



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
5 November 2002

Original: English

---

**Fifty-seventh session**  
Agenda item 90  
**Training and research**

## United Nations University

### Report of the Secretary-General\*

---

\* The document was submitted late to the conference services without the explanation required under paragraph 8 of General Assembly resolution 53/208 B, by which the Assembly decided that, if a report is submitted late, the reason should be included in a footnote to the document.

## Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction . . . . .	1–3	3
II. Global United Nations conferences . . . . .	4–10	3
III. United Nations standing processes and the United Nations University . . . . .	11	5
IV. United Nations University research programmes . . . . .	12–29	5
V. Coordination and interaction within the United Nations system . . . . .	30–38	9
VI. United Nations University as a bridge between international stakeholders . . . . .	39	11
VII. Conclusion . . . . .	40	12

## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 49/124 of 19 December 1994 on the United Nations University (UNU), the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report on innovative measures to improve the communication and interaction between the University and other bodies in the United Nations system and to ensure the integration of the work of the University into all relevant activities of the system.

2. The present report should be read in conjunction with the report of the Council of the United Nations University on the work of the University in 2001,<sup>1</sup> which contains a comprehensive section on the interaction between the University and the United Nations system.

3. Enhanced relations with the United Nations, while preserving the autonomy of the University, is a key policy objective of UNU as set forth in its charter. Within this framework, the mission of the University is to contribute, through research and capacity-building, to the resolution of pressing problems that are of concern to the United Nations. It thus plays four basic roles: as an international community of scholars; as a bridge between the United Nations and the international community; as a think tank for the United Nations; and as an instrument for capacity development, especially in developing countries. These objectives have been further highlighted in the UNU strategic plan for 2000, which outlines a vision to make UNU a more effective research and capacity-development organization that makes relevant, timely and beneficial contributions to the United Nations. As set out in the strategic plan, the work of the University is characterized by its focus on topics that are the key concerns of the United Nations, namely, pressing problems of human security and development; intellectual objectivity and integrity; bringing together theory and practice in optimal ways to generate new insights and policy recommendations; and a truly global perspective, achieved through an international network of scholars.

## II. Global United Nations conferences

4. The United Nations University has been closely involved in substantive work in support of major United Nations conferences. UNU has undertaken special policy studies that were made available to the preparatory bodies of United Nations conferences and/or to the conferences themselves. The University has also organized special events related to themes raised in United Nations conferences or has initiated work related to their follow-up.

5. A UNU senior research fellow participated in the first meeting of the International Forum for Social Development on 7 February 2002 in New York, a new initiative in follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

6. The UNU Press released a new edition of a book on trade, environment and the millennium,<sup>2</sup> which provided an overview of the key issues to be negotiated at the World Trade Organization's ministerial meeting in Qatar. In this new edition, the contributors revised their contributions to the first edition in the light of the failed negotiations in Seattle and other developments in the World Trade Organization (WTO) over the previous two years. They also focused on the special interests of developing countries in the Doha negotiations, as many WTO member Governments believe that a new round of multilateral trade negotiations is essential in order to

ensure a stable multilateral trading system that fully represents the interests of developing countries.

7. UNU had a double presence at the International Conference on Financing for Development, which was held from 18 to 22 March 2002 in Monterrey, Mexico. UNU organized a panel discussion on civil society and global finance: promises and challenges, based on a UNU and Warwick University project on the same topic. Speakers included project participants, such as the general manager of the Bank for International Settlements, the Coordinator of the Financing for Development Global Forum and project co-director Jan Aart Scholte, a renowned expert on globalization. The project volume<sup>3</sup> was also launched at the Conference. Bringing together 20 leading activists, officials and researchers from five continents, the volume shows how civil society can play an important and growing role in global finance. Also in regard to the Monterrey Conference, a two-year study by the UNU World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER) on capital flows to developing countries since the Asian crisis: how to manage their volatility, and its findings and recommendations were presented at a press conference in New York on 18 September. The study was conducted by leading economists Ricardo French Davis of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean and Stephany Griffith Jones, Professor at the Institute of Development Studies, Sussex University. Their report concludes that the volatility and reversibility of capital flows into developing countries are major causes of recent large, frequent and developmentally costly crises, and outlines measures to encourage higher and more sustained capital flows to give greater dynamism to developing countries and protect against capital flow volatility.

8. The University has made a concerted effort to provide input throughout the entire preparatory process leading to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002. Since its inception, the University has focused a substantial portion of its work on the pursuit of sustainable development. In this context, UNU submitted a special report to the Preparatory Committee for the Summit at its second session, which was held in New York from 28 January to 8 February. The report provided an outline of some of the University's key research findings and capacity-development work, with particular attention paid to the implementation of the provisions of Agenda 21.

9. On the occasion of the third session of the Preparatory Committee, held in New York from 25 March to 5 April, UNU issued the preliminary findings of a report identifying gaps and weaknesses within the current system of international environmental governance and assessing concrete proposals aimed at strengthening the existing system, including moves in the direction of full centralization in the form of a world environment organization or the pragmatic combination of clustering specific aspects of related multilateral agreements.

10. On 27 May 2002, UNU released a policy study on a new strategic framework for the sustainable development of China, India, and Indonesia to mark the fourth and final meeting of the Preparatory Committee, held in Bali, Indonesia, from 27 May to 7 June. The report presented an overview of trends and policies already established and new policy directions related to critical socio-economic and environmental issues identified in Agenda 21, focusing on those three countries. It covered both positive trends pointing towards greater sustainability and negative

trends or issues in which progress has proved more elusive. It also identified policy gaps and trade-offs. Coinciding with the World Summit on Sustainable Development, the University released a report entitled “International sustainable development governance — the question of reform: key issues and proposals”, which examines how changes in international institutions can help to improve environmental quality and promote development. At the Summit, UNU organized a panel discussion on realizing the new social contract: science and technology education for sustainable development.

### **III. United Nations standing processes and the United Nations University**

11. UNU provides continuous support for the efforts of the Second Committee of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to enhance their interaction with experts and with knowledge-related institutions in order to enrich and deepen the substance of their policy deliberations. One recent example of the University’s involvement was its extensive participation in the programme of work for the high-level segment of the Council devoted to the contribution of human resources development, including in the areas of health and education, to the process of development, which took place in New York from 1 to 3 July 2002. Drawing on its past and ongoing research, UNU thus made substantial contributions to the discussions dealing with the linkages between human resource development and trade, food security, information technology and education.

### **IV. United Nations University research programmes**

12. Bearing in mind the themes mentioned in the UNU charter, the successive policy agendas and concerns of the United Nations system and its previous work programmes, the research, capacity-building and dissemination work of the University has been clustered into two main programme areas, namely, peace and governance and environment and sustainable development and their interlinkages. Specific activities and projects are selected on the basis of the following criteria: the relevance of the topics to United Nations objectives, the nature and scale of the human impact and the extent of the problems, the relevance of the issue to developing countries, whether the issue requires focused attention and relates to a critical gap in understanding, and the value that UNU could bring by focusing on the issue. The following examples drawn from recent activities are illustrative of the UNU démarche.

#### **Peace and security**

13. The University recently completed a project on power in transition, which was published in book form by the UNU Press.<sup>4</sup> Comparing historical cases of violent transition with instances of peaceful transition, the study focuses on a host of issues that may influence the ongoing reformation of the current international order: the material distribution of power and its effects on international stability; the convergence of ideas and the role of contested norms in affecting a mutually acceptable outcome; domestic political preferences and the constraints they impose on State behaviour; and differences in State strategy and their impact on transition.

14. Another major study published by the UNU Press, entitled “United Nations peacekeeping operations: ad hoc missions, permanent engagement”,<sup>5</sup> identifies lessons that could be learned from past peacekeeping practices, as they have evolved over the past 10 years or so, for future operations. As a practical contribution to the ongoing debate on the nature, legality and practicability of peacekeeping, the work rests on contributors who were academic “observers” of peacekeeping and practitioners who have been intimately involved.

15. Since the end of the cold war, civil wars and State violence have escalated, resulting in millions of deaths. An interdisciplinary study of the root causes and prevention of humanitarian emergencies was published early this year.<sup>6</sup> The book reflects two years of in-depth research carried out by a wide array of scholars and practitioners brought together under the aegis of UNU-WIDER in the framework of a project on humanitarian emergencies. The book provides an analysis and an inventory of instruments for donors, international agencies and developing countries to prevent humanitarian emergencies. The emphasis is on long-term development policies rather than mediation or reconstruction after the conflict ensues. Policies include democratic and institutional reforms to enhance the capabilities of the State and civil society, the acceleration of economic growth through macroeconomic stabilization and adjustment, the reduction of inequalities, the redesign and expansion of aid, and the opening of Northern markets to developing countries.

16. On 27 and 28 May 2002, an international conference on the United Nations and South Asia was held at UNU headquarters in Tokyo. The conference placed particular emphasis on the relationship between India and Pakistan, the nuclearization of that conflict and the effects of the war in Afghanistan on South Asia with respect to security. Poverty alleviation, the role of foreign aid and international trade in South Asian development and the link between development and environmental degradation were central themes of the conference. Keynote addresses were delivered by the Indian Ambassador to Japan on behalf of I. K. Gujral, former Prime Minister of India, and by Sartaj Aziz, former Foreign Minister and Finance Minister of Pakistan.

17. On 18 March 2002, UNU held an expert forum on the theme of conflict prevention: the Secretary-General’s report and the way forward. The meeting was chaired by Assistant Secretary-General Michael Doyle, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General, and Ramesh Thakur, Vice-Rector of UNU. Formal presentations were followed by discussion and comments from representatives of various United Nations agencies, departments and programmes that are involved in conflict prevention.

18. Through the participation of its Vice-Rector in the Group of Governmental Experts on disarmament and non-proliferation education, UNU has contributed to this important disarmament initiative. The expert group was established pursuant to General Assembly resolution 55/33 E of 20 November 2000 to investigate the state of disarmament and non-proliferation education globally, meeting with educators, representatives of civil society, United Nations agencies and interested organizations to develop ideas and strategies for its improvement. The study was submitted to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session (A/57/124) with a call for Governments, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations and other international organizations to implement its recommendations. Professor Thakur also spoke before the First Committee of the General Assembly as part of a panel discussion

organized by the Department for Disarmament Affairs on 3 October 2002 on the impact of September 11 on the disarmament agenda in the twenty-first century.

### **Governance**

19. A two-year study on governing globalization, conducted on behalf of UNU-WIDER, was completed and published in 2002.<sup>7</sup> The book was launched in New York on 21 October. It is among the first studies to examine in depth and comprehensively the governance needs of the world economy and polity. It evaluates the experience of institutions, with a focus on the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the International Trade Organization, to sketch the contours of reform and change that are needed in the existing system. It analyses issues of emerging significance, such as global macroeconomic management, transnational corporations, international capital movements and cross-border movements of people to suggest that there are some missing institutions that are needed.

20. The findings of a major UNU conference organized with the Institute of Human Rights of Utrecht University in the Netherlands are expected to be published by UNU Press in late 2002. The conference, held in Utrecht in October 2001, explored the changing political and human rights context that gave rise to the establishment of the International Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda and the adoption of the Rome Statute establishing the International Criminal Court. From an interdisciplinary perspective, the conference examined the political, legal and institutional experiences of the Tribunals and the Rome Statute in a comparative and forward-looking way. Particular emphasis was placed on the actual and potential role of international humanitarian law in peace-building, conflict settlement and reconciliation and in promoting international norms of justice and accountability. Its objectives were to disseminate experiences in international criminal law to law students, legal practitioners and public servants and to raise awareness and understanding in support of international criminal law, promoting it as an integral element of international peace and security and strengthening support for international cooperation in the area of criminal law and the International Criminal Court.

### **Development**

21. Empowerment of the poor is a core precondition for sustainable development and equitable environmental problem solving. In this regard, a useful resource for policy makers is the UNU-WIDER income inequality database (<http://www.wider.unu.edu/wiid/wiid.htm>), which tracks inequality over time and across countries, enabling national policy makers and their donor partners to give more attention to the linkages between inequality and poverty.

22. Leadership is critical for resolving conflicts, building peace, protecting the environment, reducing poverty and ensuring sustainability. Some of the most recent activities undertaken by the UNU Leadership Academy are a three-week intensive course on leadership for poverty reduction, held in September 2001, a leadership training course for African women entrepreneurs, held in Ghana, under the aegis of the UNU Institute for Natural Resources in Africa, in October 2001 and a three-week course on leadership for environment and human security held in Amman and Johannesburg in August 2002.

23. Building on recent debates, UNU-WIDER held a conference on the new economy in development on 10 and 11 May 2002, which sought to assess the impact of the production and/or use of information and communication technologies on economic growth, productivity, income distribution, wages, employment, the stock market and the location and production of work.

24. Over 100 experts gathered in Helsinki on 27 and 28 September to participate in a conference organized by UNU-WIDER devoted to poverty, international migration and asylum. The conference focused on two major themes: the economic consequences of migration and issues associated with asylum migration. One of the objectives was to expand the focus of present studies on the economic consequences of legal and illegal immigration. Another was to place the economic study of immigration in a global context and to enhance our understanding of those migratory movements.

25. The UNU International Institute for Software Technology in Macau, China, provides advanced training to young software engineers from developing countries. Training is offered in software research and development, curriculum development for postgraduate and postdoctoral courses in formal software development and the development of computer science department curricula. Recently, the Institute extended the scope of its advanced courses and training programmes by including new training courses on software project management and the co-design of hardware and software systems.

26. The UNU Programme for Biotechnology in Latin America and the Caribbean, located in Caracas, focuses on modern biotechnology-related health issues, bioethics, biosafety, bioinformatics and genomics. The overall objective of the programme is to promote the development of biotechnology in Latin America through research and academic exchange. Such academic exchanges are carried out through the provision of fellowships for research and advanced training in leading biotechnology laboratories within the region and also through the conduct of short training courses. The programme also assists in the establishment of links between biotech institutions in the developed world and similar institutions in Latin America.

### **Environment**

27. UNU has been conducting research on issues related to mountains, and many of the findings have been instrumental in challenging conventional wisdom on such issues as the cause of environmental degradation, flooding and the role of mountain people in conserving their own environment. To mark the launching of the International Year of Mountains, 2002, UNU hosted a public forum on 31 January. The forum was followed on 1 February by an international symposium. UNU will also participate in the Bishkek Global Mountain Summit from 28 October to 1 November.

28. As a contribution to preparations for the International Year of Freshwater, 2003, UNU, in cooperation with other United Nations entities (the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) organized an international conference on Sustainable Management of Headwater Resources, which was held in Nairobi from 5 to 8 September. The conference discussed problems caused by land degradation, natural hazards and development processes, and considered feasible land management, environmental protection and landscape



regeneration practices and policies with the objective of contributing to the promotion, development and evaluation of land management strategies that advance the self-sustainable development of headwaters regions.

29. Since its inception in 1993, the United Nations University project entitled “People, Land Management and Environmental Change” (PLEC), a collaborative effort among more than 200 scientists in 40 institutions and many hundreds of innovative farmers from across the developing world, has drawn on positive experiences of agro-diversity and demonstrated that small farmers’ knowledge and practice can contribute to curbing biodiversity loss and land degradation while enhancing rural livelihoods. In this final year of project implementation, with support from the Global Environment Facility and the United Nations Environment Programme, UNU organized a final general meeting of the PLEC project entitled “Working with farmers for the cultivation of biodiversity while improving livelihoods” in order to summarize, present and exchange the project findings and recommendations and plan a new phase of the project among the participating countries, including Brazil, China, Ghana, Jamaica, Kenya, Mexico, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Thailand, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

## **V. Coordination and interaction within the United Nations system**

### **Coordination with the United Nations Secretariat**

30. The University continues to give high priority to enhancing its connections with the United Nations. Informal substantive consultations and information sharing between the Rector and the senior academic staff of UNU and United Nations senior officials now take place routinely. The same pattern characterizes interactions at the working level. Extensive interactions also take place between UNU and the Strategic Planning Unit in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General. The Unit addresses substantive areas that are becoming major policy issues, coordinates reports that cut across major sectors and units and liaises with policy planning units in other international organizations. It also helps in the process of strategic coordination through the executive committee structure established in 1997 by the Secretary-General. In its design, the Strategic Planning Unit works closely with the University and its Council. The United Nations has thus been drawn into upstream policy work and the strategic planning of the United Nations. In this regard, it may be noted that the head of the Strategic Planning Unit attends the sessions of the UNU Council and maintains ongoing working relations with the UNU office in New York. Such close ties have been of great benefit to UNU, as they have facilitated the identification of areas of cooperation between the Secretariat and the University.

31. Another important institutional point for interface between the United Nations and UNU is the Geneva research and policy dialogue, jointly organized each year by the University and the United Nations Office at Geneva. The dialogue is thematically focused and brings together United Nations and other entities engaged in policy research and analysis.

32. These multilevel and ongoing contacts are especially useful to the University in defining the general directions of its long-term programme of research and capacity development and in its biennial programme planning. They have enabled

the University to focus more effectively on matters of immediate concern to the United Nations and to enhance the policy contents and relevance of its studies while maintaining their academic excellence. The University has thus been in a position to make targeted contributions to the United Nations. For instance, UNU was closely engaged in the United Nations study on disarmament and non-proliferation education prepared by a group of governmental experts appointed by the Secretary-General (see para. 18 above), which was submitted to the General Assembly at its current session. The report of the experts calls upon UNU to develop an intensive course on disarmament and non-proliferation and to organize a programme of training for educators and trainers.

33. UNU has continued to play a role in other major initiatives aimed at enhancing the performance of the United Nations. In this regard, UNU Vice-Rector Thakur served as senior adviser on reform and principal writer of the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Strengthening the United Nations: An agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), dated 9 September 2002. The report contains a wide-ranging package of pragmatic improvements affecting both substance and process, including a thorough review of the Organization's programme of work, detailed proposals for improving performance in the areas of human rights and public information, steps to improve coordination among United Nations entities at the country level and proposals aimed at improving the quality and performance of United Nations staff members, as well as strengthening the bases of the international civil service. The new effort builds on an earlier round of reform undertaken shortly after the Secretary-General took office in 1997. While much has been achieved in that effort, the United Nations faces the perpetual challenge of changing with the times, constantly adjusting to new conditions and new needs.

34. UNU partners in the United Nations system include the Department of Political Affairs, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the regional commissions, the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, the United Nations Interregional Crime and Justice Research Institute, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and several specialized agencies (the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the Global Environment Facility. For instance, in the area of governance, the UNU has worked with various units of UNDP in the development and implementation of a world governance survey. Many officials of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions participate in the research work of UNU-WIDER, as well as in conferences that it organizes. Close collaboration with the secretariat of the United Nations Commission on Science and Technology for Development has been established by the UNU Institute for New Technologies in support of the Commission's work on biotechnology. The UNU International Network on Water, Environment and Health is cooperating with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in the development of an electronic distance learning programme on integrated water resource management.

35. Concurrently, the efforts initiated in the mid-1990s to disseminate the findings of the University's research work more broadly at United Nations Headquarters have been intensified.

#### **Meetings of United Nations senior officials in the economic and social fields**

36. Through the Rector, the United Nations University has input into the meetings of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Those meetings enable UNU to stay informed of the changing policy concerns of the Organization that require independent and new thinking and to identify research topics for inclusion in the UNU programme that could serve to maximize the University's contributions to the work of the United Nations system.

#### **Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs**

37. The United Nations University has been fully involved in the activities of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs from the time of its inception. Besides regular participation in the Committee's deliberations, including the elaboration of consolidated proposals to the Secretary-General and the preparation of reports to be submitted to the central intergovernmental organs, UNU has developed and submitted specific inputs for a number of the Committee's projects.

#### **Cooperation with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization**

38. Nobel Prize-winning playwright Wole Soyinka and former Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity William Eteki were among the more than 45 African leaders, scientists and academics who met in Accra on 28 and 29 May 2001 for a conference entitled "Bridging the Knowledge Gap", which was organized jointly by UNU and the Independent Commission on Africa and the Challenges of the Third Millennium, with support from UNESCO and the Africa bureau of UNDP. The conference discussed ways and means to enable and challenge Africans to advance food security through basic research and by disseminating the grass-roots knowledge of indigenous farmers and forest dwellers; to add value to Africa's primary products through applied science and technology; to link scientific knowledge on natural resources to policy, problem solving and long-term planning processes; and to educate and train young scientists in cutting-edge science. Other areas of substantive cooperation with UNESCO including the establishment of a global network for innovation in higher education as part of the follow-up to the 1998 World Conference on Higher Education, as well as a series of UNU-UNESCO chairs and a new UNU-UNESCO staff exchange programme.

## **VI. United Nations University as a bridge between international stakeholders**

39. In 2001, UNU and the delegation of the European Commission in Japan started a 10-year series of conferences on legal and political issues related to enhancing peace, human rights and development. The conference held in January 2002 was on "Governance across regions: national, regional and global". Speakers included Michel Barnier (European Union Commissioner for Regional Policy and Intergovernmental Conference), Gareth Evans (President of the International Crisis

Group and former Australian Foreign Minister), Keizo Takemi (Japanese member of Parliament), Richard Goldstone (Judge of the Constitutional Court of South Africa), Emma Bonino (European Parliament member) and Deepak Nayyar (Vice-Chancellor, University of Delhi). The conferences bring together European commissioners, members of parliament from Japan and Europe, non-governmental organizations and media representatives, United Nations officials and scholars. The conferences represent a high-profile forum for raising awareness, public debate and networking.

## VII. Conclusion

40. The United Nations University has made continuing progress in enhancing its interaction with other bodies in the United Nations system and strengthening its contributions to the work of the United Nations. The University is focusing its work on the core concerns of the United Nations and establishing proper mechanisms to enable it to stay attuned of evolving priorities of the United Nations.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 31 (A/57/31).*

<sup>2</sup> Gary P. Sampson and W. Bradnee Chambers, editors, *Trade, Environment and the Millennium* (2nd ed.), Tokyo, UNU Press, 2001.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Aart Scholte and Albrecht Schnabel, editors, *Civil Society and Global Finance*, London, Routledge, 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Kupchan, et al., *Power in Transition*, Tokyo, UNU Press, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Ramesh Thakur and Albrecht Schnabel, editors, *United Nations Peace-keeping Operations: Ad Hoc Missions, Permanent Engagement*, Tokyo, UNU Press, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> E. Wayne Nafziger and Raimo Väyrynen, editors, *The Prevention of Humanitarian Emergencies*, Basingstoke, England, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002.

<sup>7</sup> D. Nayyar, editor, *Governing Globalization: Issues and Institutions*, Oxford, England, Oxford University Press, 2002.

---