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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Monday, 27 July 1998, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (continued) (E/1998/L.25)

(e) PROCLAMATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF MOUNTAINS (continued)  
(E/1998/L.21)

(f) INTERNATIONAL YEAR FOR THE CULTURE OF PEACE, 2000 (continued)  
(E/1998/L.14)

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) introduced draft resolution E/1998/L.25 entitled "International Year of Microcredit 2005" and announced that China, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Eritrea, Morocco, Nicaragua and Vanuatu had joined the sponsors. As 2005 marked the final year of the campaign announced at the Microcredit Summit, the observance of the International Year would help to generate interest and support for the concept of microcredit as a tool for poverty alleviation throughout the world. He hoped that the text could be adopted by consensus.

Ms. ESHMAMBETOVA (Kyrgyzstan) introduced draft resolution E/1998/L.21 entitled "Proclamation of an international year of mountains". The timing of the proposed international year of mountains in 2002 was in accordance with the Council's guidelines and would coincide with the ten-year review of the Rio Conference and the review of land resources, including mountain resources, to be conducted at the eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. New Zealand and Portugal had joined the sponsors.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) introduced draft resolution E/1998/L.14 entitled "International Decade for a Culture of Non-violence and Peace for the Children of the World (2001-2010)" and said that additional sponsors would be listed in the revised text to be issued shortly. The objective of the draft resolution was to build on General Assembly resolution 52/15 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1997/47 by continuing to promote the concept of the culture of peace through the observance of a decade. Informal consultations would be held on the draft resolution, and it was his hope that the final text could be adopted by consensus.

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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN (continued) (E/1998/L.26)

Mr. AMMARIN (Jordan) introduced draft resolution E/1998/L.26 entitled "Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan" and announced that Malaysia had joined the sponsors. The text was essentially the same as the one adopted at the previous session, and, in the light of the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, he hoped that it could be adopted with the widest possible support.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (continued)

(a) SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1998/L.27)

Mr. SURYO-DI-PURO (Observer for Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, introduced draft resolution E/1998/L.27 entitled "Report of the Committee for Development Planning on its thirty-second session". The draft resolution urged the postponement of a decision on the status of Vanuatu until 2000 because of doubts about the quality of the statistical data used and the statement by the Committee itself that more work on graduation criteria was needed, along with the development of a vulnerability index. The Group was ready to receive suggestions on those matters from any interested parties.

INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS (E/1998/19, 56, 64 and 73)

Mr. KHAN (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits (E/1998/19) said that it covered a whole range of activities begun in 1995 as part of the initiative of the Council to follow up major conferences. Most of the recommendations made in the report had already been taken into account, and the Council might wish to come to some conclusions as well.

In 1995 a number of cross-cutting themes had been identified, and in each subsequent year the Council had addressed one of those themes in depth. The Council had also endeavoured to pursue inter-agency mechanisms, with outputs addressed to the country level. The time had come for substantive consideration of cross-cutting themes and the existing inter-agency mechanisms, perhaps in the

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context of the overall review of activities throughout the system to be conducted in the year 2000.

Gender mainstreaming was one of the major cross-cutting themes, and as the report contained in E/1998/64 indicated, significant progress had been made in that area within the United Nations system. Further efforts would be needed to implement that theme in anticipation of the 5-year review of the Beijing Platform for Action, which would take place in 2000. Considerable progress had also been made in implementing the 1997 agreed conclusions on freshwater resources, as indicated in document E/1998/56.

Mr. EFFENDI (Observer for Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the major conferences and summits of the 1990s represented a multilateral response to the unpredictability of globalization. The Council's main contribution had been the review of cross-cutting themes derived from the major conferences. Poverty eradication was also an overriding objective of its efforts to integrated and coordinated follow-up. It was important, however, for the Council to strike a balance between the specificity of conference outcomes and the need to address cross-cutting issues.

The coordination and management function of the Council should be discharged at the inter-governmental, regional and national levels. While the functional commissions possessed expertise in their particular areas of competence, the Council was best suited to oversight of system-wide implementation of conference follow-up and identification of cross-cutting issues. In the area of regional follow-up, there should be a clear division between the functions of the regional commissions and those of the functional commissions in the implementation of operational activities. Better communication with the Council was also needed. The Council should provide the necessary guidance to the funds and programmes so that their activities to assist Governments would also take follow-up into account.

On the issue of inter-agency coordination at the regional and national levels, the Council should continue to promote regular interaction between the inter-agency committees. The task forces of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) having translated conference goals to field level, the time had come for the ACC machinery responsible for follow-up to be active.

At the country level, national Governments were mainly responsible for implementing conference follow-up. However, the United Nations system could

also help countries with that enormous task. The resident coordinator should facilitate a genuine dialogue between the Government, civil society and the donor community. While the role of the resident coordinator was indispensable in integrating the follow-up activities of the United Nations system, developing countries must also be informed of the best practices of countries not covered by the resident coordinator system.

Additional financial resources were also necessary for effective conference follow-up. He agreed with the Secretary-General that official development assistance (ODA), which continued to decline, should be the main source of external funding for developing countries. The Council should continue to address the problem of shrinking resources and should link financing to the goals and targets of international conferences. Although the Council had taken some positive steps, it was still a long way from reaching its full potential in terms of providing system-wide coordination and guidance for United Nations activities in the economic and social fields.

Mr. SHEN Guofang (China) said that the Council should strengthen its interaction with ACC to ensure that the latter's actions met the requirements of Member States. It should also strengthen its coordination with the funds and programmes and with the relevant specialized agencies, including the Bretton Woods institutions. The Council's guidance on operational activities for development should be results-oriented. In that connection, he endorsed the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/1998/19).

Country-level coordination among United Nations agencies was an important component of conference follow-up and should be strengthened. Development activities should take full account of each country's specific conditions and should provide support and assistance, under the guidance of each Government, for the achievement of conference goals. Appropriate indicators were important for evaluating progress, but any study or exploration in that field by the United Nations system must solicit the views of the entire membership, bearing in mind each country's specific conditions and stage of development. The study of indicators should not focus solely on actions at the country level while neglecting international cooperation. Lastly, coordination efforts could not produce results in the absence of sufficient resources. The reversal of the decline in international cooperation should form the core of the Council's work on the coordinated implementation and follow-up of United Nations conferences.

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Mr. MANZ (Observer for Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that the United Nations system could not effectively support government efforts to implement the comprehensive development agenda that had emerged from international conferences unless it mobilized a coherent response to the various plans of action. The innovative format of the Council's May 1998 session on the subject had been useful, but future meetings of that kind should be more interactive and should involve fewer panellists, whose statements should be circulated in advance.

Coordinated conference follow-up should focus on implementation and results. A common system of indicators must be developed for use in monitoring progress. Since poverty eradication was the fundamental development objective of all the conferences, the entire system should embrace the single target of reducing by half, by the year 2015, the proportion of people living in extreme poverty. To ensure field-level coordination, conference follow-up should be fully integrated into existing coordination mechanisms such as the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the resident coordinator system, as well as the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) at Headquarters. The output of the ACC task forces should be more fully disseminated, especially to the field level, and should be acted upon by all United Nations entities.

The Council should provide more effective guidance to its subsidiary bodies, which should, in turn, provide the Council with more substantial input. In particular, the Council should monitor the implementation of its agreed conclusions on poverty eradication and gender mainstreaming. It should also hold special meetings on specific aspects of conference follow-up on a case-by-case basis; the coordination issues related to the topic of indicators would be a good theme for such meetings.

He supported the general thrust of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions on mainstreaming the gender perspective (E/1998/64). He commended the efforts of the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality and welcomed the progress made by some intergovernmental bodies. However, the capacity to apply gender analysis in sectoral areas must be enhanced in order to create a solid basis for gender-responsive policy formulation. Appropriate

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data, methodologies and indicators were required for monitoring progress in gender mainstreaming, and tools for tracking expenditures for gender activities must be improved. Gender training, full-time gender focal points and explicit support from senior managers were essential institutional requirements.

With respect to the implementation of the Council's agreed conclusions on freshwater (E/1998/56), he hoped that the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources would succeed in promoting better harmonization and streamlining of programmes. He welcomed the Subcommittee's increased attention to the important issue of data collection and dissemination at the national and international levels.

Ms. KING (United States of America) recalled that nearly every speaker at the Council's May 1998 session had identified the need for better indicators. Accordingly, information on the efforts under way in various forums and on gaps and overlaps in the work being done should be provided at another informal session of the Council, which should be convened the following year.

Her Government commended the Organization's efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into all of its policies and programmes, and was grateful to the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality for its catalytic role in that regard. The Council should continue to pay close attention to gender mainstreaming because it was a key coordination issue and a relatively new undertaking that must be reinforced, and because progress in mainstreaming would help United Nations agencies to provide substantive inputs for the five-year review of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. She did not agree that the Organization's focus on mainstreaming diminished its focus on the critical areas of concern of the Platform for Action, since mainstreaming was not an end in itself, but rather a strategy for achieving gender equality.

She appreciated the efforts of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources to implement the Council's agreed conclusions 1997/3 but noted that a report of the Secretary-General submitted to the 1998 session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (E/CN.17/1998/3) had raised some concerns about the coordination of United Nations activities. She urged all the entities involved to step up their efforts to implement the Council's agreed conclusions and the Commission's decision on strategic approaches to freshwater management.

Mr. CHANDAVARKAR (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) recalled that, at the Council's May 1998 session, the representative of UNDP had mentioned five major requirements for conference follow-up: a truly horizontal

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and cross-cutting approach; predictable and sufficient national and international resources; adequate data and indicators for monitoring progress towards conference goals; civil society's involvement at both the national and international levels; and the mainstreaming of the gender perspective throughout the follow-up process. UNDP would seek to address those challenges, particularly at the country level, as it worked with Governments to implement conference outcomes in the context of national priorities and policies.

The Council's resolution on the agenda item under consideration would be an important reference point for UNDP and other participants in UNDG and could provide guidance for strengthening the interface between inter-agency and intergovernmental machinery in the area of conference follow-up. In the next phase of that process, which must focus on the country level, the country strategy note and UNDAF processes would lend coherence and unity of purpose to the country-level work of the United Nations system. As funder and manager of the resident coordinator system, UNDP was collaborating with its partners in the United Nations system to support conference follow-up at the country level through thematic groups and through its own programme activities for poverty eradication and sustainable human development.

Mr. VAHER (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that, although the Council had been considering the follow-up to international conferences since 1990, the recent work of ACC and the establishment of UNDG and UNDAF had radically changed the Organization's approach to such follow-up. Currently, conference follow-up was seen as a country-based process that should involve a broad range of actors, including different levels of government, local communities, civil society and donor agencies. Global guidelines and targets should be adapted to reflect specific country situations.

The new approach of structuring follow-up around cross-cutting themes such as health, human rights, children and women had strengthened the system-wide focus on key issues and highlighted the synergies and interlinkages among them. With the horizontal integration of follow-up across the system, the United Nations made maximum use of thematic groups, collaborative programming frameworks and a broad range of partner organizations. The process of United Nations reform, and particularly UNDAF, was making it possible to develop a system-wide response to global challenges. UNDAF, which reflected national priorities, was becoming the centrepiece for the coordination of country-level

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United Nations activities, since it included child rights, family, nutrition and health, education, special protection and gender equality within a common set of indicators. The annual reports of the resident coordinator system would provide a useful basis for ensuring consistency in reporting on progress towards conference goals. Lastly, the 20/20 initiative would help to mobilize the additional resources needed for the implementation of action plans.

Mr. WEIBGEN (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that FAO attached great importance to the Council's role in coordinating activities in the areas of population, national resources, food security, health and poverty. The ACC Network on Rural Development and Food Security, jointly managed by FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in close cooperation with the World Food Programme (WFP), had been established in April 1997 to ensure coordinated inter-agency follow-up to the World Food Summit. The Network was a flexible and interactive means of mobilizing knowledge and resources in support of country-level action, increasing synergies, promoting joint action, avoiding duplication and involving all relevant partners in the process. The Council should encourage the mobilization of resources to enable FAO and other organizations to participate in joint activities for which they had no budgetary allocation.

The Council should increase its interaction with the specialized agencies, which were part of its membership. FAO already participated actively in the Council's work through its extensive contributions to the relevant reports and its vigorous participation in ACC and in the Council's debates on a wide range of subjects. That participation could be improved through more flexible arrangements for informal meetings, to enable the executive heads of organizations based far from New York to interact with the Council, and through initiatives to associate the agencies more proactively with informal Council meetings on proposals that related directly to the agencies' concerns.

Mr. AARDAL (Observer for Norway) said that the overriding theme of all the global conferences had been the need to reduce poverty. Cross-cutting issues such as gender equality, human rights, environment, population and children should be mainstreamed in poverty-reduction efforts. Developed countries had a special responsibility to provide resources for conference follow-up, in accordance with the 20/20 principle.

He supported the Secretary-General's recommendations that ACC and its

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subsidiary machinery should coordinate conference follow-up and that inter-agency collaboration on cross-cutting issues should be maintained through a network approach. He hoped that the annual meetings to be convened by the Deputy Secretary-General would help to remedy the apparent lack of coordination of United Nations activities, including conference follow-up, at the regional level. All relevant United Nations agencies should participate in the five-year review of the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, particularly in terms of coordinated support of national programmes. The Council must establish a more systematic dialogue with key actors of civil society; the initiative of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in that regard was commendable.

Gender mainstreaming posed new challenges in the area of statistical methods and indicators. It was necessary to develop tools to measure resource allocations, but it was equally important to produce qualitative assessments of how United Nations programmes and projects included women's interests and gender mainstreaming. Lastly, he supported the work of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources in streamlining and coordinating activities concerning water quality.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said she was pleased that the specialized agencies' contribution to the May 1998 session of the Council were reflected in the draft resolution on the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of major United Nations conferences and summits currently under consideration. She noted that paragraph 11 of that draft called for further interaction between the Council and the specialized agencies and encouraged a more active and high-level participation by those agencies in the Council's session. UNESCO hoped to participate in the Council's discussion of its methods of work and to present proposals reflecting its concerns.

UNESCO strongly recommended that the promotion of a culture of peace should be used as a reference point in evaluating the implementation of programmes of action adopted at major conferences and hoped that fostering of the culture of peace would be added to the list of cross-cutting themes identified in the Secretary-General's report on coordinated follow-up to major international conferences in the economic, social and related fields (E/1995/86).

In connection with the excellent report of the Secretary-General on freshwater (E/1998/56), she said that the UNESCO International Hydrological

Programme had launched a major international assessment of water availability for the twenty-first century, the results of which had served as baseline values for a study prepared through the ACC mechanism. UNESCO had also organized an international conference on the topic "Water: A Looming Crisis?" and was working with the World Water Council and the Government of the Netherlands to provide periodic local assessments within the framework of the Vision for Water, Life and Environment mandated at the First World Water Forum, held in Marrakesh in 1997. It had also cooperated with other United Nations agencies in the establishment of the new ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources.

Mr. TANASESCU (Romania) said that action and coordinated follow-up at national level were crucial for successful implementation of the programmes adopted at United Nations conferences and for efficient coordination at the regional and global levels. However, certain imbalances needed to be rectified; for example, more attention had been paid to Agenda 21 than to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development or the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. Moreover, differing levels of institutional capacity at national level had led to imbalances in specific areas, and the cross-sectoral nature of national programmes sometimes required the development of a new culture involving cooperation between governmental institutions. There was also a need for greater involvement of local communities and civil society. In his own country, cooperation between the Government and the resident coordinator had made it possible to establish a national commission for sustainable development, and he hoped that the representative of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) would have the same catalytic role in national efforts to establish a body responsible for coordination of the Programme of Action adopted in Cairo. Romania had recently established an institutional framework for implementation of the programmes of action related to women and children and a United Nations development assistance framework.

Monitoring progress at the national level required an adequate set of indicators, systematic data collection and periodic reporting and assessment. He therefore welcomed the proposal for a national reporting system made by the Division for Sustainable Development and wondered whether that idea could be extended to other divisions of the Secretariat. His delegation supported the principle of direct access by national authorities to Secretariat databases and

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hoped that the Council would monitor more closely the future work of the Statistical Commission and that the latter would contribute to the development of new economic, social and environmental indicators.

The functional commissions offered an ideal framework for dialogue between experts, diplomats, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), high-level Government representatives, international organizations and local communities and should, therefore, retain the primary responsibility for evaluating major trends in follow-up to major conferences. Their agreed conclusions and negotiated decisions should serve as a basis for further guidance by the Council, which, in turn, should provide flexible coordination so that new cross-sectoral issues could be identified and discussed by the functional commissions. Annual discussion of agenda item 6 should focus on specific themes established by the Council at its organizational session. Coordination between the United Nations system and other international bodies, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions, should also be strengthened.

Mr. MARTINEZ AGUILAR (Mexico) said that topics which merited further discussion included the coordinating role of the Council; the functional commissions, funds and operational activities; intra-system coordination; follow-up at the national and regional levels; and evaluation. Follow-up to the major conferences must be global and give equal consideration to all related issues.

While the resident coordinator could play a useful role in field-level cooperation if requested to do so by the Government, responsibility for the assessment of follow-up to international conferences rested with the Member State, not with the resident coordinator. His Government supported efforts to achieve greater coordination within the United Nations system, provided that sufficient weight was given to the contributions of experts and the specific conditions of individual countries.

The May 1998 session had demonstrated the need for the Council to provide coordination and guidance in follow-up to international conferences during the current reform process, particularly with respect to inter-sectoral issues and the elimination of poverty; however, the General Assembly must retain ultimate responsibility in that regard. By using its comparative advantage in implementing the consensus achieved at conferences and summits, the Council could increase its own political presence. His delegation therefore looked

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forward to the convening of future sessions devoted to areas of special interest and urged that such sessions should be held in New York.

Mr. Dae-won SUH (Republic of Korea) said that coordination at the country level was of the utmost importance. The resident coordinator system needed to be fully utilized in implementing conference outcomes. Follow-up to international conferences should be integrated into UNDAF and the country strategy notes. The work of the ACC task forces, which provided useful guidance in the area of conference follow-up, should be widely disseminated and reflected in country-level programmes. He stressed the importance of increased transparency in ACC activities, improved coordination between ACC and the Council and adequate funding for inter-agency coordination and joint projects. There was also a need for close cooperation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, regional organizations and development banks, and bilateral donors and for more active participation by civil society and the private sector. Lastly, he called for a more integrated approach to coordination between the United Nations and other development organizations, particularly in the area of economic and social indicators.

Mr. MAKSIMICHEV (Russian Federation) said that his delegation attached great importance to follow-up to the major conferences and summits and welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on that topic (E/1998/19). The May 1998 session of the Council had been the first successful attempt at a comprehensive analysis of the United Nations system. Dialogue between the Council and ACC should be promoted as a means of assessing the work of the organization and of ensuring fuller, more timely preparation for the Council's substantive session.

It was clear that, on the whole, the implementation and follow-up machinery was functioning satisfactorily. The Council's resolution on that question must focus on ensuring that efforts to improve field-level activities did not lead to duplication and must take account of the already done in implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/227. Council decisions should acknowledge the achievements of ACC and its task forces, call for improved coordination and the development of transparent dialogue with ACC and stress the need for practical coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly at the country level. His delegation welcomed the proposal for the development of comprehensive indicators on the outcomes of major world conferences and, in principle, was prepared to support the convening of a two-

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day session on that topic in the spring of 1999.

Mr. GERUS (Belarus) said that since resident coordinators played a crucial role in optimizing the use of national resources and enhancing the effectiveness of international assistance for the implementation of the outcome of international conferences, they should facilitate the incorporation in national development strategies of the implementation of the decisions of major international conferences, bearing in mind the characteristics of each country. Belarus therefore advocated a strengthening of the resident coordinator system and a shift of focus to programme activity at the country level. The coordination of that activity at the field level should be one of the priority questions on the agendas of the executive boards of the funds and programmes of the United Nations system.

There was a need for a substantial improvement in the mechanism for cooperation between the Council, on the one hand, and the functional commissions and the executive boards of the funds and programmes, on the other. Because of the limited time available, the Council could not formulate comprehensive recommendations to the functional commissions and the executive boards of the funds and programmes unless they provided concise and informative reports, including the results of work on the outcomes of major international forums in the economic and social spheres. Joint meetings of the bureaux of the Council and its functional commissions should be held to consider the operational coordination of work in the light of the decisions of international conferences.

The functional commissions of the Council should continue to monitor the implementation of the decisions of major international conference, a process that was inseparable from the process of reforming the socio-economic sector of the Organization as a whole, including the reform of the Council's subsidiary bodies on the basis of General Assembly resolutions 50/227 and 52/12. In taking a decision on that question, the Council should bear in mind the need to strengthen the role of the functional commissions in the analysis, monitoring and regulation of the process of implementing the final documents of international conferences.

The mechanism for cooperation between the Council and ACC must be improved; the ACC inter-agency task forces should be used more fully in determining the most promising areas for cooperation between bodies of the United Nations system in the sphere of the coordinated implementation of the decisions of major

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international forums. The Council should take the initiative in expanding cooperation with ACC.

The role of the regional commissions could also be enhanced and should be catalytic at the regional level. The informal dialogue with the heads of the regional commissions at the Council's special and substantive sessions had demonstrated the interest on the part of the regional commissions in participating in implementation and follow-up to international conferences at the regional level.

One of the priority areas of work of the regional commissions should be promotion of the implementation of the recommendations of major international conferences in developing States and countries with economies in transition. That process could be accelerated by means of effective cooperation of the commissions with subregional integration associations, in particular the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development and the Commonwealth of Independent States, through the provision by the commissions of technical and advisory assistance in drawing up and implementing major regional and subregional projects and programmes.

Cooperation between agencies of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions had considerable potential. His delegation supported the Secretary-General's recommendation regarding closer coordination between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions in follow-up to conferences through the broader exchange of information and closer cooperation between country representatives of the Bretton Woods institutions and resident coordinators.

Currently, Belarus was taking measures to implement the national sustainable development strategy, drawn up on the basis of the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and also the national plan of action to improve the situation of women in the context of the Beijing Platform for Action and other programme documents. His delegation was convinced that the successful implementation of the final documents of major international conferences depended entirely on the effectiveness of implementation at the regional and country levels.

Ms. LUBIN (International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres) said that implementation of the plans of action adopted at major conferences had been uneven at the international and the country levels and that

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the Council's high-level segment had demonstrated a new impetus towards coordinated follow-up. Unfortunately, however, little had been said concerning the role of NGOs in that regard. Because NGOs were required by their funding sources to carry out detailed evaluations of the effect of their programmes on local communities, they had developed quantitative and qualitative indicators which could be of great use to Governments and international bodies. Because of their experience with local communities, NGOs should be involved more directly at all levels of planning and execution of conference follow-up.

Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development, held at Copenhagen in 1995, was unique in its involvement of all sectors of the community. Although NGOs had not been permitted to attend meetings of the task forces involved in coordination with the specialized agencies, their views had been sought and their experience made available. Despite growing consensus at the national level that NGOs and the private sector should play a greater role, some Government resistance remained. Unfortunately, although NGOs had participated actively in the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), they had not been involved at the implementation stage and hoped to play a greater role in that regard, particularly in the areas of microcredit and microenterprises.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.