

**PRESS CONFERENCE BY HIGH-LEVEL PANEL CONVENED TO STRENGTHEN UN  
PERFORMANCE**

**IN DEVELOPMENT, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, ENVIRONMENT**

**UNHQ, 6 April 2006**

Reaffirming their support for a stronger and more effective United Nations, the Prime Ministers of Mozambique, Norway and Pakistan briefed correspondents today at Headquarters, following the first meeting of an eminent group of world leaders convened to examine how to fundamentally restructure the Organization to ensure better coherence and performance in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment.

The group -- known as the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment -- is co-chaired by Luisa Dias Diogo, Prime Minister of Mozambique; Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway; and Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister of Pakistan. Joining them at this afternoon's press conference was United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch Brown.

The study to be carried out by the 15-member panel, whose formation was announced by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in February, was called for in the Outcome Document adopted by global leaders at the 2005 World Summit in New York. It is meant to complement other major reform initiatives currently under way in the Organization, including the proposal for comprehensive management reform recently submitted to the General Assembly.

"In life today, the only constant is change", noted Mr. Aziz, who added that, as the world changed, all organizations that existed to help the world needed to fine tune and reorganize themselves to meet the needs of tomorrow. The panel held a day and a half of intense discussions on a number of issues, including the need to provide a clear role for the United Nations, in order to accelerate development, fight poverty, build capacity in countries and assist countries in various reform initiatives.

In the area of humanitarian assistance, it was agreed that the Organization, which had done "a marvellous job", must learn from its experiences and institutionalize them. In that regard, he said the panel expressed strong support for the new Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF) -- a stand-by fund established by the United Nations to enable more timely and reliable humanitarian assistance to victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts -- "because the time to raise money was not while people were suffering and dying". The United Nations must have a pool of funds, which could be used for relief immediately, since natural disasters did not provide early warning.

Regarding the environment, he said the panel would look at how global warming and other threats the world faced could be given their rightful place through the United Nations. "We think change is definitely needed... we need to retool and reorganize ourselves to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow, because that will then allow us to have a more prosperous and a peaceful world", he added.

The whole point of the panel, and of the reform process, stated Mr. Stoltenberg, was to make the United Nations a better and stronger organization in the future. In an effort to examine the weaknesses and shortcomings of the Organization, the group was engaging in “constructive criticism”. There was great will on the part of panel members to present bold conclusions and recommendations.

Emphasizing that things were changing in countries, Ms. Diogo added that the United Nations system needed to respond to those changes, and to help countries better organize and achieve the objectives of development.

Responding to questions, Mr. Aziz said that one of the objectives was to seek coherence in the activities of the United Nations and its agencies. The Organization had a broad mandate and there were many bodies. “We have to adjust our ability to deliver the objectives of the UN in a fast changing global environment.” Coherence meant bringing all the various groups together to get the maximum results. The panel should lay out a road map for the United Nations to conduct its activities in a seamless manner, empowered, well resourced and with clear objectives, meaning all the actors knew what they had to do and what they should not do. That was how the Organization would become effective.

The panel, he continued, would look at the United Nations delivery system at the country level to make it more coordinated, seamless and effective. It was agreed that the United Nations family in a country must not operate in “silos” but should be coordinated in such a way that its effectiveness was improved.

There were many different ways to achieve coherence, noted Mr. Stoltenberg. One was to look at the different institutions. Another was to try to promote better coordination and cooperation between existing institutions and programmes. A third way involved the way programmes and institutions were funded, which were important for the way they worked together. For example, the CERF gave the United Nations more money at an early stage to be present during natural disasters. In addition, the Fund provided the Organization with an increased ability to coordinate activities, because it had the money to do so.

Asked how the panel’s work fit into the overall reform process, Mr. Malloch Brown responded that the real challenge had been that the world changed faster than the United Nations. That was felt particularly strongly in the areas of development, environment and humanitarian assistance.

“Rather than doing just another group of UN people sitting around a table seeing how we can fine tune and recalibrate the existing arrangements, it seemed we should go out to our clients at the highest political level and to the development experts of the world outside the system, and challenge them to challenge us with solutions, which would give us an architecture able to deliver on the financing committed last year at the Summit, but, above all, able to deliver on the international community’s pledge to support countries in their efforts to achieve the MDGs,” he stated.

Regarding the gender issue in achieving coherence within the system, Ms. Diogo noted that the majority of actors in the areas of development, environment and humanitarian assistance were women. That was why one of the agreements in the panel was to commission a specific study on

the gender issues related to the three pillars of development, environment and humanitarian assistance.

In addition to the three co-chairs, the Panel is composed of Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown (United Kingdom); former Chairman and CEO of the Global Environment Facility Mohamed T. El-Ashry (Egypt); President of the Canadian International Development Agency Robert Greenhill; Director-General for Development Cooperation Ruth Jacoby (Sweden); former President Ricardo Lagos Escobar (Chile); European Commissioner for Development and Humanitarian Aid Louis Michel (Belgium); former President Benjamin W. Mkapa (United Republic of Tanzania); Director General of the French Development Agency Jean-Michel Severino; Under Secretary for Economic, Business and Agricultural Affairs Josette S. Shiner (United States); and former State Secretary for Foreign Affairs Keizo Takemi (Japan).

The panel's ex-officio members are Kemal Dervis ( Turkey), Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); and Lennart Båge ( Sweden), President of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).

The panel is expected to complete its work by the summer, to allow for formal presentation of its recommendations to the next session of the General Assembly in September 2006, and possible implementation in 2007.