



# Administrative Committee on Coordination

19 November 1999

English and French only

## Summary of conclusions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination at its second regular session of 1999

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 29 and 30 October 1999)

### *Summary: ACC conclusions requiring specific follow-up*

The Executive Heads, at the private meeting, decided to proceed with the review of ACC as proposed by the Secretary-General in a communication he had addressed earlier to the Executive Heads. In this connection, it was agreed that Executive Heads would be invited to provide a two-page contribution outlining what they expected out of an ACC session and, given that, what in their view was the best process for obtaining such an outcome. These contributions would be made available to the review team by the Secretary of ACC (para. 4).

#### **A. The demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment**

##### **The institutional and programmatic capacity of the United Nations system to respond flexibly and effectively to the challenges of the next century**

At the current session, ACC confirmed the broad conclusions emanating from the "retreat" it had held in April 1999 (see para. 7-15).

The Secretary-General outlined a number of common strands emerging from the retreat and subsequent contributions from Executive Heads, which were broadly endorsed as guidance for further inter-agency work (para. 16):

- C First, the need to set clear goals and work towards them collectively, with clear benchmarks to measure the results of cooperative initiatives. The commitments made, and the targets set at the global conferences of the 1990s must be brought together to provide an appealing common agenda for the future work of the system;

- C Second, the key issues of the mobilization of resources to overcome a major, and growing, constraint on promoting the global agenda;
- C Cutting across these two basic concerns, the need, in the new era of globalization, to build new and broader partnerships to achieve regional and global objectives.

#### *Strategic alliances*

ACC members shared the view that, for the United Nations system, contributing to a more effective response to global challenges involved not only enhancing coordination and coherence within the system itself, but also forging new strategic alliances and partnerships with key stakeholders, including the private sector, based on United Nations values, while preserving the independence and uniqueness of the system and its constituent parts. It was noted that many existing and new initiatives were under way within the system that were based on the broad approaches underlying the “issue-management” system advocated in the Secretary-General’s reform programme, and/or embodied elements underlying the concept of a “global public policy network” (para. 17).

#### *ACC’s role*

Rather than necessarily launch additional initiatives, ACC should focus on engendering support for ongoing and new initiatives, encouraging exchanges on lessons learned and considering the contribution that they were collectively making to advancing global priority objectives. ACC should also deepen its analysis of cross-sectoral linkages among issues, with a view to clarifying how the strategies and objectives of the various entities interact; and how they can best reinforce each other and best be reinforced through broad-based coalitions and alliances based on shared values (para. 19).

#### *Poverty eradication*

It was reiterated that poverty eradication and the objective of promoting equity, at the national, regional and international levels, should continue to be the overarching goals that guided ACC in contributing to the development of a focused global agenda, based on the outcomes of global conferences. They should equally be regarded as the basic goals that the system should endeavour to advance through the many new initiatives being launched and the new partnerships and coalitions that these initiatives are endeavouring to bring about (para. 20).

A great deal of discussion, both at the ACC private meeting and under the present item, focused on the link between poverty eradication and social development on the one hand, and the expanded Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative on the other. Discussions in ACC highlighted a strong, common interest on the part of all ACC members in joining forces so that: the initiative could contribute substantially to the strengthening of social services and anti-poverty programmes; the Governments concerned would be supported with regard to putting in place the governance structures and economic and social policies to benefit from the initiative; and there would be both the capacity and political will in the countries concerned to seize the opportunity of the initiative to refocus policies and programmes on human-centred development. The magnitude of the demands on financial resources involved in the initiative implied difficult choices. It also required that there should be a common effort towards ensuring that it did not erode donor flows for development assistance (paras. 21-22).

*Developing a “shared language” and mutually supporting activities*

It was recognized that the process of creating coalitions involving a broad range of actors could and should entail a key role for the United Nations system in identifying public policy issues that required a global common commitment. As part of this effort, ACC should develop a “shared language”, for which the work pursued over the years by the United Nations in defining and promoting economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights of the child, and its more recent achievements in pursuing a rights-based approach to poverty eradication, could provide a solid contribution (para. 24).

In discussing ACC’s role in deepening the analysis of the impact of globalization, particular emphasis was also placed on harnessing information and communication technologies in support of sustainable development. Many other areas were mentioned, where an “issue management” approach might further enhance the impact of the system (para. 25).

**B. Follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming**

The Secretary-General called upon ACC to explore and identify policy interventions that would minimize the risks of globalization and ensure the most positive outcomes for women (para. 28).

ACC members stressed that gender dimensions should be taken into full account in all operational areas of the work of the United Nations system. Among the issues especially highlighted during the discussion were: equal opportunity policies and programmes aimed at reducing occupational segregation by sex; policies allowing women workers to consolidate the benefits of increased paid employment through access to basic worker rights; and policies addressing the needs of women who formed the bulk of the informal sector. Another issue identified for special attention was the way in which the United Nations system could assist in ensuring that fair value was placed on the “invisible” work of women and also appropriately reflected in national accounts. ACC agreed that the statement to be prepared for the Beijing plus-five review should present a compelling vision stressing the link between poverty reduction and gender issues. The opportunity should also be seized for the system to express a clear common position on specific policy issues such as gender-based violence, education for women and girls, and reproductive and sexual health rights (paras. 29-30).

Executive Heads considered that, prior to Beijing plus five, the system should undertake a comprehensive review of progress made by and within organizations in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, for discussion at the spring session of ACC (para. 31).

Turning specially to management issues, many Executive Heads agreed that much remained to be done in terms of retaining women and providing adequate career opportunities and conditions of service. In this connection, it was felt that the family support policy promulgated by the Secretary-General should be fully implemented on a system-wide basis (para. 32).

Many Executive Heads stressed that one of the major issues that needed to be addressed in order to increase the representation of women was that of spousal employment (para. 33).

It was agreed that the statement to be addressed by ACC to the special session of the General Assembly on Beijing plus five, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”, would be finalized through correspondence, taking into account the conclusions and views expressed during the ACC discussions (para. 34).

## C. Follow-up to recent ACC decisions

### *Coordination of United Nations system activities in Africa*

The Secretary-General recalled that the issue of the multitude of international initiatives in Africa had been one of the main issues addressed at the first inter-agency meeting for the Africa region held in Nairobi in March 1999, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General. As many United Nations system's activities in Africa fell within the framework of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, the meeting had concluded that other relevant United Nations system activities could also be brought under that "umbrella". It was thus agreed at the meeting that the Special Initiative would, provisionally, constitute the most appropriate mechanism for the coordination of the United Nations system's activities in Africa (paras. 36-37).

ACC welcomed the work under way and endorsed the broad thrust of those recommendations before it, which aimed to promote more collaborative actions, reinforce synergies, avoid duplication and overlap and generally bring about greater coherence in the work of the United Nations system in Africa, with the Steering Committee on the Special Initiative providing a common framework for overseeing the overall effort (para. 39).

General support was also expressed for the thrust of other recommendations stressing the importance of the United Nations system's work in Africa continuing to reflect Africa's own vision and priorities; information sharing and communication, particularly through electronic means, on initiatives in Africa, both as a requirement to ensure overall United Nations system effectiveness and vis-à-vis development partners outside of the United Nations system; effective and non-duplicative ways of monitoring and reporting on United Nations system development activities in Africa, including the identification of best practices, drawing lessons from intercountry experiences and evaluating major implementation constraints (para. 40).

In the discussions, various suggestions were made concerning the formulation of specific recommendations. The Secretary-General indicated that, based on the comments, some adjustments would be made to the formulation of individual recommendations before ACC for the enhanced role of the Special Initiative, in consultation with the concerned Executive Heads (paras. 41 and 44).

### *Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)*

ACC agreed that the agenda for the spring 2000 ACC session would include a policy discussion on human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (para. 48).

### *Follow-up to global conferences and the Economic and Social Council*

ACC had before it a background note on the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed the hope that an item on preparations for the Conference would be placed in the ACC agenda for its spring 2000 session (paras. 52-53).

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recalled that 14 December 2000 would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and asked ACC members for suggestions in respect of names of successful former

refugees, especially within the United Nations system of organizations, who could serve as examples of hope for refugees (para. 54).

The Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) referred to previous discussions in ACC and the Economic and Social Council on successor arrangements for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. In particular, he stressed the importance of monitoring, prediction, early warning and preparedness in relation to natural disasters. To these ends, science and technology should be given a prominent role in any successor mechanism for the Decade. The Secretary-General indicated that the above comments and recommendations would be taken into due account in finalizing his recommendations to the General Assembly (paras. 55-56).

*Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace*

The Secretary-General invited the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to elaborate on the proposed follow-up by the organizations of the system. The Director-General's proposals included the suggestion to consider applying a "results-based" programming approach, by defining collectively, for each objective and sub-objective in the Programme of Action, the main expected results of the system's actions within a time-frame of 10 years, for example. In order to examine the feasibility of this approach, it was suggested that an ad hoc meeting of the senior officials responsible for programme planning in their respective organizations be convened. The Director-General indicated that UNESCO would be pleased to host such a meeting at its headquarters in January or February 2000, so that a first report would be available for the consideration of ACC in April 2000 (paras. 57 and 59).

ACC members endorsed the proposal and requested the senior officials responsible for programme planning in their respective organizations to examine the feasibility of the proposed approach at an ad hoc meeting, which UNESCO would host in early 2000, and to report thereon to ACC at its April 2000 session (para. 60).

## **D. Administrative Questions**

### **Introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism to enhance the administration of justice in the United Nations system**

ACC took note of the report and recommendation of the Legal Advisers that the introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism in the administration of justice in the United Nations system not be further pursued. The wish was expressed that the meeting of Legal Advisers elaborate its views on expanding the existing procedure for review by the Administrative Tribunals themselves through the introduction of an "extraordinary appeal" process and on the manner in which this appeal process could be improved. ACC also requested the meeting of Legal Advisers to provide information on the process of selecting judges for the Administrative Tribunals and to explore the possibility of seeking, through the relevant intergovernmental organs, an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the judgements of the Administrative Tribunals (para. 67).

*United Nations staff security and safety*

ACC agreed to adopt a decision on United Nations staff security and safety which is reproduced in the annex to the present document.

*The International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)*

ACC members reiterated their strong support for the proposed review of the functioning of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and stressed its urgency. The Committee noted that, if the review was launched, the proposed review group would require solid technical, as well as policy inputs and support. In this connection, it was stressed that, as part of this support, it would be important to provide the group with experience from the private sector as well as human resources experts, including some with legal expertise (paras. 78-79).

**E. Other matters**

*Meeting with the Chairman of ICSC and staff representatives*

ACC members stressed the need for ICSC to ensure that it remained an independent and impartial technical body devoted to safeguarding and strengthening the international civil service. They also stressed the need for substantial improvements in its method of work and functioning, so as to increase the confidence of organizations of the common system and ensure that its decisions were fair, sound and not subject to costly legal challenges (para. 84).

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held its second regular session of 1999 at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 29 and 30 October 1999, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

2. The agenda for the session was as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. The demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment: the institutional and programmatic capacity of the United Nations system to respond flexibly and effectively to the challenges of the next century.
3. Follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming.
4. Follow-up to recent ACC decisions:
  - (a) Coordination of the United Nations system's activities in Africa;
  - (b) Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS);
  - (c) Follow-up to global conferences and the Economic and Social Council;
  - (d) Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.
5. Administrative questions:
  - (a) Introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism to enhance the administration of justice in the United Nations system;
  - (b) United Nations staff security and safety;
  - (c) International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).
6. Other matters:
  - (a) Meeting with the Chairman of ICSC and staff representatives;
  - (b) Other matters brought to the attention of ACC;
  - (c) Other issues;
  - (d) Dates for the spring session of ACC.

3. A private meeting of ACC members was held in the morning of 29 October 1999.

4. The Executive Heads, at the private meeting, *decided to proceed with the review of ACC as proposed by the Secretary-General in a communication he had addressed earlier to the Executive Heads. In this connection, it was agreed that Executive Heads would be invited to provide a*

*two-page contribution outlining what they expected out of an ACC session and, given that, what in their view was the best process to obtain such an outcome. These contributions would be made available to the review team by the Secretary of ACC.*

5. The present report covers the outcome of the discussions at the regular session of the Committee.

## **I. The demands placed on national and international systems by the new global environment: the institutional and programmatic capacity of the United Nations system to respond flexibly and effectively to the challenges of the next century**

6. ACC pursued, under this item, the process of reflection it had initiated at its spring 1999 session on the United Nations system's response to the profound transformations the world is undergoing on the eve of the new millennium, in particular the new challenges brought about by globalization. This reflection built on a prior process of discussions, which ACC had engaged in during the previous two years, on the approaches guiding the reforms under way in most of the organizations of the United Nations, and on the way in which they could be made to complement each other, and shaped to strengthen the overall capacity of the system to meet the demands placed on it by the new global environment. Underlying both sets of discussions was an awareness of the increasing number of public policy issues requiring international responses, and of the consequent need for more effective, flexible, inclusive and result-based mechanisms to ensure such responses.

### **ACC retreat**

7. *At the current session, ACC confirmed the broad conclusions emanating from the "retreat" it had held in April 1999.* At the retreat, ACC members recognized the importance of the system's seizing the opportunity presented by the Millennium Assembly and contributing to it, by system organizations acting together to develop a vision for the system that would take it into the next century and helping define a common agenda for it.

### Shared vision and values

8. Executive Heads considered that the broad concept of sustainable human security and development captured well the broad objectives of the United Nations system to promote peace, development, democracy, social justice, the rule of law and human rights. Sustainable human security and development can serve as the overarching objectives of a common agenda for the United Nations system. An integrated and comprehensive approach is needed to enable each organization to enhance the effectiveness of its own work and to advance the overall objectives of the system.

9. The identity of the United Nations system is defined by the shared values of “responsibility”, “solidarity” and “citizenship”. These broad concepts are underpinned by the core United Nations values of universality; equality, or equal opportunity and participation; justice, democratic process and the rule of law; impartiality, implying independence from ideological, national and interest-group perspectives; and diversity within unity.

### Gaps and challenges

10. Executive Heads at the retreat focused on identifying the main gaps and challenges confronting the system. The most important gaps were between (a) the extraordinary capacity of the world economy to deliver and what it is actually delivering; and between the rich and the poor; (b) the globalized economy and localized authority structures; (c) the new global challenges and the system’s structures and governance mechanisms; (d) the strength of nation States in the United Nations system context and their growing weakness outside of it: national sovereignty, on the one hand, and global standards, on the other; and (e) the system’s capacity to develop standards and rules and its capacity to apply them. Another key gap was the lack of a corporate United Nations system identity: there was as yet no distinct “United Nations voice”.

11. In addition to the gaps identified at the retreat, some trends that shape the external environment and are relevant to defining the challenges confronting the system were highlighted in subsequent inputs from organizations, among them: (a) the growth of middle-income countries and increased reliance on regional blocs; (b) the growing risk of complex man-made and natural disaster-related emergencies; (c) increased urbanization and migration; (d) increased pressure on natural resources and ecosystems; and (e) continued and growing inequalities in access to the benefits of technologies.

### Objectives

12. At the retreat, Executive Heads identified a number of common objectives to enable the system to narrow and, where possible, close the gaps identified and meet the new challenges ahead. These included (a) contributing to the development of new frameworks and institutional arrangements that allowed an optimal response to global challenges; (b) helping to bring the benefits of globalization to people and countries left out, and making global market forces more inclusive and equitable; (c) promoting a common agenda for the United Nations system, based on a comprehensive approach to sustainable human development and human security; and (d) promoting a strengthening of the rule of law globally.

### Strengths and weaknesses

13. It was recognized that the system had unique strengths as well as weaknesses. The strengths of the system included: (a) universality: in terms of the scope of its membership, the range of its functions, its multicultural character and its capacity to give voice to the concerns of all; (b) credibility and moral authority: value-based orientation, underpinned by knowledge, giving expression and operating according to principles and acting for the common good; and (c) convening power which enables the system to contribute to global agenda-setting, and to serve as generator of normative standards and as a vehicle of international cooperation for their attainment. The weaknesses included: (a) the system’s inability to fully exploit the sources of its own strength; (b) lack of coherence in setting goals; (c) inconsistency in implementing initiatives and in monitoring the realization of agreed plans and targets; (d) propensity to be crisis-driven, that is to say, the reactive nature of the system; and (e) self-imposed constraints resulting in a reluctance to be candid about issues and United Nations system responses.

### Areas of action

14. In the light of the above, Executive Heads defined a number of areas for common action: (a) contributing to more inclusive mechanisms for responding to global challenges and for dialogue among multi-stakeholders; (b) helping to build capacity in developing countries to enable them to participate more proactively in setting the global agenda for international dialogue; (c) devising more effective partnerships within the system, including through issue-based networks, and forging deeper relations with civil society; and (d) establishing result-oriented action plans with clear and achievable targets, measurable country-level goals and implementable monitoring, evaluation and reporting procedures.

15. In addition, in subsequent communications from Executive Heads, the need to deepen the definition of the concept of sustainable human security and development was stressed. Specific initiatives for strengthening the United Nations system's capacity were advocated. Particularly noteworthy, in this context, was the proposal for the preparation, perhaps every 10 years, of a system-wide "State of the world report" which would draw on existing "State of" reports that analysed present and future trends; and suggestions for further developing coherent and consistent policy and regulatory frameworks at the global level, and for strengthening concerted planning instruments for United Nations assistance at country and regional levels, responsive to the evolving requirements of different regions and countries, as defined by them.

#### **Guidelines for further inter-agency work**

16. In his opening statement at the current session, *the Secretary-General outlined a number of common strands emerging from the retreat and subsequent contributions from Executive Heads, which were broadly endorsed as guidance for further inter-agency work:*

- C First, the need to set clear goals and work towards them collectively, with clear benchmarks to measure the results of cooperative initiatives, and, as part of that effort, the need for the system to get behind a clear, simple agenda, based on the outcomes of the global conferences. The commitments made, and the targets set at these conferences must be brought together to provide an appealing common agenda for the future work of the system;*
- C Second, the key issues of the mobilization of resources to overcome a major, and growing, constraint on promoting the global agenda, and, related to that, the need for a common effort by the system to reach out and raise international awareness of the work and achievements of the United Nations system;*
- C Cutting across these two basic concerns, the need, in the new era of globalization, to build new and broader partnerships to achieve regional and global objectives.*

#### **Strategic alliances**

17. Elaborating on the last point, *ACC members shared the view that, for the United Nations system, contributing to a more effective response to global challenges involved not only enhancing coordination and coherence within the system itself, but also forging new strategic alliances and partnerships with key stakeholders, including the private sector, based on United Nations values, while preserving the*

*independence and uniqueness of the system and its constituent parts. It was noted that many existing and new initiatives were under way within the system that were based on the broad approaches underlying the "issue-management" system advocated in the Secretary-General's reform programme, and/or embodied elements underlying the concept of "global public policy network".* Thus, many of the ongoing or new initiatives within the system involve efforts, under a lead agency or agencies, to provide for cooperative "issue management" among concerned organizations of the system, in partnership with other concerned intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, in the pursuit of priority objectives that cut across the mandates of individual organizations. They also involve efforts at different levels to create "global public policy networks", that is to say, to link and engage all relevant stakeholders — Governments, multilateral organizations, civil society and the private sector — through flexible interactive arrangements, and to promote broad-based coalitions for advocacy, resource mobilization and joint action, in order to advance global objectives.

18. Attention was drawn in this context to the "roll back malaria" and the "tobacco control" initiatives of the World Health Organization (WHO); the "education of the girl child", an area in which the Secretary-General has recently called for a major effort; and the "elimination of urban slums" initiative of the World Bank. A new major initiative was also presented to ACC of a "Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI)" to engender a new commitment by United Nations organizations, philanthropic foundations, vaccine producing companies and a range of public sector institutions to strengthen immunization programmes and to bring the new vaccines that are becoming available to current and future generations of children. Members of GAVI currently include WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the Rockefeller Foundation, the Bill and Melinda Gates Children's Vaccine Programme and representatives of vaccine producers, bilateral development agencies and developing-country Governments. The alliance will explore new ways of forging public-private partnerships to enable new vaccines to reach all the children who could benefit from them.

#### **ACC's role**

19. *Rather than necessarily launch additional initiatives, ACC should focus on engendering support for ongoing and new initiatives, encouraging exchanges on lessons learned and considering the contribution that they were collectively making to advancing global priority objectives. ACC should also deepen its analysis of cross-sectoral linkages among issues, with a view to clarifying how the strategies and*

*objectives of the various entities interact; and how they can best reinforce each other and can best be reinforced through broad-based coalitions and alliances based on shared values.*

#### **Poverty eradication**

20. *It was reiterated that poverty eradication and the objective of promoting equity, at the national, regional and international levels, should continue to be the overarching goals that should guide ACC in contributing to the development of a focused global agenda, based on the outcomes of global conferences. They should equally be regarded as the basic goals that the system should endeavour to advance through the many new initiatives being launched and the new partnerships and coalitions that these initiatives are endeavouring to bring about.*

21. *A great deal of discussions, both at the ACC private meeting and under the present item, focused on the link between poverty eradication and social development on the one hand, and the expanded Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative on the other.* This link was seen as providing a new important basis for more purposeful collaboration between the Bretton Woods institutions and the other bodies and programmes of the United Nations system, both at the global and at the national level. ACC was briefed on, and reviewed the main strategic concerns underlying, the HIPC initiative, among them: the importance of a comprehensive approach to the many structural dimensions and issues involved; that debt forgiveness should be understood as only the beginning of a process and did not obviate the need for proper policies at all levels to eradicate poverty; and that the degree of preparedness for the implementation of the structural and other changes required varied greatly from country to country and might, in some cases, require an extended time-frame.

22. *Discussions in ACC highlighted a strong, common interest on the part of all ACC members in joining forces so that: the initiative contributed substantially to the strengthening of social services and anti-poverty programmes; the Governments concerned were supported to put in place the governance structures and economic and social policies to benefit from the initiative; and there was both the capacity and political will in the countries concerned to seize the opportunity of the initiative to refocus policies and programmes on human-centred development.* The critical importance of maintaining the principle of additionality of official development assistance (ODA) resources was also strongly emphasized. *The magnitude of the demands on financial resources involved in the initiative implied difficult choices. It also required that there should*

*be a common effort at ensuring that it did not erode donor flows for development assistance,* as the social programmes and services that would be put in place as a result would need to be sustained over time for the initiative itself to succeed and its underlying objectives to be met. In turn, the measures to be pursued to improve governance in the context of the initiative should serve to encourage additional ODA and foreign direct investment (FDI) flows.

23. Commenting on supportive initiatives that could be taken in this regard, Executive Heads drew attention to the importance of programmes in the field of education and training, as well as programmes aimed at reversing the brain-drain, that had multiplier effects and ensured the sustainability of social programmes. In the same context, the importance of employment creation as a key component of anti-poverty strategies, and of related institution-building and entrepreneurial training programmes was emphasized, as was the relevance of the “local social dialogue mechanisms” being promoted by the International Labour Organization (ILO), as potentially key contributions to both good governance and sustainability. The view was also expressed that measures for the prevention of corruption were best pursued, not as a precondition, but as an integral part, of debt relief and aid packages, and that the quality of anti-corruption measures, rather than increasing penalties, was the key to effectiveness and sustainable results.

#### **Developing a “shared language” and mutually supporting activities**

24. *It was recognized that the process of creating coalitions involving a broad range of actors* — which was central to the concept of “global public policy networks” — far from placing the United Nations system in a marginal role, *could and should entail a key role for the United Nations system in identifying public policy issues that required a global common commitment* and in providing the knowledge base and the platform for engaging all stakeholders around shared concerns and basic United Nations values. A precondition is the system’s ability to rally round clear goals and priorities — a process in relation to which ACC has an important contribution to make. *As part of this effort, ACC should develop a “shared language”, for which the work pursued over the years by the United Nations in defining and promoting economic, social and cultural rights, including the rights of the child, and its more recent achievements in pursuing a rights-based approach to poverty eradication, could provide a solid contribution.*

25. *In discussing ACC’s role in deepening the analysis of the impact of globalization and identifying areas where the*

organizations of the system had mutually reinforcing contributions to make, *particular emphasis was also placed on harnessing information and communication technologies in support of sustainable development* — a key area also in the effort to engage the private sector in support of United Nations objectives. Many other areas were mentioned where an “issue management” approach might further enhance the impact of the system. These included a coordinated approach to climate change; the importance of a concerted approach to the looming freshwater crisis, particularly in Africa; and the need for a renewed effort towards the “elimination of urban slums” and, in particular, ensuring land tenure rights for the poor, especially, the land tenure rights of women.

26. It was also pointed out during the discussions that the pursuit of global objectives and the creation of alliances and networks to advance them did not always have to take place at the global level, and that there were issues and objectives common to all countries that were nevertheless most effectively addressed through regional or national responses. While trade and capital flows issues and global environmental concerns, such as the depletion of the ozone layer and the emission of carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), call for global rules and principles and for global monitoring, there are measures — such as the interconnection of gas or electricity or rail networks, the management of river basins, and action to deal with transboundary air pollution — that, though they contribute to global objectives, are best pursued at the regional level. Also, the pursuit of global rules and principles can often benefit from approaches that take into account the diversity of regions and/or build on the sharing of national and regional experiences. In this perspective, the new arrangements being put in place to enhance policy coherence and inter-agency cooperation at the regional level, pursuant to the relevant recommendations of the Economic and Social Council, should be seen as an integral part of the efforts of ACC to strengthen inter-agency coordination and enhance partnerships for the pursuit of global objectives.

## II. Follow-up to the Beijing Platform for Action and gender mainstreaming

27. In introducing the item, the Secretary-General recalled that, at its last session, ACC had agreed to issue a statement as an input to the special session of the General Assembly which was to review the follow-up to the Beijing Conference under the theme “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace in the twenty-first century”. He noted that, in addition to dealing with policy issues relating to the status of

women globally, ACC was also called upon to address management questions relating to gender equality in the secretariats of the United Nations system organizations. Although these were two distinct sets of issues, they were both covered in the Beijing Platform for Action<sup>1</sup> and both would need to be addressed in the statement.

28. The Secretary-General further noted that, in the recent period, ACC had given special attention to the impact of globalization on development, including the inherent risks of marginalization and of increasing inequalities among countries and population groups. The gender impact of globalization was an extremely complex issue. Globalization offered many potential benefits for women but its negative effects also risked impacting women disproportionately. In this context, *the Secretary-General called upon ACC to explore and identify policy interventions that would minimize the risks of globalization and ensure the most positive outcomes for women.*

29. Members of ACC considered that gender concerns were still far from being adequately addressed in macroeconomic policy and agreed that the gender dimensions of globalization were a key area for further study. Recalling that without women as full participants, no development or poverty reduction could effectively take place or be sustainable, *ACC members stressed that gender dimensions should be taken into full account in all operational areas of the work of the United Nations system.* The importance of analysing the effects of increased participation of women in labour markets on family and societal relations at large was also emphasized. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees noted that, in the context of work with refugees, since the Beijing Conference, considerable attention had been given to, and progress made in, assisting women. Specifically, in post-conflict situations such as those in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Rwanda and Kosovo, women had become heads of households and primary caretakers of families and had, as such, been specifically targeted for initiatives that were proving very successful. Such initiatives had a community-building focus and were based on the recognition of the key contribution of women in repairing the social fabric in post-conflict communities. ACC was also informed that a protocol on the trafficking in human beings, especially women and children, was under preparation in connection with the draft United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and would be open for signature by autumn 2000.

30. Reference was made to the recent publication of the *1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development: Globalization, Gender and Work*<sup>2</sup> which had benefited from major and extensive inputs from United Nations system organizations and included an in-depth analysis of many of the

issues under consideration. *Among the issues especially highlighted during the discussion were: equal opportunity policies and programmes aimed at reducing occupational segregation by sex; policies allowing women workers to consolidate the benefits of increased paid employment through access to basic worker rights; and policies addressing the needs of women who formed the bulk of the informal sector. Another issue identified for special attention was the way in which the United Nations system could assist in ensuring that fair value was placed on the “invisible” work of women and was also appropriately reflected in national accounts.* The need to consider how best to integrate the gender dimension into the evolving international financial architecture and the differential impact of financial crises on women were also highlighted. The importance of ensuring fair access for women to credit and production resources, education and health was especially stressed. *ACC agreed that the statement to be prepared for the Beijing plus-five review should present a compelling vision stressing the link between poverty reduction and gender issues. The opportunity should also be seized for the system to express a clear common position on specific policy issues such as gender-based violence, education for women and girls, and reproductive and sexual health rights.*

31. *Executive Heads considered that, prior to Beijing plus five, the system should undertake a comprehensive review of progress made by and within organizations in the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, for discussion at the spring session of ACC.* The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women noted that the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE) had already initiated such a review as an input to Beijing plus five. She noted that many organizations of the system were already far advanced in gender mainstreaming in regard to programming, policy analysis, research and operational activities. She also welcomed the elaboration in a number of organizations of statements on gender policies. In regard to statistics on the advancement of women in the secretariats of the system, she noted that the data compiled through the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) normally had a two-year time lag. Thus, if current figures were to be provided to the review bodies, the system would need to make an additional effort to compile a set of updated statistics. She appreciated the willingness of ACC to review these issues at its spring session, in the light of a report by IACWGE.

32. *Turning specially to management issues, many Executive Heads* noted that significant strides had been made in their secretariats in reaching the goal of 50-50 gender parity, which had in fact been achieved by the United Nations

Population Fund (UNFPA). Nevertheless, it was *agreed that much remained to be done in terms of retaining women and providing adequate career opportunities and conditions of service.* It was noted, for example, that many of the measures benefiting women being promoted by the system at the national level, such as access to childcare and flexible working arrangements, were not being extended to United Nations staff members. *In this connection, it was felt that the family support policy promulgated by the Secretary-General should be fully implemented on a system-wide basis.* Some of the operational organizations noted that, despite their best efforts, their rotation system, and the increasing number of non-family and hardship duty stations, worked against increases in the representation of women. Others found that they still had a very limited pool of women in national services from which to recruit. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Administrator noted that, while women accounted for 36 per cent of headquarters staff, they constituted only 24 per cent of the resident coordinators and appealed to the organizations of the system to put forth more names of qualified women candidates.

33. *Many Executive Heads stressed that one of the major issues that needed to be addressed in order to increase the representation of women was that of spousal employment.* In this connection, the Special Adviser to the Secretary-General drew attention to the “Participating Agencies Mobility System” (PAMS), elaborated by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) to respond to the concerns of spousal employment in relation to inter-agency mobility. The electronic system available through the ACC/CCAQ web site provided an easy and effective means of making the résumés of interested staff members and their spouses available to participating organizations. Consideration was also being given to extending the system to non-United Nations employers in duty stations with a small United Nations presence. While work was proceeding on facilitating spousal employment among or within organizations, a related issue that needed review was that of duty station agreements which, in many cases, did not allow for spousal employment.

34. The Committee agreed that its statement to the special session of the General Assembly should reflect a clear distinction between the “external” messages — to be addressed by ACC to the international community — and “internal” commitments. Also, in relation to the latter, a distinction should be drawn between measures affecting the programmes and operations of the respective organizations and those relating to the management of their staff. *It was agreed that the statement to be addressed by ACC to the special session of the General Assembly on Beijing plus five would be finalized through correspondence, taking into*

*account the conclusions and views expressed during the ACC discussions.*

### III. Follow-up to recent ACC decisions

#### A. Coordination of the United Nations system's activities in Africa

35. The Secretary-General noted that the United Nations system's work in Africa had been a long-standing item in the ACC agenda, reflecting the priority that all the parts of the system continued to assign to supporting African development. He indicated that he was pleased with the response of the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to his report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) and thanked members of ACC for their support and initiatives in following up on the report.

36. *The Secretary-General recalled that his report had raised the issue of the multitude of international initiatives in Africa and that this had been one of the main issues addressed at the first inter-agency meeting for the Africa region held in Nairobi in March 1999, under the chairmanship of the Deputy Secretary-General.*

37. The Deputy Secretary-General noted that the meeting had reviewed existing inter-agency mechanisms and had sought to devise arrangements that would enhance the coherence of the United Nations system's activities without creating additional structures for coordination. *As many United Nations system activities in Africa fell within the framework of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s, the meeting had concluded that other relevant United Nations system activities could also be brought under that "umbrella". It was thus agreed at the meeting that the Special Initiative would, provisionally, constitute the most appropriate mechanism for the coordination of the United Nations system's activities in Africa.*

38. As a follow-up to the agreement reached at the Nairobi meeting, the co-Chairs of the Steering Committee on the Special Initiative had prepared a report on how the Special Initiative could assume an expanded coordination role. The report had been circulated at the eighth meeting of the Steering Committee on the Special Initiative and subsequently submitted to the Deputy Secretary-General. A set of recommendations aimed at harmonizing and simplifying existing arrangements had been

formulated on that basis, which were now placed before ACC. In her comments, the Deputy Secretary-General drew special attention to the importance of monitoring progress and of keeping Member States systematically informed about the scope and impact of United Nations system initiatives in support of African development.

39. *ACC welcomed the work under way and endorsed the broad thrust of those recommendations before it, which aimed to promote more collaborative actions, reinforce synergies, avoid duplication and overlap and generally bring about greater coherence in the work of the United Nations system in Africa, with the Steering Committee on the Special Initiative providing a common framework for overseeing the overall effort.*

40. *General support was also expressed for the thrust of other recommendations stressing the importance of:*

- C The United Nations system's work in Africa continuing to reflect Africa's own vision and priorities;*
- C Information sharing and communication, particularly through electronic means, on initiatives in Africa, both as a requirement to ensure overall United Nations system effectiveness and vis-à-vis development partners outside of the United Nations system;*
- C Effective and non-duplicative ways of monitoring and reporting on United Nations system development activities in Africa, including identifying best practices, drawing lessons from intercountry experiences and evaluating major implementation constraints.*

41. *In the discussions, various suggestions were made concerning the formulation of specific recommendations.* It was suggested that some of the recommendations could be merged, and that others would benefit from improved formulation.

42. Caution was expressed concerning the proposed intention of "revisiting" the Special Initiative clusters, which might risk affecting the carefully negotiated division of labour on which they were based. Instead, it was suggested, the lead agencies of the clusters could be encouraged to ensure "inclusiveness" of all United Nations system entities. In the same context, it was pointed out that the expanded role of the Steering Committee on the Special Initiative needed to be clarified and better articulated. The view was at the same time expressed that existing clusters did not adequately reflect all key priorities, such as water, and that resource flows for the implementation of the Special Initiative needed to be assessed. It was further observed that excessive reporting should be avoided and that the proposed network of communication focal

points under the Special Initiative should not duplicate the information products generated by the clusters.

43. Appreciation was expressed that no additional standing mechanisms or meetings were being proposed for regional coordination and that the intention was to bring about a further streamlining of inter-agency arrangements. Likewise, appreciation was expressed for the fact that meetings of the Steering Committee on the Special Initiative would take place in Africa. The importance of ensuring that the Special Initiative and existing country-level coordination tools (the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)), (the common country assessment (CCA)) were made mutually reinforcing and non-duplicative was also stressed.

44. *The Secretary-General indicated that, based on the comments, some adjustments would be made to the formulation of individual recommendations before ACC for the enhanced role of the Special Initiative, in consultation with the concerned Executive Heads.*

## **B. Human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)**

45. In introducing this item, the Secretary-General recalled that the ACC session in April 1999 had asked the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions) (CCAQ(PER)) to place in its agenda the issue of United Nations staff members and dependants living with human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) and to report back to ACC on any policy-level considerations and joint actions required.

46. In response to that request, CCAQ(PER) established a Task Force which has so far met twice. A matrix has been drawn up listing six main areas of concern, namely: (a) the current ACC policy and its implementation; (b) the evidence base (that is to say, an estimation of the number of staff and their dependants living with HIV/AIDS); (c) social security; (d) the provision of drugs, laboratory and other support care; (e) prevention; and (f) other related activities. A questionnaire based on this matrix has been sent to all organizations of the United Nations system. On the basis of the responses, a report will be prepared and submitted to ACC at its spring 2000 session.

47. The Secretary-General drew attention to the proposal that the agenda for the spring 2000 session of ACC should provide for a substantive policy discussion on HIV/AIDS. Speaking in his capacity as the Chairperson of the Committee of Co-sponsoring Organizations of the Joint United Nations

Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS), the Administrator of UNDP endorsed the proposal and suggested that the head of the Joint Programme be invited to report to the meeting. Several organizations supported these suggestions.

48. *ACC agreed that the agenda for the spring 2000 ACC session would include a policy discussion on HIV/AIDS.*

## **C. Follow-up to global conferences and the Economic and Social Council**

49. The Secretary-General thanked ACC members for their active contribution to the revitalization of the Economic and Social Council. He noted that a major component of this revitalization had been the very active and constructive policy dialogue established by the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions. He thanked the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for their extraordinary cooperation in making these exchanges possible. He also thanked the Director-General of ILO for his contribution to the success of the high-level segment of the Council.

50. The Executive Director of UNFPA stated that the twenty-first special session of the General Assembly on the International Conference on Population and Development plus five had been an outstanding success because of a steady consensus-building effort and an open and transparent discussion process, and five successive years of constant progress in implementing the Cairo agreements on population as a development issue of concern to all nations. A significant element of the outcome of the special session had been the agreement reached on concrete benchmarks to guide further implementation of the Cairo Programme of Action of the International Conference on Programme and Development.<sup>3</sup> These could be used also for other five-year reviews since many of the same issues were likely to arise. Stressing the importance of close inter-agency cooperation in support of the upcoming special sessions conducting five-year reviews, of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), she noted that the secretariat of the twenty-first Special Session of the Assembly had initiated meetings with those of the special session on the Social Summit plus five and on Beijing plus five.

51. The Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs informed ACC members of the state of preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social

Development and further initiatives and thanked the ILO, the World Bank and other bodies that were actively contributing to the process. He also reviewed preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on Beijing plus five, in which some 20,000 non-governmental organizations were expected to participate.

52. In reviewing forthcoming conferences and special events, ACC had before it a background note on the *World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance*, to be held between end July and early September 2001. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, who would be serving as Secretary-General of the Conference, in introducing the note, stated that the overall aims and objectives of the Conference were:

(a) To review progress made against racial discrimination, to reappraise obstacles for further progress and to devise ways to overcome them;

(b) To consider how to ensure a better application of existing standards to combat racism;

(c) To increase awareness about racism and its consequences;

(d) To make recommendations on how the activities and mechanisms of the United Nations system could be more effective in fighting racism;

(e) To review the political, historical, economic, social, cultural and other factors that had contributed to racism;

(f) To make recommendations with regard to new national, regional and international measures that could be adapted to fight racism;

(g) To make recommendations on how to ensure that the United Nations had sufficient resources to be able to carry out effective programmes to combat racism and racial discrimination.

53. The United Nations High Commissioner drew particular attention to the areas of cooperation within the United Nations system identified in the note, and sought the support and assistance of the system in organizing the Conference and ensuring its success. She also sought suggestions as to individuals who could be appointed as goodwill ambassadors for the Conference. The Universal Postal Union (UPU) was invited to consider the issuance of a commemorative stamp for the occasion. *The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights expressed the hope that an item on preparations for the Conference could be placed in the ACC agenda for its spring 2000 session.*

54. *The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees recalled that 14 December 2000 would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). She intended to celebrate the occasion in a positive way and asked ACC members for suggestions of names of successful former refugees, especially within the United Nations system of organizations, who could serve as examples of hope for refugees.*

55. *The Secretary-General of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) referred to previous discussions in ACC and the Economic and Social Council on successor arrangements for the International Decade on Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). In particular, he stressed the importance of monitoring, prediction, early warning and preparedness in relation to natural disasters and noted that the annual report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly had also emphasized their crucial importance for sustainable development. To these ends, science and technology should be given a prominent role in any successor mechanism for the Decade. In particular, the Secretary-General of WMO proposed that the Secretary-General's recommendations to the Assembly on the subject envisage the establishment of a scientific and technical advisory body to assist in promoting applications of science and technology which have increasingly shown their effectiveness in disaster prevention. He also considered it important that the inter-agency task force, to be proposed in the report of the Secretary-General, should take into due account scientific and other relevant aspects of disaster mitigation: its composition should not give undue prominence to relief and rehabilitation aspects over the science and technology component of disaster mitigation, and any system of rotation in its membership should ensure a continued presence of the scientific and technical organizations involved in disaster prevention. Finally, the secretariat to be tasked with the follow-up to the Decade and the servicing of the proposed advisory body and the inter-agency task force should be a distinct inter-agency entity for the whole system, and should be separate and not identified primarily with relief and rehabilitation activities.*

56. *The Secretary-General indicated that the above comments and recommendations would be taken into due account in finalizing his recommendations to the General Assembly.*

## D. Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace

57. In introducing this item, *the Secretary-General* expressed satisfaction that the General Assembly had recently adopted the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace, a concept that was at the centre of the core values of the United Nations system. This was a major achievement by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and a major contribution of UNESCO to the United Nations and the United Nations system as a whole, which must now assume ownership of this potentially extremely important instrument. He *invited the Director-General of UNESCO to elaborate on the proposed follow-up by the organizations of the system.*

58. The Director-General of UNESCO recalled previous instances when UNESCO initiatives had led to General Assembly action, namely, the 1995 Declaration of Principles on Tolerance and the Follow-up Plan of Action for the United Nations Year for Tolerance (taken note of by the Assembly in resolution 51/95 of 12 December 1996) and the Universal Declaration on the Human Genome and Human Rights (endorsed by the Assembly in resolution 53/152 of 9 December 1998) and reiterated UNESCO's satisfaction at the adoption of the Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace on 13 September 1999 (Assembly resolution 53/243). He acknowledged, in particular, the very constructive role of the Assembly Coordinator, the Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, in this process. He added that a great number of heads of delegations at the UNESCO General Conference, currently in session, had expressed their strong support for the Programme. He underlined the timeliness and immediate relevance of the Programme of Action for the International Year for the Culture of Peace, the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations and the Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. He also provided some examples of relevant activities already initiated by UNESCO, such as the project entitled "Disarming History", dealing with revision of school manuals; encounters of journalists from neighbouring countries in potential conflict situations; and activities for the promotion of press freedom and the development of radio programmes focused on peace-building.

59. The Director-General expressed his personal gratification at being able to present, at his last ACC session, proposals for a proactive role by the United Nations system in launching the implementation of the Programme of Action. *The Director-General's proposals included the suggestion to consider applying a "results-based" programming approach, by defining collectively, for each objective and sub-objective in*

*the Programme of Action, the main expected results of the system's actions within a time-frame, of 10 years, for example. Each organization could define its specific objectives and expected results within that overall framework. The Director-General further noted that, while such an undertaking was ambitious, it could serve as a test case to see how the United Nations system was able to articulate its programmes in relation to a set of "core objectives", and whether it was possible to define a set of "core results" at the level of the system as a whole. In order to examine the feasibility of this approach, it was suggested that an ad hoc meeting of the senior officials responsible for programme planning in their respective organizations be convened. The Director-General indicated that UNESCO would be pleased to host such a meeting at its headquarters in January or February 2000, so that a first report would be available for the consideration of ACC in April 2000.*

60. *ACC members endorsed the proposal and requested the senior officials responsible for programme planning in their respective organizations to examine the feasibility of the proposed approach at an ad hoc meeting, which UNESCO would host in early 2000, and to report thereon to ACC at its April 2000 session.*

## IV. Administrative questions

### A. Introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism to enhance the administration of justice in the United Nations system

61. ACC was informed that, in response to an ACC request at its spring session, the ad hoc meeting of Legal Advisers had set up a working group to elaborate a paper, for ACC consideration, on the feasibility of introducing a second-tier appellate mechanism in existing arrangements for the administration of justice within the United Nations system. The Legal Advisers had concluded that, notwithstanding the desirability of establishing a two-tier system, there was no requirement under international law to afford a right of appeal in the context of civil suits. The matter was therefore primarily a policy question which should take into account the fact that the cost of establishing and maintaining a second-tier appellate mechanism would be considerable, considering the limited number of potential cases likely to be referred to it. Hence, unless instructed otherwise, the Legal Advisers were not inclined to pursue the matter further. The Legal Adviser of UNESCO, however, had presented a dissenting opinion, arguing that a system of two-tier judicial appeals responded to one of the basic principles of democratic law.

62. The Director-General of UNESCO stressed the importance of the issue for staff policy and management. He emphasized that, in his view, the current functioning of the Administrative Tribunals did not correspond to democratic principles and he provided relevant examples of recent judgements. He thus urged that the issue be studied further. At the very least, a system should be established for the ILO Administrative Tribunal itself to review or re-examine specific cases, at the request of either administration or staff.

63. The Under-Secretary-General for Management noted that, under current arrangements for the administration of justice in the United Nations system, the Joint Appeals Boards served as the first-tier appeal mechanism and the United Nations and ILO Administrative Tribunals as the second-tier appeal mechanism. He considered that, while there were questions regarding the consistency of the jurisprudence followed by the two Tribunals, the present system of administration of justice was, on the whole, working in a satisfactory manner. He recommended that ACC adopt the recommendation of the Legal Advisers.

64. The Director-General of UPU supported the recommendation of the Legal Advisers, noting that the costs of a second-tier appellate mechanism would not justify the number of cases likely to be brought before it. He suggested at the same time that recent decisions taken by the United Nations and ILO Administrative Tribunals be studied further, from the point of view of their consistency in the application of international law. The Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) underscored the importance of ensuring fairness in the administration of justice in the United Nations system, observing that certain judgements of the Administrative Tribunals lacked consistency. He suggested that consideration be given to the process of selecting judges for the Administrative Tribunals and also to the possibility of seeking advisory opinions from the International Court of Justice.

65. The Under-Secretary-General for Management pointed out that recourse to advisory opinions from the International Court of Justice had been discontinued two years earlier in the case of the United Nations Administrative Tribunal. However, such recourse might still be open in the case of the ILO Administrative Tribunal.

66. ACC stressed the need for the administration of justice and the functioning of the Administrative Tribunals to be conducive to the effective management of human resources within the system and to be responsive to the evolving requirements that it faced. Related issues were also raised in subsequent discussions concerning the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC).

67. *ACC took note of the report and recommendation of the Legal Advisers that the introduction of a second-tier appellate mechanism in the administration of justice in the United Nations system should not be further pursued. The wish was expressed that the meeting of Legal Advisers elaborate its views on expanding the existing procedure for review by the Administrative Tribunals themselves through the introduction of an "extraordinary appeal" process and on the manner in which this appeal process could be improved. ACC also requested the meeting of Legal Advisers to provide information on the process of selecting judges for the Administrative Tribunals and to explore the possibility of seeking, through the relevant intergovernmental organs, an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice on the judgements of the Administrative Tribunals.*

## **B. United Nations staff security and safety**

68. The Secretary-General opened the discussions by recalling that the United Nations system had, in the recent past, taken a number of steps to enhance the security and safety of United Nations system personnel, many of which had had a positive impact. Nevertheless, given the volatile and violent situations in which United Nations system staff were called upon to carry out their duties, it was necessary to intensify efforts at all levels. Within the system, it was important to ensure that measures that were jointly agreed upon were supported by each organization, administratively as well as financially. At the international level, the United Nations system must insist that concerned Governments conduct vigorous investigations into all security incidents involving United Nations system personnel. Governments must also be urged to sign and ratify the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel (General Assembly resolution 49/59, annex) which had only 29 ratifications to date. The Secretary-General also expressed the view that, while appeals to donors for contributions to the Trust Fund for Security of personnel of the United Nations system in the field should be reiterated, relying on voluntary contributions to fund arrangements for security was not sustainable in the long term, and other approaches, based on assessed contributions, should therefore be actively re-examined.

69. The United Nations Security Coordinator stressed the need for the United Nations system as a whole to reiterate to Governments that they were accountable for the security and safety of United Nations system personnel. Too often, United Nations system staff were expected to operate in conflict areas without any adequate security. Given the breadth of United

Nations involvement around the world, present security provisions for the system were wholly inadequate. Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) staff, including field representatives, amounted to only 46 people. They were expected to deal with the security concerns of 33,000 international staff around the world, or approximately 100,000 people when dependants and local staff were counted. He also stressed the need of including security experience and training as prerequisites for resident coordinators, who were called upon in crisis situations to serve as the system's "designated security officials". The system had to make the point, consistently, that it cared about staff safety, and to make security a clear priority, in order to ensure that security directives were taken seriously at all levels of the organizations, as was not always the case.

70. Members of the Committee concurred that every effort should be made, by all members of the system and at every opportunity, to remind Governments of their responsibilities for the security and safety of staff, and to hold them accountable for the safety of staff and for the full investigation of security incidents. In addition, while increased voluntary contributions from member States should continue to be sought, the system itself should take the lead in establishing security as a priority, by making adequate provision for it in the programme budgets, through redeployment if necessary. The responsibility of the system towards locally recruited personnel also needed to be given renewed attention. While fully agreeing on the importance for all organizations of the system of compliance with UNSECOORD security directives, some members of ACC considered that these directives needed to be more field-based, and could benefit from fuller consultations with the humanitarian agencies.

71. Members of the Committee concurred with the view of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees who stressed that staff security needed to be dealt with at all levels: political, legal, operational and institutional. At the political level, there was a need to give renewed attention to the issue of the "threshold", in the face of growing international tolerance for violent acts against humanitarian workers. This was a matter for the Secretary-General and ACC to pursue. At the legal level, it was important to promote vigorously the ratification of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and to start work on an additional protocol dealing with protection of civilian staff. At the operational and institutional level, continued discussions with UNSECOORD were essential on a number of issues, including conditions justifying resort to armed escorts, discipline among United Nations system staff and the extent of delegation of security decisions to the field.

72. Given the many recent instances of security situations deteriorating very rapidly, ACC stressed the need for every field office to have a security plan regardless of the current situation. In this connection, the Committee agreed that security training and stress counselling should be systematically included in training packages for resident coordinators, in their capacity as designated officials.

73. Concern was also expressed regarding the adequacy of the level of compensation for families of staff killed in the line of duty, and the amount of time it took to process these payments. It was recalled that the compensation for professional staff amounted to \$250,000, and that for local staff it was five times the annual salary. The Secretary-General considered that the issues should be actively pursued, and requested the Deputy Secretary-General to arrange for them to be reviewed, possibly through an inter-agency working group.

74. The Committee agreed that there should be a renewed sense of urgency with regard to security and safety of staff. Among the most urgent issues identified for special attention in the immediate future were those of the system's responsibility to local staff; financing for security; relations with Governments regarding their responsibilities towards United Nations system staff; and the adequacy and level of compensation for staff killed in the line of duty. ACC requested that work on these issues be actively pursued, and the outcome reported at the ACC spring 2000 session.

75. In the light of these discussions, ***ACC agreed to adopt a decision on United Nations staff security and safety which is reproduced in the annex.***

76. Further to the ACC April 1999 discussions on the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers (Y2K), the Secretary-General asked the Secretaries-General of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to brief the Committee on the latest information at their disposal regarding the aviation and communication aspects of the issue. The Secretary-General of ICAO said that he could be quite positive regarding Y2K compliance by the aviation industry. He was confident, based upon information received from member States and airlines, that the level of aviation safety would not be adversely affected. The Secretary-General of ITU for his part noted that while many countries, with the assistance of ITU, had taken steps to ensure that their telecommunications equipment would be Y2K-compliant, this required a considerable quantity of human and financial resources such as were not available to a number of developing countries. He felt, therefore, that some communication problems should be anticipated.

### C. International Civil Service Commission (ICSC)

77. The Secretary-General informed the Committee that document A/54/483 containing the proposed composition of a review group on the functioning of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) was now before the General Assembly. The document emphasized the support that the proposed review had at all levels of the system and advocated a broad approach to the exercise, focusing on the future of the international civil service and the integrity of the common system.

78. *ACC members reiterated their strong support for the proposed review of the functioning of ICSC and stressed its urgency.* Many Executive Heads reiterated their concerns over the many serious problems confronting the common system. Among the issues highlighted were the increasing difficulties being encountered in attracting and retaining qualified staff — especially in certain technical areas — because, *inter alia*, of discrepancies in levels of compensation between the United Nations system and other employers. Given the present system of post adjustments, this problem was further exacerbated in certain high-risk duty stations where compensation packages were proving increasingly insufficient as regards attracting qualified staff. The capacity of the United Nations system to respond to the challenges posed by the rapidly changing international environment required a more flexible common system, one able to adapt to evolving technical and substantive requirements. It was suggested, therefore, that the review, in addressing the future of the common system, should focus on the need to provide managers with more flexibility in their management of human resources, while preserving the underlying unity of the system.

79. *The Committee noted that, if the review was launched, the proposed review group would require solid technical, as well as policy inputs and support. In this connection, it was stressed that as part of this support, it would be important to provide the group with experience from the private sector as well as human resources experts, including some with legal expertise.*

80. The Committee noted that the Fifth Committee had just begun its consideration of the item and requested to be kept informed of the outcome of these deliberations.

### V. Other matters

#### A. Meeting with the Chairman of ICSC and staff representatives

81. In accordance with previous practice, ACC heard statements from the Chairman of ICSC and the representatives of the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) and the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations (FICSA).

82. In presenting the work of the Commission during the year, its Chairman highlighted the continuing work of ICSC in developing a framework for human resources management. He referred specifically to the updating of the 1954 Standards of Conduct in the International Civil Service; the consideration by the Commission of the issue of the post adjustment at Geneva, and the reasons for its recommendation to the General Assembly that present levels be maintained; the evolution of the net remuneration margin for 1999 and the problem of low levels of margin at senior managerial levels which might have to be corrected with a differentiated salary increase by grades in tandem with a real salary increase; and the review by the Commission of the floor formula for the allowance for dependent children of General Service staff. On the proposed ACC amendment to the ICSC Statute, the Commission had concluded that there was no need for it, as very few ICSC decisions and recommendations had been successfully challenged before the Administrative Tribunals. Opinions rendered by the advisory panels would not in any case be binding on the Administrative Tribunals, administrations or staff representatives, and would not, therefore, necessarily act as a deterrent to further litigation. ICSC has decided to submit its observations on this issue to the Assembly and to the United Nations Legal Counsel. The ICSC Chairman also announced that, next year, the Commission would be marking its twenty-fifth anniversary and invited organizations of the common system to join ICSC in celebrating this event.

83. ACC recalled that the proposed amendment to the ICSC Statute, to enable organizations within the common system to request an advisory opinion on the legality of ICSC decisions, had been unanimously agreed upon by the Legal Advisers of the United Nations system, following consultations with the Presidents of the Administrative Tribunals. ACC had endorsed the proposed amendment and requested that it be placed before the General Assembly for its consideration. The motivation for the amendment was to avoid the recurrence of problems, such as those that had resulted from the ICSC decision concerning the abolition of the language factor in Rome, where the organizations concerned had queried the ICSC decision in question but, as participants in the common system, had eventually complied with it. The Administrative

Tribunals had subsequently rendered judgements that found the ICSC decision to be illegal. Substantial and unbudgeted costs (US\$ 9.6 million) had been imposed upon the organizations concerned because of the illegality of the ICSC decision. The amendment was seen as a concrete step towards preventing such situations from recurring and thereby improving the functioning of the common system.

84. *ACC members stressed the need for ICSC to ensure that it remained an independent and impartial technical body devoted to safeguarding and strengthening the international civil service. They also stressed the need for substantial improvements in its method of work and functioning, so as to increase the confidence of organizations of the common system and ensure that its decisions were fair and sound and were not subject to costly legal challenges.*

85. The Chairman of ICSC explained that the Commission, while not opposing the ACC proposal to amend its Statute, did not see a need for it. The decisions of the Commission were reached after careful consideration and after consulting the United Nations Legal Adviser as well as its own legal experts. The Administrative Tribunals had ruled against the decisions of the Commission only in very few instances. The decision of the Commission on the language factor in Rome had been overturned purely on technical grounds, because of the failure of the Commission to take local market conditions into account.

86. It was observed that, in any event, the proposed amendment of the ICSC Statute, along with the proposal to establish a review group to examine the membership, mandate and functioning of ICSC, was currently under consideration by member States. It would be up to the General Assembly to reach a decision on these matters, which ACC hoped would be positive.

87. The statements of the staff representatives focused, *inter alia*, on issues related to human resources management, in the light of ongoing reforms and continuing financial constraints in the United Nations system. In this regard, the representative of CCISUA made a number of positive and forward-looking proposals. Staff representatives stressed the need to address the problems arising from the proliferation of different types of contracts. They also highlighted the need for concrete measures to safeguard staff safety and security, particularly in the light of recent events in East Timor, Kosovo and Burundi. They called for improved staff-management relations; a more effective and responsive career management system; the recognition of domestic partnerships for dependency purposes; long-term care insurance; the arresting of the deterioration in conditions of service; and the observance of objectivity and transparency in the conduct of salary surveys. The President of FICSA expressed strong support for the

establishment of a review group to examine the mandate, membership and functioning of ICSC. On the retroactive application of a new salary scale that would reduce the salaries of national staff in Kosovo by one third, the FICSA representative requested that the decision on the matter be rescinded, as no salary survey had been conducted and no inter-agency and staff-management consultations had taken place.

88. The Secretary-General and members of ACC thanked staff representatives for their statements. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in particular expressed appreciation to FICSA for bringing up the issue of the local staff salary scale assessment in Kosovo. She pointed out that this assessment had been carried out without prior involvement of agencies' field staff. The UNHCR administration and staff council were pursuing the matter, as they were both concerned that salary scales should be implemented in a just manner for all local staff. She appreciated the Secretary-General's intention to look further into the matter.

## **B. Other matters brought to the attention of ACC**

89. ACC took note of a number of actions taken by its subsidiary bodies, as follows:

(a) CCAQ Financial and Budgetary Questions (FB) had approved revised United Nations Accounting Standards (UNAS) on ACC's behalf;

(b) The Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) had approved, on ACC's behalf, the ACC guidance note on the United Nations system and the International Year of Volunteers, 2001;

(c) CCPOQ had adopted, on ACC's behalf, further guidelines on the functioning of the resident coordinator system;

(d) The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) had reviewed the state of play with regard to the establishment of the Environmental Management Group (EMG). Members of IACSD underscored the need for the United Nations system to agree on a common view with respect to the mandate, terms of reference and criteria for membership as well as the working methods of EMG through consultations. Once the results of inter-agency consultations on the EMG are approved by ACC, information on the above matters will be included in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly. In the meanwhile, the Assembly will be briefed on the consultative process launched in the United Nations system with respect to the establishment of EMG.

90. ACC also took note of the following proposed appointments:

(a) The recommendation of CCAQ(FB) to extend the appointment of its Secretary, Mr. Peter Leslie, for a two-year term commencing on 1 January 2000;

(b) The recommendation of CCPOQ to extend the appointment of its Secretary, Mr. Eckhard W. Hein, for a two-year term commencing on 1 February 2000;

(c) The recommendation of the ACC Subcommittee on Nutrition that the term of its current Chairman, Mr. Richard Jolly, be extended for one more year, up to 31 December 2000, with Mr. Jolly to be succeeded by Mr. A. Namanga Ngongi, Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP), for a two-year period (2001-2002);

(d) The nomination by the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC) of Mr. Tore Brevik, Director of Communications and Public Information of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), as its Chairman for a two-year term (2000-2001).

91. ACC noted the following scheduled meetings of the subsidiary bodies:

IACSD	New York	Last week in January 2000
IACWGE	New York	23-25 February 2000
CCPOQ	Geneva	28 February to 2 March 2000

92. The next session of ACC, to be co-hosted by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and WFP in Rome, will be held on 6 and 7 April 2000. ACC requested the Organizational Committee to finalize arrangements for the session, in the light of relevant decisions taken at the current session.

93. Since the term of office of the Director-General of UNESCO would be coming to an end before the next meeting of ACC, the Secretary-General, on behalf of ACC members, paid tribute to Mr. Federico Mayor for his outstanding contribution to international cooperation and the work of ACC.

#### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.96.IV.13), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.IV.8.

<sup>3</sup> *Report of the International Conference on Population and Development, Cairo, 5-13 September 1994* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.95.XIII.18), chap. I, resolution 1, annex.

## Annex

### ACC decision on United Nations staff security and safety

Over the past months, there has been a substantial increase in the number and gravity of attacks and threats against United Nations system staff including, *inter alia*, the murder of staff members in Somalia and Pristina, the assassination of two officials in Burundi and the taking of hostages in Georgia.

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) considers this state of affairs intolerable and deplores the fact that the threshold of international tolerance for violent acts against civilian United Nations system staff continues to rise.

We, the Executive Heads members of ACC, decide:

- C That a comprehensive approach needs to be fully and urgently implemented and concerted action taken to ensure the security and safety of staff, including local staff, in all duty stations;
- C That such an approach requires action by Member States and the secretariats alike, at Headquarters and in the field, at the political, legal, institutional and operational levels;
- C That every effort will be made by all members of the system, and at every opportunity, to raise with Member States, as well as other parties to conflict, their responsibility and accountability for the safety of staff and the full investigation of security incidents;
- C That designated officials and security management teams will be held individually and collectively responsible and accountable for ensuring the safety and security of staff and for taking all necessary measures to that end;
- C That all necessary steps will be taken to ensure that adequate funds and staff are available for security measures, including dedicated funding for security measures, preferably from programme budgets;
- C That security and stress management training will be provided for all staff in the field and that such training is mandatory;
- C To initiate a review of the adequacy, level and timeliness of the compensation to families of all staff members killed in the line of duty;
- C That close and continuous inter-agency coordination with regard to the security implications of Y2K will be maintained;
- C To closely monitor the implementation of these measures.

ACC also decides to bring to the attention of Governments:

- C Their primary responsibility for ensuring the security and safety of all United Nations system staff and their accountability for any acts committed in their territories affecting the security and safety of staff ;
- C The fact that only 29 Member States have ratified the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and that consideration should be given to elaborating an additional protocol to cover all civilian staff of all United Nations system entities working in a given country;
- C Its appreciation to those countries that have contributed funds for security training and encouragement of others to do the same, so that more staff members can be provided with basic tools for survival, before they are assigned to the increasing number of high-risk duty stations.