world and particularly in their respective regions, conflict is a part of life and often accompanies social, economic and political change. They recognized that it is relevant and timely to address the social roots of violent conflict, and to examine ways of channeling conflict peacefully. They stressed that it is important to look for commonalities but also specifics in each conflict. In this context, distilling indicators for prevention will be a worthwhile challenge.

65. Several examples of social and structural roots of conflict in different world regions were examined, as well as examples of endogenous conflict prevention activities. Among other things, the representative of ECE noted that three basic factors help to preclude conflict: stability of institutions; respect for the rule of law and promotion of welfare and equity. There is also the need to take into account external factors such as globalization. The representative of ESCWA noted that in his region conflict are exacerbated by the speed of urbanization, experiences of humiliation, and issues of power-distribution. The representative of ECLAC agreed that a sharp increase of urban unemployment particularly among youth engenders outbreaks of violence.

66. Additionally, the following possible roots of violent conflict were identified (as possible indicators) during the discussion:

- Modernization without social integration
- Half-hearted democracy
- Rising urban unemployment (i.e. Mexico crises, Venezuela, Peru in the 80s)
- Globalization's social impact (exclusion; rising inequalities in & between countries)
- Anti-globalization movement (though not elected, neither were governments elected to 'govern globalization' or to give in to pressures of TNSs)
- Neglect of rural areas (schools, health etc) esp. where there's a warrior tradition
- Actors (Indigenous, Youth, Older Persons). Peasants started Peru's Shining Path but students joined in (as an expression of political disaffection and frustration at joblessness). Older Persons were effective in conflict prevention in some regions.
- Rise in access to symbolic goods (t.v., etc) unaccompanied by access to material goods, with higher education levels (interaction of three and more variables)
- Culture of resolving conflict in a violent way
- Role of values (i.e. since equality not fundamental in USA, inequality is less likely to trigger violence there than it would in Scandinavia where it is key. In USA notions of rights or freedoms key. etc) .
- Humiliation, a strong precursor in some cultures (even death may be preferred)
- Invisibility (being omitted/stereotyped in media etc. - in LA can offend more than material exclusion)

Identity not respected (+ low income & non-representative institutions)

67. The Chief thanked the representatives of the Regional Commissions for their valuable contributions and promised to keep them informed of progress in organizing the meeting.

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