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ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL HOLDS JOINT MEETING WITH PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION

In Keynote Address, Deputy Secretary-General Highlights Clear Links between Peace, Achievement of Millennium Development Goals

In any country, the devastating legacy of conflict — death, disease, population displacement and capital flight — could erase hard-won development gains and States emerging from such situations must manage myriad and often competing priorities in order to meet all eight of the Millennium Development Goals, high-level United Nations officials stressed today.

During a joint meeting of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission, Council Chairman Hamidon Ali, of Malaysia, said that of the 34 countries farthest from reaching the targets set out in the United Nations development agenda, 22 were in or emerging from conflict. The good news was that many were advancing, including the poorest, which proved the Goals were achievable when appropriate policies, prudent planning and adequate resources were underpinned by political commitment. More must be done to systematically mainstream security concerns into development strategies, and vice versa. “This is why this joint special event between our two bodies is so important,” he said.

Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, Peter Wittig, of Germany, agreed, saying that the work of the two bodies overlapped in a critical way: peacebuilding created the basis for progress on the Goals - particularly when focused on providing services like health and education - while the Goals offered a solid framework for peacebuilding by increasing the legitimacy of Governments and addressing the root causes of conflict. However, the Goals did not take into account such security concerns as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration. Those issues, and the interdependence between the Goals and peacebuilding, deserved more attention.

In a keynote address, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro said progress towards the Goals could build trust, which was particularly important for post-conflict Governments that were often weak and distrusted. But she cautioned against equating progress towards the Goals with peacebuilding work, stressing that only those activities that addressed the specific sources of conflict deserved such a label. In some countries, attaining even one Goal might constitute progress on an issue considered a trigger to conflict.

In the discussion that followed, speakers urged addressing youth unemployment, which had widespread relevance for post-conflict countries. In the short-term, disaffected youth were a source of instability, but long-term prosperity depended on young people’s contribution to society. Also, fragile States faced risks that stretched beyond their capacity to deal with them, including drug trafficking. Official development assistance (ODA) was crucial for complementing national budgets and mobilizing resources from other actors.

In other business, the Council, acting on the recommendation of its Commission on Science and Technology for Development, adopted by consensus two draft resolutions, respectively on the “Assessment of progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society”, and “Science and Technology for Development”. It also adopted four draft decisions covering, among other things, the participation of non-governmental organizations, academic entities and the business sector in the Commission’s work.

On the recommendations of its Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations, the Council also adopted 12 draft decisions contained in the reports of that Committee’s regular and resumed 2010 sessions

(documents E/2010/32 (Parts I and II)). By that action, the Council, among other things, granted consultative status to 131 civil society groups listed in those reports.

By another draft decision and adopted by a vote of 23 in favour to 13 against with 13 abstentions, the Council granted consultative status to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (“IGLHRC”), a group on which the Committee had decided not to take action or make a recommendation during its 2010 sessions.

During an extended debate, before and after action, on the merits of the IGLHRC and whether the Council could indeed take action on an issue deferred by one of its subsidiary bodies, speakers underscored the importance of adhering to Council resolution 1996/31, which outlined the criteria for and principles to be applied in the establishment of consultative relations with non-governmental organizations. Some speakers took issue with the precedent that today’s action would set for other subsidiary bodies, saying that it undermined the Committee’s legitimacy.

Others, however, pointed out that the application for consultative status had been before the NGO Committee for three years and efforts towards system-wide coherence required action. The representative of the United States, which had sponsored the text, recalled that the Committee had refused for more than a decade to grant consultative status to any lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender civil society group, although the Council had acted to grant consultative status to seven such organizations whose applications had been rejected.

Those seven Council decisions had firmly established the principle that a non-governmental organization’s support for gay and lesbian rights should not be a disqualifying factor in the NGO Committee’s decisions to grant consultative status. Unfortunately, she said, the Committee continued to act in complete disregard of the repeated guidance it had received from its parent body on the matter, and in denial of the standards set in 1996/31.

In final business, the Council approved an oral draft decision on “African countries emerging from conflict”, outlining that the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission continue to inform the Council of its activities with countries on the Council’s agenda in the substantive session of 2011. In prior comments on that issue, Mr. Wittig described the Commission’s work in countries on its agenda: Burundi; Central African Republic; Guinea-Bissau; and Sierra Leone. He looked forward to Liberia being placed on the Commission’s agenda.

The Economic and Social Council will reconvene at 10 a.m. on Tuesday, 20 July, to begin consideration of agenda items 9, 10 and 11 of its general segment, and hold a panel discussion on small island developing States.

Background

The Economic and Social Council met today to continue its general segment, which will run through 22 July, and was expected to take action on several draft resolutions and decisions.

Action

The Economic and Social Council resumed its joint consideration of agenda item 7, entitled “Coordination, programme and other questions”, and sub-item on “International cooperation in the field of informatics”; and agenda item 13, entitled “Economic and environmental questions”, and sub-item on “Science and Technology for Development”; taking action on two draft resolutions and four draft decisions.

In the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its thirteenth session (document E/2010/31), the Council adopted by consensus draft resolution I on “Assessment of the progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society”, and draft resolution II, on “Science and technology for Development”, also by consensus.

The Council then proceeded to take action on four draft decisions, contained in the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its thirteenth session (document E/2010/31).

In Chapter I, Section B, the Council adopted by consensus draft decision I, on “Participation of non-governmental organizations and civil society entities in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development”, as well as draft decision II, on “Participation of academic entities in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development”, draft decision III on “Participation of business sector entities, including the private sector in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development”, and draft decision IV, entitled “Report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development at its thirteenth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the fourteenth session of the Commission”.

Next, the Council took note of the Note by the Secretary-General of the Internet Governance Forum, contained in document A/65/78-E/2010/68.

The meeting was then suspended.

General Discussion on Non-governmental Organizations

The Council then held a brief discussion on non-governmental organizations.

JAN GRAULS (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said his delegation considered the involvement of civil society and non-governmental organizations an essential part of the work of the United Nations in general and the Economic and Social Council in particular. The European Union was committed to the overall aspiration of Council resolution 1996/31, which aimed to provide consultative status to organizations whose activities fell within the realm of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

However, with the role of civil society groups from all regions expanding, the NGO Committee now faced a considerable backlog of work, due to the increase of both new and deferred applications. He said the demand for consultative status would thus continue to grow, and the Committee must keep pace with that trend. Additionally, some Member States had increasingly opposed consultative status for organizations which criticized their respective human rights records, or whose views those States did not agree with.

He further said that the Committee had “conspicuously” failed to reach recommendation decisions regarding certain groups during several sessions. To that end, the European Union wished to express concern over the denial of consultative status to organizations which promoted and defended the rights of persons based on their sexual orientation and gender identity. Such applications had been systematically delayed in the Committee through questionable procedural manoeuvres, including several rounds of repetitive, inappropriate and unproductive questioning.

For example, he said that questions must not be used to merely request details such as names and addresses of members of such organizations, or to prolong deliberations indefinitely. By taking a “no-action” motion on such an organization this past June, the Committee had failed in its mandate. The treatment of such cases reflected a negative trend, and the European Union urged States on the Committee on Non-governmental Organizations to defend and uphold the guiding principles agreed upon in Council resolution 1996/31.

ANDREW GOLEDZINEWSKI (Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada and New Zealand, said that the NGO Committee’s decisions should be taken according to the criteria clearly set out in Council resolution 1996/31, and that political and ideological consideration must not be allowed to override those criteria. Non-governmental organizations should all be treated in a fair, equal, and transparent manner.

He went on to say that due process should be followed, and decisions should be taken as expeditiously as possible. Delay tactics and procedural hurdles imposed on certain civil society groups, many delaying applications for several years, were unacceptable. Additional questions or information demanded of such groups should clearly relate to the criteria set out in resolution 1996/31.

ROSEMARY DICARLO (United States) said that when the Council had adopted resolution 1996/31, its intent was to promote the engagement of non-governmental organizations with a diverse range of views. The preambular section took into account the full diversity on national, regional and international levels, and acknowledged the breadth of their expertise. The Committee, therefore, needed to support the aims of the resolution.

Yet, over past decade, the Committee had too often failed to follow the resolution's clear guidance. On numerous occasions in recent years, she continued, the Council had been forced to override the NGO Committee's decisions and grant status to qualifying organizations. The Council had not been forced to act in such a way to correct work of any of its other subsidiary bodies.

She said that the Council had worked hard this year, with many members of the Committee and with that body's Chairperson, to ensure that those non-governmental organizations which clearly met the criteria received consultative status without having to endure unwanted delays. The United States recognized that some significant gains had been made in improving the work practices of the Committee, and hoped the Committee would be able to build on such progress in the coming year.

However, too often the Committee still fell short in its role as an impartial arbiter. She said that among its failures, it was especially disappointing that it had failed to grant consultative status to the well respected organization International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission ("IGLHRC"), which could make valuable contributions on such issues human rights and HIV/AIDS.

Introducing the draft resolution on the Application of the non-governmental organization International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (document E/2010/L.19), Ms. DICARLO (United States), said that organization had a solid reputation for the past two decades, supported issues relating to human rights and sexual orientation, and clearly contributed to the work of the Economic and Social Council.

Action

The Council then turned its attention to the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its 2010 regular session (document E/2010/32 (Part I)*), and start consideration of the draft recommendations contained therein.

It first took action on four draft decisions recommended by the Committee, contained in Chapter I, Part I, of that report.

The Council adopted by consensus draft decisions I, entitled "Applications for consultative status and recommendations for reclassification received from non-governmental organizations"; draft decision II, entitled "Withdrawal of consultative status of the non-governmental organization General Federation of Iraqi Women"; draft decision III, entitled "Suspension of consultative status of the non-governmental organization Interfaith International"; and draft decision IV, entitled "Report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its 2010 regular session".

The Council then concluded its consideration of the draft decisions contained in document E/2010/32 (Part I)*.

Next, the Council turned its attention to Part II of the NGO Committee's report on its 2010 resumed session (document E/2010/32 (Part II), which contained eight draft decisions.

In that context, the Council adopted by consensus draft decision I, entitled "Applications for consultative status and requests for reclassification received from non-governmental organizations"; draft decision II, entitled "Suspension of consultative status of non-governmental organizations with outstanding quadrennial reports, pursuant to Council resolution 2008/4"; draft decision III, entitled "Reinstatement of consultative status of non-governmental organizations that submitted outstanding quadrennial reports, pursuant to Council resolution 2008/4" and draft decision IV, entitled "Withdrawal of consultative status of non-governmental organizations, pursuant to Council 2008/4".

Also by consensus, it adopted draft decisions V, on "Suspension of consultative status of the Centre Europe-tiers monde"; draft decision VI, on "Modification of the agenda of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations at its 2011 session"; draft decision VII, on "Dates of and provisional agenda for the 2011 session of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations" and draft decision VIII, entitled "Report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations on its 2010 resumed session".

It then concluded consideration of the decisions contained in document E/2010/32 (Part II).

The Council next took up the draft resolution on the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.

Speaking prior to action, the representative of the United States said that commission had been a respected human rights organization dedicated to combating discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. By promoting the implementation of human rights treaties, it had already made a significant contribution to supporting the United Nations Charter and the work of the Council. It had been a leader in the battle against HIV/AIDS, and had been praised by both the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Citing the first three principles of Council resolution 1996/31, she said that qualifying organizations must be concerned with matters falling within the competence of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies; its aims and purposes must be within conformity with the spirit, purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter; and it must undertake to support the work of the Organization to promote knowledge of its principles and activities, in accordance with its own aims and purposes and the nature and scope of its competence and activities. She stressed that the IGLHRC “easily met” those standards, and that the advancement of the Charter lay at the core of its mission.

She said that the Committee on Non-governmental Organizations had refused for more than a decade to grant consultative status to any lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender civil society group, although the Council had acted to grant consultative status to seven such organizations whose applications had been rejected. Those seven Council decisions had firmly established the principle that a non-governmental organization’s support for gay and lesbian rights should not be a disqualifying factor in the NGO Committee’s decisions to grant consultative status. Unfortunately, the Committee continued to act in complete disregard of the repeated guidance it had received from its parent body on the matter, and in denial of the standards set in 1996/31.

As a legal matter, the “no action” decision made by the Committee on IGLRHC’s application had been deeply flawed. Working along those lines, the Committee could keep “controversial” applications in an endless state of deferral by refusing to allow votes that could be reviewed by the Council. Such actions thus sharply curtailed the Council’s legitimate and necessary oversight authority over a subsidiary body established for the purpose of promoting — not thwarting — the engagement of civil society with the Organization.

A representative of the Secretariat said adoption of the draft decision would give rise to no programme budget implications.

Also speaking before action, Saudi Arabia’s delegate cited the Council’s Rules of Procedure and called for a vote on the draft decision E/2010/L.19.

Then, speaking in general statement before action, Saudi Arabia’s delegate then said the Committee had passed a no-action vote on the matter at hand, which should have stood. Unfortunately, some Council members had politicized the issue and usurped the NGO Committee’s role, which undermined the Committee and the very collaborative basis employed to take decisions. He strongly objected to undermining Committee’s authority in such a way. For that reason, his delegation must vote “no” on the text.

Also speaking before action, the representative of Saint Lucia said his delegation took very seriously recommendations that emerged from committees. If difficulties emerged, a way for dealing with them must be found, rather than just sidestepping the Committee’s recommendation. Since Saint Lucia was not member of the NGO Committee, it had had difficulty in terms of what had occurred previously on this issue. One of the deferred decisions with the greatest concern for the Council was not one with priority for his country, he said, noting that delegates must examine a total package, in terms of helping the Committee’s work advance. He wondered whether the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission was another human rights body. Would that group now redefine what human rights meant? That required consideration and that posed difficulties for him in how to proceed.

Israel’s delegate said that, as a member of the NGO Committee, it recognized its important role in strengthening the relationship between the United Nations and civil society. Council resolution 1996/31 defined

that partnership as one that would facilitate the engagement of diverse voices of civil society with the Organization. It stipulated criteria for granting consultative status to non-governmental organizations. It was the Committee's duty to engage in candid consideration of all applications and grant consultative status to all those complying with resolution 1996/31.

Israel was dismayed with the procedural attempt to further derail substantive discussion over certain non-governmental organizations, he said, notably the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission. That organization had been under discussion for over three years and had engaged positively with the Committee. No convincing reason had been offered to explain why the organization had been deferred time and again. Israel thus supported the United States' proposal to grant consultative status to that organization.

Speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, Egypt's representative said that in being asked to act on one of the several applications, the Council was in a difficult position. The application had been in the NGO Committee for three sessions, not three years, and attempts to grant it consultative status constituted selectivity. Regardless of the area in which that organization worked, an attempt to take action today would create a precedent which would only upset the delicate balance of the institutional structure between organizations and the United Nations. The matter should not be before the Council; respect should be granted to the efficiency with which the Committee had conducted its work.

Egypt believed in promoting dialogue with civil society, including on respect for religious freedoms and freedom of expression, he said, noting that his country had championed several initiatives to promote respect for those rights. Egypt had previously expressed serious concern with the organization's continued manoeuvres to evade questions on religious rights and the right to freedom of expression. Believing in the right of all delegations to receive answers, Egypt was attached to respecting the United Nations' institutional structure, as well as States' concerns regarding matters under consideration. The manner in which the issue was being addressed was regrettable. For such reasons, Egypt would vote against the decision.

Belgium's delegate, speaking on behalf of the European Union, supported the application for consultative status for the IGLHRC and firmly believed that each non-governmental organization should be assessed in accordance with Council resolution 1996/31. The principles of non-discrimination and diversity were key in that regard. That text outlined that non-governmental organizations should be granted consultative status if their work was concerned with matters falling in Council's consideration; in conformity with the United Nations Charter; and undertook to support the United Nations' work.

In its application, IGLHRC had shown that it had fulfilled such criteria, he said. Over 3,000 non-governmental organizations had been afforded consultative status in line with 1996/31, many of which promoted policies that the Union did not endorse; however, that did not mean they should be excluded. There was no valid reason for excluding IGLHRC consultative status. It was an important constituency that had equal rights in the work of the Organization. As such, the European Union would vote in favour of the draft decision.

Norway's delegate said the Committee's mandate was clearly laid out in resolution 1996/31: to make recommendations on granting consultative status to organizations. Non-discrimination was a founding value of the United Nations and Norway was concerned at the trend that applications from certain groups did not receive action in the Committee. Instead, their applications were deferred, which had been the case with the IGLHRC application. That group had consistently answered questions since its application was first considered in 2008. It had shown admirable patience in efforts to receive consultative status. Those determined efforts spoke to its high regard for the Council. On that basis, Norway would vote in favour of the draft decision.

Also speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, the representative of the United Kingdom said his delegation firmly believed that every organization that met the criteria found in resolution 1996/31 deserved to be granted consultative status with the Council, and that that applied, regardless of the nature of that organization. The criteria explicitly confirmed the need to take into account the full diversity of the qualifying non-governmental organizations, and that consultative status should be granted if its work and mandate fell within the first three principles of the resolution. He said the organization being considered today clearly fulfilled these criteria, and that much of its work supported United Nations activities in such fields as health, gender and human rights.

He went on to say that the IGLHRC was well known not only in the United States, but also internationally, and would add an important voice to the discussion at the United Nations and represented an

important constituency with a full and equal right to engage in the work of the Organization. Of the organizations that have been granted consultative status, he said many espoused views or policies that were not shared by all States or Governments, but nevertheless had a right to share those views. Although some might disagree with those organizations, they should not be excluded. United Nations had always supported such organizations regardless of whether all Member States shared all of their specific views.

He stressed that the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission had provided full, frank and satisfactory responses to all question posed by the Committee. Since the first round of questions had begun in May 2008, no credible reason could be presented for refusing them, except for straightforward discrimination. The United Kingdom would, therefore, vote in favour of the draft, and would encourage all members of the Council to do likewise.

Also speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, the representative of Canada, said his delegation recognized the need for diverse voices in discussions of the Organization's and the Council's work. The civil society group in question had been active in the area of human rights advocacy and had contributed to combating HIV/AIDS. In light of that, he said that Canada would vote yes on the draft resolution.

Also speaking before the vote, the representative of Australia, echoing the sentiments of others in support of the draft, recalled that the representative of Saint Lucia had asked if the Council was interested in redefining human rights.

Speaking on a point of order, the representative of Egypt interrupted to say that the Council had moved past the stage of "general statements", and that those speaking in explanation of vote must keep their explanations short and in accordance of the rule of procedure.

Resuming his explanation, Australia's representative said that his country would be voting in favour of the draft. One of the reasons was because delegations understood that the particular aims of the non-governmental organization and its mandate was to work for the rights of gay and lesbian people, and that they had the same rights as other people. It was on these understandings that the Australian delegation had been proceeding. Respective of the nature of the group itself, Australia was very comfortable with what they were doing.

Another reason his delegation was in favour was that the system established in the Council was that the Committee made recommendations, and that those recommendations had to be confirmed or not by the Council, as was done earlier this morning, and it was what was being done with the current vote. The fact that the Committee had made no recommendation could not continue to frustrate the efforts of the Council. If the Council were bound by the recommendations of the Committee, that would also apply to other subsidiary bodies of the Council. As his delegation did not wish to curtail the authority of the Council, it would, therefore, be voting "yes" for the reasons outlined in his explanation.

Speaking in explanation of vote before the vote, the representative of Argentina said her delegation would vote in favour of the draft, although it would have preferred to receive a recommendation, and trusted that that would continue to be respected procedure. However, in this case, her delegation was convinced that the Council should adopt a decision, considering that the Committee responsible had not been able to formulate a recommendation three years after the application was presented. Her delegating considered that substantive issues such as a non-governmental organization's application should be debated on its merits and not be postponed on mechanisms of procedure. In this case, the organization complied with the requirements of resolution 1996/31 and worked constructively to further the aims of principles of the United Nations. Her delegation would, therefore, vote in favour on an exceptional basis responding to the current circumstances.

The representative of Saint Lucia said that things were moving so fast in the meeting, that his delegation remained in a state dilemma, as the more he listened to statements and explanations of vote, the issue became even more complicated, because it was necessary to make a serious decision regarding the vote. He said he needed to pose a question, but feared a point of order, and wondered if his colleagues would allow him to pose it rhetorically.

Interrupting that explanation, the Council Vice-President said that questions would not be entertained, and asked that Saint Lucia refrain.

Resuming his explanation, the representative of Saint Lucia said he felt the right of his speech was being curtailed, but that he would stick to the point of his explanation. Although his dilemma remained, he would attempt to rephrase his point. Thus, he stressed that any organization with consultative status with the Council needed to have a certain level of authority and legitimacy in terms of its work, and in terms of its mandate as well. The difficulty lay in that he did not know the mandate of the IGLHRC. The use of the term “Commission” rather than “Body” or “Association” in the title of the organization gave it a different flavour, and his understanding was that a commission was very different from an association or a body.

Also speaking before action, the representative of the Russian Federation said his delegation opposed discrimination on any grounds, including sexual orientation. The issue before the Council went beyond framework to give consultative status; it involved the procedural functioning of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. His delegation had wondered how the attempt to introduce a report on one organization had been carried out.

In this case, the Committee had not finished consideration of the request for consultative status and had not recommended anything to the Council regarding the non-governmental organization, he said. As the matter was still on the Committee’s agenda, the Russian Federation could not support the United States’ proposal. Before today’s meeting, his Government had asked the Secretariat how many requests were being considered in the Committee and was told there were over 530 such requests. One could imagine what Council meetings could turn into if it had to consider all such requests. The Russian Federation did not believe the current procedure met the goal of improving system-wide coherence and had no option other than to vote against draft decision “L.19”.

Then, by a recorded vote of 23 in favour, 13 against, with 13 abstentions, the Council adopted the draft decision on the “Application of the non-governmental organization International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission for consultative status with the Economic and Social Council” (document E/2010/L.19).

Speaking in explanation of vote after the vote, Venezuela’s delegate said her country’s Constitution forbade discrimination on grounds of economic or social status. Venezuela had voted against the granting of consultative status to the organization for reasons of procedure, not because it had substantive objections to that organization’s work. The examination of applications for consultative status was the responsibility of the Non-Governmental Organization Committee.

She said the Council did not have enough information to make a clear, objective opinion on the issue and it should, thus, respect the Committee’s recommendations. Any decision adopted regarding the consultative status would establish a negative precedent, opening the door for any State to selectively bring the Council’s attention to applications for consultative status based on national interest.

Uruguay’s delegate said he had voted in favour of the draft decision. He did not understand why the Committee had postponed action on the organization, after it had answered questions for three years. The case should be considered on its own merits and not be discriminated against for dealing with sexual orientation. The application did not contradict the 1996 resolution and he regretted that the Committee’s decision had been a no-action vote, meaning that the IGLHRC had not received consultative status.

Saint Lucia’s delegate said he had not been convinced that the IGLHRC had met the criteria for consultative status with the Council. There was clear division of labour within the United Nations system. As it did not have the full scope of information on the non-governmental organization, Saint Lucia did not participate in the process.

China’s delegate said her country was against all discrimination, including on the basis of sexual orientation. Out of respect for procedure, China had voted against the draft decision. In June, the Committee, fulfilling its mandate, had considered the group’s application and after deliberations, decided to postpone consideration. The Committee was an authoritative body and the Council had by-passed it, which established an unfavourable precedent, as it harmed the Committee’s credibility and challenged the relationship between non-governmental organizations and the United Nations. She was greatly concerned by the practice.

Peru’s delegate said his country supported the NGO Committee’s duty to consider the consultative status of non-governmental organizations, and further, supported its work in the case at hand. Peru wished to see

all non-governmental organizations comply with requirements outlined under 1996/31, without exception. It was also important to follow established procedure. By not adopting a decision on the groups' status, the Committee's efficiency was suffering. Peru supported the draft decision for technical reasons and requirements. The current vote should not establish a precedent for the Committee or any other body of the United Nations. It should be considered a factor that would help the Committee be more efficient.

Japan's delegate said it was unfortunate that, at its 2010 resumed session, the Committee had taken no action on the status of the group in question. She supported giving consultative status to any organization that conformed to the principles of the United Nations and the Council, outlined in resolution 1996/31. While agreeing that the Committee should have sufficient time to consider its cases, she expressed concern at instances when a decision was repeatedly deferred. For such reasons, Japan had voted in favour of the draft resolution.

Speaking in general statement after action, Cuba's delegate said it was unacceptable that the technical procedure used today was "disastrous", which meant that States could not be clear as to how to vote. She reserved the right to "deal with the digital screen issue".

The United States delegate said the Council had sent a clear message that it would ensure that the diverse voices of civil society were heard at the United Nations. Today, the Council had strengthened resolution 1996/31 and upheld the tenet that organizations would be granted consultative status. She expressed hope that the non-governmental community would follow guidance provided by the Council in their future deliberations.

A member of the Secretariat then said the results of the vote would be provided at the start of the 3 p.m. meeting.

The Council then concluded consideration of agenda item 12.

Joint Special Event on Millennium Development Goals

In the afternoon, a joint special event of the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission on "Millennium Development Goals in countries emerging from conflict" was held.

Opening Remarks

Launching the special event, Economic and Social Council Chairman HAMIDON ALI (Malaysia) said that, of the 34 countries farthest from reaching the goals and targets set out in the United Nations development agenda, 22 were in or emerging from conflict. Indeed, armed conflict could erase years of development gains: maternal mortality in conflict-affected countries tended to be the highest globally, while infant and child mortality also tended to rise significantly. Education systems and infrastructure were degraded. The good news was that many nations were moving forward, including some of the poorest, which proved that the Millennium Development Goals were achievable when appropriate policies, prudent planning, good governance and adequate resources were underpinned by political commitment.

But economic and social development could only take place if basic security was provided, he said, adding that a successful and rapid implementation of economic and social programmes could help stabilize the fragile security situation in many countries. It was true that many States were likely to transition rapidly in and out of conflict, making the environment for implementing development strategies more difficult. More must be done to systematically mainstream security concerns into development strategies and programmes, and vice versa. "This is why this joint special event between our two bodies is so important," he said.

The Council's Annual Ministerial Reviews of progress in implementing internationally agreed development goals allowed for assessing how conflict affected implementation of the development agenda, he said, underscoring that the Council could also benefit from lessons learned by the Commission on integrating security within a rights-based framework to improve the chances for sustainable development. The Council's oversight role in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance was valuable to promoting better integration between the policy and operational dimensions of peacebuilding and longer-term development.

Next, PETER WITTIG (Germany), Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, said the work of the two bodies overlapped in a critical way: peacebuilding created the basis for progress towards the Millennium

Development Goals, particularly when focused on providing services like health and education, while the Goals offered a solid framework for peacebuilding by increasing the legitimacy of Governments and addressing the root causes of conflict. For countries emerging from crisis, immediate priorities focused on establishing safety and security; disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts; and initiating security sector reform, among other things. However, the Goals, as currently configured, did not take into account those issues and the interdependence between the Goals and peacebuilding deserved attention.

Indeed, peacebuilding priorities were crucial for progress towards achieving the Goals, he said, noting that restoring core Government functions, like basic public administration and finance at the national and subnational levels, was essential, as was the creation of employment for young people and former combatants, and the rehabilitation of infrastructure. Without such a focus, attaining the Goals for countries emerging from conflict would be impossible.

Combating disease and empowering women would help lay the foundations for sustainable peace, not least by addressing some of the inequalities that created conflict, he explained. There was no simple, linear transition from conflict to peace. The Commission's goal was to support national efforts to escape the cycle of violence. While peacebuilding strategies should aim to create an environment for the Goals to flourish, attaining the Goals would help create the social cohesion needed to prevent future conflict. The Goals must be viewed through a peacebuilding lens and he expressed hope that today's discussion would provide insight into how that relationship could be further enhanced.

Keynote Address

United Nations Deputy Secretary-General ASHA-ROSE MIGIRO said it was highly appropriate that the Council, which had addressed the impact of conflict on development since the 1990s, and the Commission, which supported countries emerging from conflict, should hold today's joint meeting. The majority of countries lagging furthest in achieving the Millennium Development Goals were those emerging from conflict. Indeed, the Goals and peacebuilding were strongly interdependent: peacebuilding encompassed the provision of safety, security and public services, such as health care and education, which were critical for Goals. Likewise, achievement of the Goals provided a foundation for creating peace.

In that context, she highlighted the three key issues for today's discussion, saying that measuring progress towards the Goals at the country level and across sub-groups often revealed differences. Inequality among regions might emerge when data was aggregated at the country level. However, Governments could target resources more effectively if the Goals were monitored at the subnational level. That type of monitoring was especially valuable for countries emerging from conflict, as it prioritized resources in an environment where everything appeared important.

Another key issue centred on how progress towards the Goals could help build trust, she explained, noting that post-conflict Governments were often weak and distrusted, especially before new elections were held. Through efforts to reach the Goals, by delivering health services, for example, Governments could provide a peace dividend that increased trust. A sense of purpose was particularly vital in fractured societies and the Goals could foster unity: involving communities in the design, monitoring and evaluation would build bridges.

However, she cautioned against equating progress towards the Goals as peacebuilding, saying that only those activities that addressed the sources of conflict deserved such a label. In some countries, attaining even one Goal might constitute progress on an issue considered a trigger to conflict. She hoped today's meeting would increase awareness of the interdependence between peacebuilding and achievement of the Goals.

Panel Discussion

Moderated by Mr. Wittig, the panel featured presentations by: Amara Konneh, Minister of Planning and Economic Affairs of Liberia; Jordan Ryan, Assistant Secretary-General and Director of the Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); Sarah F. Cliffe, Special Representative and Director, World Development Report on Conflict, Security and Development at the World Bank; and Sakiko Fukuda-Parr, Professor of International Affairs at the New School.

Mr. KONNEH said the most important element for recovery in any post-conflict nation was peace and security, which required rebuilding infrastructure, providing basic services for citizens, improving the rule of law and promoting reconciliation.

He stressed that Liberia had made some progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and was likely to achieve several of their sub-targets. Those included halving the proportion of people suffering from hunger, eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education, reducing by two thirds the under-5 mortality rate, halting the spread of HIV/AIDS which had been kept under 5 per cent, and halving the number of people without access to safe drinking water.

However, due to Liberia's legacy of conflict, reducing poverty by half by 2015 was unrealistic in the Liberian context, as it would require the fastest reduction in poverty ever recorded in the world. Still, Liberia was likely to achieve a poverty reduction rate of 1.3 per cent per year.

He went on to say that access to economic opportunities and basic social services were essential building blocks for peace, and the Liberian Government had initiated concrete steps to dismantle social and Government structures that predisposed Liberia to violent conflicts. Areas that required focused attention were land conflicts; youth empowerment; political polarization; management of natural resources; the relationship between the State and its citizens; and a weak and dysfunctional justice system. The key message emerging from the Liberian experience was that, despite the grim poverty statistics following the conflict, Liberia had nevertheless made important progress in poverty reduction efforts, and that the outlook was positive.

Ms. CLIFFE said that countries emerging from conflict or affected by conflict within the last 10 years and — the issue of violence and insecurity in general — “is really very essential to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”. If progress could not be achieved in those countries, the Goals would not be attained globally. Peacebuilding and institution-building were essential. Moreover, greater focus was needed on prevention, especially in nations with high levels of crime linked to drug trafficking. By way of example, she said some Central American countries that had achieved peace settlements also had seen their peace threatened by high levels of violent crime linked to that behaviour.

The difference between the financing available to countries in post-conflict situations and those struggling to prevent conflict was another issue to be raised in work to equitably achieve the Goals, she said. Even the countries that had achieved the Goals the fastest during the twentieth century had taken between 12 years and a generation to achieve transitions, but the financial support often lasted a much shorter amount of time. How such support was provided was also important. It was absolutely critical that national institutions be credible; however, a great deal of international support was often unwilling to take the risks of working with such fragile institutions. It was clear that security, political and development efforts must coalesce.

In other areas, she said the support extended to countries in such situations was often volatile, making it tough for them to truly achieve sustained progress. In some cases, it would be difficult to show progress in the short-term on health and education outcomes. While it was important that Governments show their progress, and the international community must show the benefits of its aid efforts to support measurable outcomes, including for progress in combating violence itself. One ironic point was that there still was no way to help a country measure progress in decreasing insecurity inside its borders.

Ms. FUKUDA-PARR, said the Millennium Development Goals did not cover many of the priority actions needed for peacebuilding, such as issues of making sure that people had access to security and justice, and to other democratic governance institutions important for building peace that were not covered in the Millennium Development Goals. It was important to remember that the Goals spoke to the development targets only, and that the democracy and peace chapters did not have goals. These things were equally important in and of themselves.

The Millennium Development Goals were targets in the social sectors as defined by national averages. But she cautioned that conflicts arose from tensions among groups within countries that competed for opportunities, resources, and for roles in Government and other influential institutions. In some instances, patterns of development could create conflict if they exacerbated such risk factors. Such risk factors varied from one country to another, and each country required a unique analysis.

However, it was known through decades of research that certain factors had consistently, though not always, been at the root of conflict dynamics. Research on the economic causes of conflict since the 1990s had identified several factors, namely horizontal inequalities; the youth bulge and unemployment; poorly governed natural resources; and environmental pressures. She said that her own research had found that the of 61 worst-performing countries with respect to the Goals, almost all had a legacy of groups seeking vengeance, uneven development along group lines, and a youth bulge.

Including measures to reduce such risks should be an important element of any policy strategies in post-conflict settings. In other words, preventing violent conflict, not just accelerated development and achievement of the Goals, should be an explicit policy objective in post-conflict settings.

In the ensuing debate, delegates underscored the mutually reinforcing role of peace and security in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, with some stressing the need for much stronger data on countries emerging from conflict. The representative of Denmark, a co-facilitator of the September's Millennium Development Goal summit, said it was striking that, in a world "increasingly living 24/7, we are still, when it comes to data, very much lagging behind". Data had a broad impact on political action, particularly in countries walking a line between emergence from and relapse into conflict.

Speakers also focused on the importance of addressing youth unemployment, which had widespread relevance for countries emerging from conflict. In the short-term, disaffected youth were a source of instability, but long-term prosperity depended on their contribution to society. Others stressed a focus on building capacity, saying that fragile States faced risks that stretched beyond their capacity to deal with them, including drug trafficking. In that and other work, empowering women was critical.

Questions and comments also centred on the key role that regional private sectors could play in helping countries emerging from conflict. Some speakers reiterated that national Governments were responsible for their economic and social development, including with relation to the Goals. At the same time, no country should fail in meeting the Goals due to a lack of resources. Official development assistance (ODA) was crucial for complementing national budgets and mobilizing resources from other actors.

As that might not be enough to promote long-term development, support should also provide the necessary "breathing room" to consolidate political stability, with a view to promoting growth. Speakers also stressed the coordination between the Council and the Commission was essential, which would give leverage to the United Nations' post-conflict response. Likewise, it was critical to boost the capacities of national and local authorities, in particular their development efforts.

Also speaking in the debate were representatives of Canada, Chile, Nepal, Brazil, Bangladesh, Australia, Ghana and Indonesia.

A representative of the European Union also spoke.

A representative of the World Food Programme also addressed the Council.

Responding to comments made during the discussion, Ms. CLIFFE said that youth unemployment, which was absolutely critical for the Millennium Development Goals and peacebuilding, was one of those areas where agreement could easily be found on its priorities. Two areas to focus on would be public employment programmes, as well other types of work opportunities for youth. The challenge of labour-intensive growth was difficult for the most isolated or fragile States, but was critical for sustaining progress. She said that Ghana and Indonesia, for instance, had navigated respective difficult periods with successful programmes for both post-conflict rehabilitation and poverty reduction.

Mr. KONNEH, also responding to the dialogue, said that the experience of post-conflict nations immediately after a conflict was one wherein the national capacity was at zero. The most important question during these times was whether or not citizens could sleep at night without gunfire. During such times it was not about roads or economic growth, but just whether families could sleep soundly and safely at night. The condition during this time was one in which there was a high aid flow, and when the international community was rallying around the post-conflict country.

For example, Ghana helped Liberia to get emergency electricity, and there were other strong attempts to push new programmes. The presence of non-governmental actors was widespread, but lacked coherence. As the post-conflict country leapt out of that initial mode, the aspirations of the people then mushroomed, while Government capacity and budget remained low, and aid flow decreased. Those elements — rising aspirations of the people, limited national budget, low capacity to deliver services, and the shift of the international community's focus to other priorities — seriously hampered peacebuilding and development. To bring such problems under control, actors must work cohesively and must not ignore the need for data on which to base projections and recorded progress.

Ms. FUKUDA-PARR said that employment had not received much focus and priority consideration from national Governments and donor priorities in recent years. For example, most of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers prepared by countries did not have action plans for generating employment. That was an area wherein both national Governments and the donor community could put more energy and learn more about successful examples.

Mr. RYAN said it was important to consider the critical voice of fragile States and how they saw the need for greater cooperation and collective action. From the UNDP's perspective, he looked forward to making available the results of the meeting in Ghana where a number of so-called fragile States were focusing on the Millennium Development Goals. It was also vital to focus on a range of issues, such as zero tolerance for sexual and gender-based violence. Finally, it was important that the international community be committed to giving the time and space, some through the peacekeeping missions, to make sure thugs don't overtake a peace that had been established, and to make sure that national capacity was being built to ensure that peace and security took hold.

General Discussion on African Countries Emerging from Conflict

Peacebuilding Commission Chairman, Mr. WITTIG, then briefed the Council on the first joint meeting between the African Union Peace and Security Council and the Commission earlier this month. "We are convinced that linkages with ECOSOC need to be deepened," he stated. With emphases on national ownership in the peacebuilding efforts, the Commission focused on tailoring responses to national priorities.

The Chair of the Commission's Burundi Configuration visited that country recently to support and play an active role in elections, which were held in May and June. More elections were scheduled to a later date. However, those elections had been an important milestone in establishing the foundation for long-term growth and development.

In May 2009 the Central African Republic and the Commission had implemented an inclusive in-country peacebuilding framework with national authorities and international actors to address issues of development; security; and disarmament, demobilization and reintegration. Since then, progress continued to be steady with the implementation of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration process and upcoming presidential and legislative elections this year.

The focus on Guinea-Bissau was directed towards the revitalization of the economy, combating drug trafficking, and establishing stability for elections, both parliamentary and presidential. There was also great emphasis on ensuring civil control of the Armed Forces.

With Sierra Leone, the final country on the Commission's agenda, the Commission had adopted an outcome document that endorsed the Government's agenda for change. Three priorities were identified for the Commission, including youth unemployment, governmental rule of law and the combating of drug trafficking. In September, the Commission would be conducting a review of this adopted framework.

He then commented he looked forward to Liberia being placed on the Commission's agenda. Turning to the role of the Peacebuilding Fund and its work with other African States, in the four years of that mechanism's existence, \$155 million for 12 African post-conflict countries had been allocated and delivered in a fast, flexible process of funding for transition. Seven African post-conflict countries benefited from the newly introduced Peacebuilding Commission Recovery Facility, totalling \$24 million. A total \$16 million was allocated for seven immediate response facilities, among them, Somalia and Liberia.

Taking the floor next, JORGE TAGLE, (Chile) stressed the importance of including the private sector in the work of the Commission, and “not the incipient private sector but on the regional level” to support economic development in post–conflict African countries. He requested more information on how the Peacebuilding Commission could support this process.

Responding to the representative, the Mr. WETTIG said that the role of the private sector had been highlighted in the Commission’s various country configurations, notably in regards to youth employment, which was not just a development issue but a security issue. He agreed that the continued engagement, as well as first time engagement, was important and would be highlighted in efforts taken on the ground.

Action on Oral Decision

The Council then approved an oral draft decision under the agenda item on “African countries emerging from conflict”, which stated that the Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission would continue to inform the Council of its activities with countries on the Council’s agenda in the substantive session of 2011.

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