

*Translated from Spanish*

## **Concluding remarks of the President of the Council**

**Geneva, 26 July 2003**

Distinguished representatives:

We have reached the conclusion of our substantive session of 2003, and it falls to me to provide a brief summary of our meeting. This may be premature, since the session has been long and intense and we should let the results settle before passing final judgement. A number of tangible achievements can, however, already be pointed out. They come in two forms: first, as the results of the substantive meeting and second, as inputs that may contribute towards strengthening our debate. I will touch on both.

Allow me to say, first of all, that I think we can feel satisfied with this session's achievements, which have been many and productive.

- We had a good dialogue with our colleagues from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). Maybe because we are nearing the date of the ministerial meeting in Cancún, or maybe because the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, Mr. Rubens Ricupero, focused it so eloquently, this year our dialogue was dominated by the Doha agenda, with emphasis on the urgent need for developing countries to enjoy greater access to markets in the industrialized countries. It is worth noting that we were able this year to coordinate the dialogue with the topic chosen for the high-level segment, and the question of trade in agricultural products therefore received special attention. I would also like to point out that, in a sense, this dialogue marked a new stage in the ongoing communication with our partners, which gained impetus this year at the meeting of 14 April, and which will be the subject of further consultations during the high-level meeting to be held within the framework of the General Assembly in October.
- In my view, the high-level segment was extremely successful, both in substance and in form. As for substance, we put rural development back on the priority agenda — where it belongs — within the framework of the achievement of the United Nations development goals for the millennium. We also set out a conceptual framework which placed rural development in a much wider and more integrated context, providing for actions at the local level to be coordinated with policies at the national level. All this was reflected in a brief but meaty ministerial declaration. As for form, we had a genuinely interactive debate, at the round tables in this room and in particular at the working breakfasts organized by various agencies. Lastly, I wish to draw attention to the high level of governmental representation, to the fact that the main United Nations agencies concerned with these matters were represented by their top officials, and to the fact that we attracted many representatives from the non-governmental and business communities.
- The operational activities for development segment, under the leadership of my colleague Abdul Mejid Hussein, the Permanent Representative of Ethiopia,

yielded excellent results this year. I was impressed by the quality of the debate that occurred at the round tables, attended by representatives of donor countries, programme countries and officials of United Nations programmes. We broached one of the most critical topics for the operational activities of our Organization — the shortage of core resources — and we adopted decisions that will facilitate our consideration of the 2004 triennial policy review of United Nations operational activities. I would like to thank Ambassador Mejid Hussein and those who worked with him for having organized this segment with such dedication.

- The coordination segment, under the leadership of my colleague Murari Raj Sharma, the Permanent Representative of Nepal, was able to build on the efforts of the Ad Hoc Working Group of the General Assembly on the integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields. You will recall that the General Assembly approved the work of that body in resolution 57/270 B of 23 June 2003. The task here was to review the role of the Economic and Social Council in the context already approved by the General Assembly, and this was the aim of the document that emerged from that segment. Again, my gratitude to Ambassador Sharma for his outstanding work.
- My colleague Valery Kuchinsky, the Permanent Representative of Ukraine, chaired the humanitarian affairs segment. As you know, although this segment was introduced into our activities as recently as 1998, its importance has been growing year by year. Here, and thanks to the strong support from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), we have taken a qualitative step forward in linking together the emergency, reconstruction and development phases of United Nations humanitarian activities, and in identifying ways of funding them. The level of the dialogue at the round tables was exceptional and the document that emerged might even be considered a blue book for the field activities of the United Nations providing humanitarian assistance to developing countries. I would like to thank Ambassador Kuchinsky and those who worked with him for their tireless efforts.
- With the start of the general segment, chaired by my colleague Marjatta Rasi, the Permanent Representative of Finland, the pace of our work changed somewhat. Instead of focusing on one or two unifying themes, we had a broad range of issues to consider, and little time to do so. Nevertheless, hard work was done in unofficial consultations and informal informals, and due attention was given to all topics, most of which we wrapped up. I am pleased to note that, unlike in past years, very few topics are left to be addressed in our resumed session. As I said, we considered a great number of topics in the general segment: some routine matters such as the consideration of reports from the functional commission and others more unusual. It makes no sense to list all the results of these meetings, but I would like to highlight some that I consider to be especially significant.
- For the first time in many years, the General Assembly was asked to create a new specialized agency: the World Tourism Organization.

- A scenario is beginning to take shape for Council support to African countries emerging from conflict situations. We noted the role played by the ad hoc group on Guinea-Bissau, and created a new group for Burundi.
- We continued to play a special role in the work of follow-up to the Monterrey Consensus, as envisaged in the resolution on financing for development.
- On this occasion, the Economic and Social Council showed particular concern for the most vulnerable countries — the Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) in the high-level segment, in the consideration of follow-up to the Brussels Action Plan, and in the selection of the topic for the high-level segment of the 2004 substantive session.
- The status of women was also a predominant concern, reflected in various ways: again in the high-level segment, in the resolutions on gender-mainstreaming, and in the review of the Statute of the International Training and Research Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) for the purpose of revitalizing that institution. In addition, the topic of gender mainstreaming was chosen for next year's coordination segment.
- Along those same lines, we are incorporating into our work a concern with combating AIDS.

My thanks to Ambassador Rasi and those who worked with her for their outstanding work in leading the general segment.

The last four weeks have taught us lessons in how to improve our work and to strengthen the Economic and Social Council. This was the first time in my professional life that I have had the opportunity to attend an entire session, and that prompts me to formulate some additional comments. As I said at the outset, this may be premature. I mean to do so when we return to New York; first, at the Bureau level, and later, if you will allow me, I would like to share my thoughts with all of you. What interests me is drawing lessons from this experience in order to solidify what works well and to improve what may still need improvement.

Finally, I cannot conclude this statement without expressing my deep gratitude to:

First, the Government of Switzerland, for everything it has done for us;

Second, the Secretariat, for its substantive and logistical support;

Third, all the participants in our panels and round tables, some of whom travelled far to join us here;

Fourth, the conference officers and interpreters, whose outstanding work we appreciated, even if they abandoned us once or twice at critical moments because it was after 6.15 p.m.!

Fifth, the facilitators, without whose work it would have been impossible to reach agreement on so many topics;

Sixth, again my colleagues on the Bureau;

Seventh, the representatives of non-governmental organizations and the business community; and

Lastly, you, the representatives, for your enthusiasm, flexibility and constructive attitude.

That said, there is nothing left for me to do but to wish bon voyage to those returning to New York and to their capitals; to those remaining in Geneva, our best wishes for the success of your work.

The 2003 substantive session is now concluded. The meeting is adjourned!

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