



Administrative Committee on Coordination

ACC/1996/20

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ENGLISH AND FRENCH ONLY

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION AT ITS SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF 1996

New York, 25 and 26 October 1996

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held its second regular session of 1996 at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 25 and 26 October 1996, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali. The agenda for the session was as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Review of developments affecting international cooperation and development, and their implications for the United Nations system: strengthening and reform of the United Nations system.
3. Follow-up within the United Nations system to ACC initiatives and decisions:
 - (a) Coordinated follow-up to international conferences;
 - (b) African economic recovery and development.
4. Other matters:
 - (a) Functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery;
 - (b) Administrative questions;
 - (c) Other issues.

2. A private meeting between the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) present in New York was held on 25 October 1996.

3. The present document outlines the issues raised under the agenda items, and provides the text of the conclusions and decisions adopted by ACC.

I. REVIEW OF DEVELOPMENTS AFFECTING INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND DEVELOPMENT, AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM: STRENGTHENING AND REFORM OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

4. ACC carried out a wide-ranging review of the direction of ongoing reform processes in the United Nations system and their implications for the strengthening of the system in the context of current developments affecting international cooperation and development.

5. The documentation before ACC, comprising a background note and annotations to the agenda, endeavoured to place the reform processes under way in the system in the context of overall changes taking place in the international environment. It also outlined relevant positions emanating from groups of member States, particularly proposals of system-wide concern contained in the communiqué adopted at the G-7 summit in Lyon; reviewed developments at the central intergovernmental level, including General Assembly resolution 50/227 of 24 May 1996 on further measures for the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields; and analysed the progress made in the General Assembly working group on an agenda for development and on the strengthening of the United Nations system. In addition, the documentation provided an overview of the reforms initiated by ACC at the inter-agency level, and addressed administrative and managerial aspects of the reform processes under way in the various organizations, drawing on the outcome of the high-level meeting of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) held in New York on 18 and 19 September 1996.

6. The documentation indicated that a common thrust that had emerged from current intergovernmental discussions and positions on reform was a perceived need for the organizations of the United Nations system to concentrate on core areas of competence while at the same time strengthening joint and collaborative

actions, which was viewed as a way to maximize cost-effectiveness and at the same time ensure that the system was able to address in an integrated manner the growing number of interrelated global issues requiring comprehensive solutions. The documentation pointed out that that message was largely in line with the approaches that had increasingly been guiding the work of ACC, and with the renewed emphasis placed by ACC on a clear delineation of responsibilities within the United Nations system on the one hand, and the launching of specific joint initiatives that were result-oriented and time-bound on the other. The question was raised in the documentation whether, beyond such specific initiatives, an effort should be made at the ACC level to extend the new approaches guiding inter-agency work to broader reviews of the relationships among the overall work-programmes of organizations with a view both to improving the division of labour and strengthening joint actions system-wide. The issue was also raised of the feasibility of making a more systematic use of existing consultative and other inter-agency committees of ACC for system-wide prior consultations on policy and programme initiatives, as well as on the proposed work programmes of organizations, with a view to avoiding unnecessary overlaps, identifying gaps, and facilitating closer collaboration and complementarity of actions at the implementation stage once the relevant programme budgets had been approved by the respective governing bodies.

7. In their discussions, ACC members agreed that reform should not be viewed as a one-time operation but should be pursued as a continuous process of adaptation and change to strengthen the overall effectiveness and impact of the United Nations system in meeting the changing requirements of member States. All organizations of the United Nations system were fully engaged in that process at the programmatic, managerial, organizational and intergovernmental levels. It was recognized that, at the inter-agency level, ACC had and should continue to play a lead role in the process by helping to clarify, from a system-wide perspective, the issues that needed to be addressed at the intergovernmental level; promoting a clear delineation of responsibilities within the system, as part of the effort to enhance overall cost-effectiveness; and strengthening inter-agency coordination and cooperation in relation to activities of common interest, while further developing flexible modalities for joint actions on cross-cutting issues.

8. ACC members emphasized that the ultimate aim of reform should be to rationalize and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to advance the strategic and interrelated goals of peace, democracy, and environmentally sustainable economic and social development. Cost-effectiveness, the most productive use of funds and a concern to maximize impact at the country level were key dimensions of the current reform effort; experience with managerial

reform gained outside the United Nations system in the governmental and private sectors could be usefully drawn upon in pursuing those dimensions of the overall reform process. At the same time, the process should be approached in a wider, long-term perspective; in particular, it should recognize the unique character of the mission of the United Nations system: the pursuit of certain basic values and of long-term goals and objectives.

9. ACC decided to issue a joint statement on reform and strengthening of the United Nations system, the text of which is contained in annex I. It was further decided that a synthesis report on developments in reform processes within the United Nations system should be prepared and updated from time to time.

10. ACC agreed to focus its future work-programme on priority issues on the global agenda that had implications for system-wide coordination and cooperation and could serve to advance the substantive goals of the reform process, as outlined in its joint statement.

II. FOLLOW-UP WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM TO ACC INITIATIVES AND DECISIONS

A. Coordinated follow-up to international conferences

11. ACC reviewed the work being undertaken at the inter-agency level to promote system-wide coordinated follow-up to recent international conferences, focusing on the new arrangements that it had put in place for that purpose at its second regular session of 1995.

12. ACC was briefed by the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development, representatives of the World Bank and the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Executive Director of United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) on the work of the three task forces established by ACC to address the interrelated themes of the enabling environment for social and economic development, employment and sustainable livelihoods, and basic social services for all.

13. In the same context, ACC was briefed on preparations for the special session of the General Assembly for the purpose of an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of Agenda 21, to be held in 1997. It was also informed of work under way in its standing machinery relevant to the follow-up to recent global conferences. In addition, the attention of ACC was drawn to

the forthcoming discussion by the General Assembly of the study on the impact of armed conflict on children prepared by Ms. Graça Machel (A/51/306 and Add.1), which contains, inter alia, specific recommendations on follow-up. In view of the importance and inter-agency interest of the subject, it was proposed that ACC revert to it in 1997 in the light of the outcome of the Assembly discussion.

14. As to the Task Force on the Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development, for which the World Bank serves as lead-agency, ACC was informed that the subgroup of the Task Force dealing with capacity-building for governance, chaired by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), was proceeding on schedule. The subgroup on the macroeconomic and social framework had, for its part, selected countries and themes for its country case studies. The themes identified for that purpose were:

(a) Policies for macroeconomic stabilization and growth, including the equity trade-offs inherent in implementing such policies;

(b) The external environment and its effects on trade and investment;

(c) The interface between the public and private sectors;

(d) Strategies for human capital development;

(e) Rural development, both agricultural and non-agricultural activities and issues.

Key issues, such as the environment, gender and poverty alleviation, were being pursued as essential components of each theme. In order to avoid duplication the Task Force had agreed to suspend the work of its subgroup on indicators, and to compile instead an inventory of all inter-agency activities on indicators currently under way.

15. As to the Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, for which the ILO serves as lead-agency, ACC was informed that, following the successful completion of work for the elaboration of an appropriate conceptual framework, the Task Force was currently making progress in conducting the envisaged country policy reviews. In particular, the country reports being prepared would contain recommendations on how the United Nations system could best coordinate its support for the implementation of policy choices adopted by individual countries. UNDP was leading two country studies, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) one, the World Bank

one and the ILO three; a final synthesis report would be prepared for submission to ACC at its next session.

16. The Executive Director of UNFPA, as Chair of the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, informed ACC that the work of the Task Force was progressing well and on schedule. She recalled that a primary purpose of the Task Force was to facilitate the work of the resident coordinator system in assisting countries in realizing conference goals and commitments. With the active participation of 14 organizations, the Task Force was producing specific work products, including guidelines and guidance notes prepared within working groups on basic education for all, primary health care and international migration. She confirmed that gender, human rights and shelter issues were being addressed in the course of the work of the Task Force. As to shelter, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) had been invited to review all relevant work products to ensure the integration of shelter concerns. Close linkages were being maintained with the other two task forces. For the future, special attention must be paid to issues related to reporting, indicators and linkages between the task forces and the ACC standing machinery. Consideration also needed to be given to the availability of mechanisms for receiving feedback on country experiences after the task forces had completed their work.

17. ACC members welcomed the progress achieved in the work of the three task forces pursuant to the guidelines that it had adopted at its first regular session of 1996, and provided guidance for their further work. Satisfaction was also expressed that the Inter-Agency Committee on Women had held its first session and planned to meet in 1997 before the first regular session of ACC so that ACC could review its reports at that time.

18. ACC expressed appreciation for the contribution being made by the task forces to the development of concrete inter-agency collaboration, including with the Bretton Woods institutions, focusing on the delivery of coordinated services at the country level. The strong political support that had been provided by member States for those arrangements was also noted.

19. ACC members stressed the importance of ensuring that the work and end-products of the task forces and other relevant activities of the standing machinery were effectively used, particularly at the country level. In the same context, the need was generally emphasized to give careful consideration to ways of maintaining the collaboration that had been achieved and monitoring follow-up after the task forces had completed their work.

20. ACC noted that, alongside the three task forces, the inter-agency project that it had launched at its first regular session of 1996 on universal access to basic communications and information services, under the leadership of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), was also proceeding on schedule, and that a report on its outcome would be submitted to ACC at its next session.

21. ACC decided to undertake, at its first regular session of 1997, a first comprehensive assessment of overall progress within the system in promoting the coordinated follow-up to recent global conferences, including the effectiveness of the new inter-agency mechanisms that it had established for that purpose, and to consider further arrangements to be made to pursue such work within the inter-agency machinery. It agreed that an important aim should be to maintain and strengthen the momentum that had been created in galvanizing the system around priority goals and objectives, as they had emerged from recent United Nations conferences, and in achieving a coherent and common understanding among United Nations agencies and organizations of such goals and objectives, as a basis for enhancing coordinated support at the country and regional levels. ACC called upon the three task forces and all other concerned parts of its subsidiary machinery to contribute to the preparations for that review.

22. ACC further requested the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All to pursue the integration of relevant aspects of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in its work, and invited the other two task forces, as well as the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), to consider the implications of Habitat II for their respective work programmes, and to make recommendations thereon, as required.

23. In the broader context of global initiatives calling for priority attention by the United Nations system as a whole, the importance was stressed of taking appropriate measures to ensure sustained follow-up to the Yokohama Strategy for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, including sound planning for the closing of the Decade, and to effectively bridge the Decade with the continuing programmes of the United Nations system in the area of disaster reduction.

24. Concerning human rights, ACC heard a presentation by the High Commissioner for Human Rights on preparations for (a) the five-year review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Conference on Human Rights and (b) the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both scheduled for 1998. ACC recalled that, at its first regular session of 1994, it had decided,

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inter alia, to undertake periodic discussions on the Vienna Programme of Action with a view to furthering a coordinated approach by the United Nations system to the promotion and protection of human rights. ACC also recalled its request to the three task forces to integrate human rights issues in their work programme. ACC further noted that the Commission on Human Rights had specifically called upon ACC to contribute to the two events scheduled for 1998. Accordingly, it decided to include in the agenda of its second regular session of 1997 an item on the preparations for both events, and authorized the convening of inter-agency consultations during 1997 to prepare for its consideration an assessment of the United Nations system response to the Vienna Programme of Action, as well as recommendations on a coordinated approach to the celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

B. African economic recovery and development

25. Opening ACC discussions on the item, the Secretary-General welcomed indications of increased African interest and involvement in the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, and of growing political support for the Initiative at the international level. He noted that some of the questions that had earlier been raised about the added value of the Initiative were being progressively overcome. Referring specifically to the report of the 5th meeting of the ACC Steering Committee of the Special Initiative, the Secretary-General expressed satisfaction that the division of labour within the United Nations system was being further clarified, and that concrete implementation strategies for achieving early and tangible results were being finalized.

26. ACC was further briefed by the co-chairs of the ACC Steering Committee of the Special Initiative on the conclusions of its 5th meeting (New York, 20 September 1996). They noted that there was increasing evidence of African ownership of the Initiative, initially as reflected in the participation of a number of heads of States and Government in its launch in March 1996, and more recently in the support or endorsement extended to the Initiative at meetings of ministers of health and other sectors of a number of African Governments. They co-chairs further noted that the current mid-term review of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s provided a very useful opportunity to reinforce linkages between the Special Initiative and the New Agenda.

27. The co-chairs also reported on the increasingly effective inter-agency collaboration that was developing around the Special Initiative, as evidenced in the reports of the coordinating and cooperating agencies of the United Nations

system, including the Bretton Woods institutions. They confirmed progress in the preparation of sector investment programmes in education, health, water and governance in 13 countries. Reports had also been received from four countries in which "retreats" focusing on relevant aspects of the implementation of the Initiative had been organized by the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team, with the close involvement of Governments. The co-chairs stressed that a next important step was the formulation of a common communication strategy to guide further work in connection with the Special Initiative.

28. ACC was informed that with respect to the priority area of basic education for all African children, the caucus of African ministers of education had adopted an implementation protocol that had been jointly prepared by the World Bank and UNESCO.

29. In the ensuing discussion, ACC members expressed appreciation for the progress achieved since the launch of the Special Initiative. They generally endorsed an all-inclusive approach to the participation of African countries in the Special Initiative, including the provision of sustained support in the preparation of sector investment programmes to countries that required it. Given the large number of African countries being destabilized by civil wars and conflicts, ACC members urged that every effort be made to utilize the framework of the Special Initiative whenever possible, to bridge relief and development assistance, and to extend, also to those countries, the concerted support of the United Nations system.

30. ACC members stressed the importance of further developing effective resource mobilization strategies for all the priority components of the Special Initiative with a view to achieving the required additionality. The need to continue to support regional activities, along with country-specific projects, was also stressed. The importance of establishing firmer and more substantive relationships between the New Agenda and the Special Initiative was also generally recognized. ACC requested the secretariat of the Special Initiative to prepare an analytical report that would link the operational goals and activities of the Special Initiative to the New Agenda and present the Special Initiative as a key component of the implementing mechanisms of the New Agenda. Linkages should also be explored or strengthened between the Special Initiative and other international programmes, such as the Alliance for African Industrialization, as well as ongoing bilateral programmes. To begin with, comprehensive information on all ongoing activities supporting African development should be assembled and made available throughout the United Nations system.

31. ACC called for the prompt implementation of the work programme endorsed by the Steering Committee of the Special Initiative. It reiterated the importance it attached to the resident coordinator and the entire United Nations system country teams promoting and sustaining an effective dialogue between United Nations system representatives and Governments, civil society and the donor community in the implementation of the Initiative. ACC also urged that more focused attention be given to a number of priority dimensions of the Special Initiative, including sustainable livelihoods in environmentally marginal areas, poverty alleviation, human rights and gender, in relation to which programme development did not yet appear to be sufficiently advanced.

III. OTHER MATTERS

A. Functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery

32. ACC received a progress report on the review of experience with the 1993 reorganization of the ACC machinery, initiated at the first regular session of 1996 of ACC. At that session, ACC had recognized that the reorganization and extensive streamlining of ACC machinery that it had brought about had served to significantly enhance the effectiveness of both ACC itself and its subsidiary bodies. The ACC concluded that further improvements should nevertheless be sought in relation to both the methods of work of ACC itself and the functioning of its subsidiary machinery.

33. In pursuing the review, ACC noted the relationship between the agenda item and its discussion at the present session of the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system. That discussion had helped to further define the role of ACC in the changing international environment and identify priority issues that needed to be pursued by ACC with a view to strengthening the effectiveness and coherence of the United Nations system.

34. As to ACC methods of work, the executive heads considered that the effectiveness and impact of ACC had been significantly enhanced by the adoption of more flexible methods of work and the launching of specific initiatives, such as the Special Initiative on Africa and the initiative related to the coordinated follow-up to United Nations conferences, being pursued through task-oriented, time-bound mechanisms. Along with improvements in the functioning and effectiveness of ACC, policy dialogue and concrete programme cooperation were being furthered throughout the United Nations system through direct and more systematic consultations between executive heads, as well as through flexible and innovative arrangements for consultation and cooperation among organizations

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to address specific issues of mutual concern. The Secretary-General and the executive heads of the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO), for example, were holding periodic consultations on post-conflict peace-building and other issues of common interest, with particular emphasis on Africa. It was generally felt that flexible methods of inter-agency work and task-oriented and objective-based approaches to coordination should be further promoted, together with arrangements to keep ACC and the totality of its membership duly apprised of consultations and developments of system-wide interest.

35. ACC considered it important that duplication between the work of its standing machinery and the work of ad hoc inter-agency mechanisms be avoided, and that the bodies comprising its standing machinery be kept fully informed of developments in the work of ad hoc mechanisms relevant to their overall mandates.

36. Those improvements should enable ACC to increasingly focus on key policy themes and to reach well-informed, concrete conclusions on priority issues of interest to the United Nations system as a whole. As the ability of ACC to reach such conclusions is enhanced, it becomes increasingly important to strengthen its capacity to systematically assess the follow-up given to its decisions and initiatives. ACC endorsed the recommendations submitted to it on arrangements to provide more integrated secretariat support for the whole of ACC machinery.

37. It was recalled that a number of ACC subsidiary bodies had jointly financed secretariats, whereas others were serviced by staff or units within the United Nations Secretariat. Regret was expressed that the previous ACC decision to place the jointly financed secretariats in common premises in Geneva had not yet been implemented. ACC concurred with the recommendation that greater integration in the work of those secretariats, as well as more systematic cooperation between them and the concerned services of the United Nations Secretariat, could achieve savings, and more importantly, would serve to enhance the quality and coherence of secretariat support for the whole of the ACC machinery, without detracting from the services provided to the subsidiary bodies concerned. ACC requested that action for the co-location of inter-agency financed secretariats in Geneva should be taken without further delay, and invited its Organizational Committee (OC) to elaborate further suggestions for its consideration on how the proposed networking arrangements among the jointly financed secretariats and concerned units in the United Nations would function in practice, as well as on the information and other outputs that could be jointly delivered as a result of such arrangements.

38. ACC requested OC to continue to strengthen its capacity to monitor and report on a more systematic basis on developments relevant to the follow-up to ACC decisions.

39. As to the subsidiary structure and methods of work of consultative and other inter-agency committees, ACC noted the progress achieved to date in streamlining their agendas and shortening their meetings. ACC endorsed the proposal to discontinue the ACC Subcommittee on Rural Development and replace it with flexible arrangements for coordination, particularly at the country level.

40. ACC noted the information provided to it on the progress made by CCPOQ in ensuring a more focused selection of topics for its sessions, with more thorough preparations, through the use of task forces and similar arrangements. ACC was encouraged to continue its efforts to shorten the duration of its meetings and reorient its agenda to focus on policy coordination issues cutting across the programme and operational areas with a view, inter alia, to enhancing its impact on the intergovernmental agenda.

41. ACC recognized that the practice of holding high-level meetings of CCAQ as a whole had proved useful and that it should be continued in the future, when required. With regard to the meetings of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel Questions) (CCAQ(PER)), ACC noted the information provided to it, whereby the extent to which CCAQ(PER) could further reduce the number of its meetings was closely linked with its consultative relationship vis-à-vis the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC). The participation of CCAQ(PER) in ICSC meetings had already been rationalized and reduced. There was, however, potential for further reductions, particularly if ICSC limited its sessions to one a year. ACC reiterated its request that that possibility be pursued with ICSC and the General Assembly.

42. Recalling its decision to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the progress being made to follow up recent global conferences at its first regular session of 1997, ACC agreed that that would be a suitable context for addressing further issues related to the relationships between CCPOQ and IACSD on the one hand, and between those bodies and ad hoc task forces concerned with aspects of the follow-up to conferences on the other. It therefore agreed to revert to those issues at that time. It recognized, however, that such a review could only be concluded at its second regular session of 1997 so as to take into account the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of Agenda 21, to be held in June 1997.

43. Meanwhile, ACC requested CCPOQ and IACSD to pursue the review of their subsidiary structures with a view to their further streamlining. The two committees were invited to consider the feasibility of extending the country-based approach that would be pursued in the area of rural development to other relevant subsidiary bodies coming within their purview.

44. ACC reiterated its recommendation that in all substantive and administrative areas, maximum use be made of information technology for inter-agency consultations in order to reduce as far as possible the number and frequency of inter-agency meetings and achieve savings.

45. ACC requested OC to pursue its consideration of the modalities of reporting on the results of the work of ACC and its subsidiary machinery to the relevant intergovernmental bodies so as to enhance the relevance and impact of such reporting.

46. ACC decided to revert to the above-mentioned issues at its first regular session of 1997 with a view to completing the review at its second regular session of 1997.

B. Administrative questions

47. During the consideration of this agenda item, ACC heard statements from the Chairman of ICSC and the representatives of the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations, and the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations, and had an exchange of views with them.

48. ACC was briefed by the Chairman of CCAQ(PER) on current developments in the work of ICSC since the first regular session of 1996 of ACC, focusing on issues relating to common system remuneration and the functioning of ICSC. Regarding the issue of common system remuneration, ACC was informed of the recommendations being submitted by ICSC to the General Assembly at its fifty-first session for a salary increase of at least 3.1 per cent at each grade and step; the restructuring of the salary scale along the lines already put forward by ICSC in 1995, amounting on average to a further 1 per cent increase; and the consolidation of 2.5 percentage points of post adjustment into the base/floor scale.

49. ACC members reiterated their views on the declining competitiveness of United Nations staff remuneration and their concerns about the functioning of ICSC, including the continuing impasse on the participation of staff

representatives in the work of the Commission. ACC recalled the proposals that it had put forward in its statement to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session (see ACC/1995/23, para. 35). The possibility of relocating ICSC was also raised.

50. ACC adopted a statement under the item, which is contained in annex II.

51. It was noted that at a time when reform was high on the system's agenda, it was more essential than ever to have an effective and imaginative international civil service commission that was capable of taking initiatives to keep pace with new trends in human resource managements and the changing needs of organizations, including the introduction of a competitive and more flexible, responsive and economical pay-setting system.

52. In response to questions raised about the ongoing process of review of the code of conduct of United Nations Secretariat staff, it was explained that the review was being carried out within the framework of - and was not intended to supersede - existing inter-agency instruments applicable to the entire common system. Consultations on various aspects of the draft had nevertheless been initiated by the United Nations Secretariat with United Nations funds and programmes. The draft, once completed, would be shared with ACC members. ACC members emphasized their interest in the exercise from a system-wide perspective, and expressed the hope that there would be timely consultations, bearing in mind the implications of the exercise for the international civil service in the common system.

53. ACC reviewed with the United Nations Security Coordinator issues concerning the security and safety of the United Nations system staff. ACC members reiterated the importance that they attached to compliance with the Field Security Handbook, as the basis for an effective inter-agency security management policy. The importance of ensuring that staff at large were provided with relevant information in this area was stressed. It was noted that work was under way in the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator to prepare a comprehensive information note on security policy that would be made available to all United Nations system staff through their respective headquarters. ACC agreed that staff security should remain a standing issue on its agenda, with preparations to be undertaken through the Ad Hoc Meeting on Security Matters, which would henceforth be convened on an annual basis. In the intervals between meetings, informal working groups would be convened, as necessary, to resolve security issues as they arose. ACC members shared the Security Coordinator's and the Ad Hoc Meeting's concern that priority be given to providing adequate resources to ensure effective security arrangements at the inter-agency level

and - most importantly - in the field. Consideration of issues raised in the annotated agenda concerning the use of armed guards was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

54. As to the perspective of the United Nations system on the future role of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), ACC noted the conclusions of the high-level meeting of CCAQ, as well as the meeting's assessment of shortcomings in the present structure of JIU and in the quality and value added of its reports. In the light of the meeting's recommendations, ACC requested the United Nations to invite the General Assembly, on behalf of ACC, to institute an independent review - to be carried out in 1997 by a group of auditors-general or former auditors-general of selected member States - of the role and functions of JIU, focusing on the relevance, effectiveness and cost-efficiency of JIU studies, and resulting in recommendations to the General Assembly on the future role of JIU, the optimal resources needed to fulfil that role and the opportunities provided by out-sourcing studies. Pending the outcome of that review, the United Nations would consult with the President of the General Assembly, pursuant to paragraph 2 of article 3 of the Statute of JIU, on ways not to preclude the possibility of future cost-containment measures, including the feasibility of postponing elections for forthcoming vacancies due to take place at the current session of the General Assembly, since they would only take effect in 1998. Meanwhile, ACC reiterated its request that JIU observe zero nominal budgetary growth.

C. Other issues

1. World Food Summit

55. The Director-General of FAO provided an update on preparations for the World Food Summit, which was to be convened in Rome from 13 to 17 November 1996. He noted that the Summit's draft policy statement and plan of action should be finalized by the end of October. He further indicated that the widespread interest in the Summit, as evidenced by the confirmed attendance of over 100 heads of State and Government, together with the transparent nature of the preparatory process, augured well for the success of the Summit. He also stated that while FAO would carry out the measures needed to ensure the follow-up to the Summit and the implementation of its plan of action within the framework of its mandate and field of competence, it would in so doing work closely with its partners in the United Nations system. The Committee on World Food Security would be the intergovernmental body responsible for monitoring progress, and would report to the Council and Conference of FAO, in line with resolution 2/95

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adopted by the FAO Conference. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 50/109, it would also report to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council.

2. Appointments and future meetings within the ACC machinery

56. ACC endorsed the appointment of Mr. Abdelkhalek Tazi-Riffi of ITU as Chairman of CCAQ(FB) for a two-year period 1997-1999 starting from its first regular session of 1997, as well as the appointment of Mr. Abraham E. Espino of IAEA as the CCAQ(FB) Vice-Chairman for the same period, as well as the extension of the appointment of the Secretary, Mr. R. Eggleston (WHO) and Assistant Secretary, Ms. M. J. Peters (ILO) of CCAQ(PER), for a further period of three years, as of 1 July 1996 and 1 May 1996, respectively.

57. ACC noted the following programme of meetings:

IACSD	New York	20 and 21 February 1997
CCPOQ	Geneva	3-7 March 1997
CCAQ(PER)		To be held in conjunction with the forty-fifth session of ICSC (exact dates to be determined)
CCAQ(FB)	Vienna (IAEA and UNIDO)	Week of 10-14 February 1997

3. Future meetings of ACC

58. ACC decided that its first regular session of 1997 would be held at the United Nations Office at Geneva on 10 and 11 April 1997. Its second regular session was tentatively scheduled to take place at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 31 October and 1 November 1997.

4. ACC statement to the special session of the General Assembly on the implementation of Agenda 21

59. ACC recalled that in accordance with its earlier decision, the last phase of the review of the functioning of IACSD was expected to result in a statement

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by ACC for submission to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly. It noted that the statement would be concise, policy-oriented and forward-looking; would emphasize actual and potential support for progress at the country level; and would analyse the effectiveness of inter-agency arrangements established to follow up the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It would also suggest, on the basis of experience gained since UNCED, ways of promoting more effective and efficient United Nations system-wide support in the area of sustainable development for the period after 1997.

60. ACC further noted that the statement would contain three main parts:

(a) A brief description of current inter-agency arrangements for following up UNCED and promoting sustainable development, with an assessment of their effectiveness;

(b) Main challenges faced by the United Nations system during the period;

(c) Main issues requiring attention during the special session and in the period beyond the 1997 review.

61. ACC recognized that the impact of the ACC statement on the outcome of the special session would be enhanced if it were to be issued in good time before the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, which was acting as the Preparatory Committee for the special session and was scheduled to meet from 7 to 25 April 1997 in New York. ACC requested IACSD to finalize the draft ACC statement at its ninth meeting, on 20 and 21 February 1997, and agreed that the draft would thereafter be formally approved by ACC members by correspondence.

5. Participation of the United Nations University and the International Trade Centre in ACC machinery

62. In response to the interest expressed by the Bureau of the United Nations University (UNU) Council in the possibility of UNU participation in ACC, ACC endorsed the following arrangements for the participation of UNU in its machinery. It was agreed that UNU be invited to be represented in the consultative and inter-agency committees comprising the subsidiary machinery of ACC. As far as ACC itself was concerned, arrangements would be made to inform UNU of the ACC work programme so as to enable UNU to indicate whether the agenda of any given session included an item to which UNU, in view of the research and related activities it had conducted, would have an especially important

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contribution to make. In that light, the Secretary-General would recommend to ACC the participation of the Rector in relevant ACC discussions. Provisions would also be made for periodic consultations between the Rector of the University and ACC members to identify research topics for inclusion in the UNU programme, which would serve to maximize UNU contribution to the work of the United Nations system.

63. ACC also agreed that provision be made for the participation of ITC in the inter-agency and consultative committees within the subsidiary machinery of ACC.

Annex IACC JOINT STATEMENT ON THE REFORM AND STRENGTHENING
OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

1. The Secretary-General and the executive heads of all the specialized agencies and United Nations programmes and funds, meeting under the Secretary-General's chairmanship during the second regular session of 1996 of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (New York, 25 and 26 October 1996), reviewed the overall direction of ongoing reform processes within the United Nations system and their implications for the strengthening of the United Nations system.
2. They reaffirmed their individual and collective commitment to pursuing and intensifying the reform effort in order to strengthen effectiveness and impact in meeting the changing requirements of member States.
3. The organizations and bodies of the United Nations system have been responsive to the changing international environment and the evolving demands of member States. They have reviewed policy orientations, both individually and collectively, and are redefining priorities and refocusing programmes and activities, while at the same time enhancing efficiency and cost-effectiveness.
4. Central to their efforts are the far-reaching management reforms being introduced in the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. Significant intergovernmental reforms and other organizational changes are also being actively pursued, including reviews of mission statements and strategies, and progress in streamlining intergovernmental structures and processes to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Information on all such processes is being shared and will be disseminated throughout the United Nations system, which should help to ensure that they are mutually supportive, that their implications for other organizations and bodies are identified and taken into account, and that best practices are institutionalized and drawn upon system-wide.
5. ACC wishes to emphasize the importance of ensuring that intergovernmental reforms progress in parallel with managerial and other organizational reforms. Secretariat and intergovernmental reforms should draw strength from each other and influence each other's course in a positive way. As the experience of a number of organizations shows, that is crucial for ensuring that the reform process genuinely contributes to overall organizational effectiveness.

6. At the inter-agency level, ongoing measures to enhance programme complementarity are being accompanied by renewed efforts to identify and focus on common priority objectives and priority themes; develop joint arrangements to respond to emerging requirements; and concert overall policies and strategies. The strengthening of country-level coordination and country-level impact is a key objective and measure of those efforts.

7. With the adoption of clear principles to guide its work and more focused, policy-oriented agendas, the effectiveness of ACC itself - as the only forum bringing together the executive heads of all organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General - is being progressively strengthened in pragmatic ways. The structures of the inter-agency mechanisms supporting the work of ACC and their working methods, including increased use of modern communication technology, have been streamlined and improved. Such measures are assisting ACC not only in responding more effectively to system-wide policy guidelines emanating from the central intergovernmental bodies but also in taking new inter-agency initiatives on key global priorities, and will be pursued and deepened in the period ahead. They include the decentralized methods of work put in place for the follow-up to Agenda 21; the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa; and the flexible arrangements, including time-bound inter-agency task forces, that have been introduced to support country-level actions on a thematic, coordinated basis, to implement the results of recent global conferences. A growing number of joint mechanisms expected to contribute to greater system-wide impact have also been launched, such as the Global Environment Facility and the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV-AIDS, both of which are intended to take advantage of existing synergies while avoiding institutional proliferation.

8. A common challenge facing the system in an environment of growing budgetary constraints is to preserve programme delivery while refocusing programme priorities in response to changing demands. Cost-effectiveness, the most productive use of funds, and maximizing the resources devoted to the delivery of programmes and services of direct benefit to countries are and will continue to be major concerns of the executive heads. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the ultimate objective of reforming and revitalizing the system is not about cost-cutting but about effectiveness and responsiveness. The effort will ultimately succeed only if it is accompanied by sound and predictable funding for programmes and activities.

9. The peace-building and development objectives of the United Nations system require the adoption of a long-term perspective. The impact of reform measures should be assessed in the same perspective, and should not be measured only in

the short term. Effective reform is a process, not an event. The consensus achieved at recent global conferences is providing a new impetus for revitalizing international cooperation for development, and is introducing a coherent framework for system-wide action in support of development that should be viewed as an integral component of the reform process.

10. The present movement to strengthen and reform the United Nations system is driven by a confluence of changes in the political, environmental, economic and social domains that are rapidly and fundamentally changing the international context. The reform agenda of the United Nations system must be organized around substantive objectives, and should have as its main objective the strengthening of its capacity to respond effectively to the new challenges confronting the international community. ACC recognizes its responsibility to contribute actively to that process. It will do so by helping to clarify the issues that need to be addressed from a system-wide perspective, formulating appropriate policy advice to facilitate intergovernmental decisions, and deepening system-wide coordination and cooperation, thereby demonstrating that the organizations of the system can work together in a coherent and cost-effective manner to meet the changing needs of member States.

11. ACC has identified a number of broad objectives around which it intends to focus its contribution to the reform process in the period ahead. Among them are:

(a) Enhancing the capacity of the United Nations system to address effectively the challenges arising from the new types of conflicts and the complex emergencies that characterize the post-cold war period. Special attention will be paid to strengthening the system's early warning capacity and reinforcing inter-agency coordination in situations in which peacemaking and peacekeeping are to proceed in parallel with emergency relief, reconstruction, and the resumption of economic and social development. Renewed efforts are also required to provide system-wide support for the process of disarmament, including verification, and to give new impetus to controlling conventional weapons and arms trafficking, and curbing the production and spread of landmines with a view to their ultimate banning;

(b) A renewed system-wide effort to address the implications of globalization and liberalization in the world economy, bearing mind the major new opportunities being opened up for trade and investment and for information and technology flows, but also bearing in mind the risks of marginalizing the poorest countries and the poorest groups within countries. Those issues are central to the arrangements for enhanced cooperation being developed within the

United Nations system, such as arrangements among the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions in the trade and finance area; between UNCTAD and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization in the investment area; and among the financial and trade institutions, the ILO, and other concerned specialized agencies and United Nations programmes and funds on links between trade and finance and social development. Accelerating the development of instruments and structures to ensure that all countries maximize their benefits from globalization, as well as strengthening technical cooperation and other support for capacity-building in those areas, will be important objectives of the system in the period ahead;

(c) Mobilizing and concerting the contribution of the system to the overarching goals of poverty eradication and people-centred sustainable development in key areas, such as the elimination of hunger and malnutrition, social development and social integration, the environment, health, education, employment and sustainable livelihoods, population, shelter, gender equality and the special needs of children. Mainstreaming a gender perspective and contributing to advancing the status of women in society is a crucial dimension of that effort:

(i) The United Nations system is uniquely placed to develop international standards and legal norms, and to support international conventions to attain the specific objectives set by the international community in these areas; to marshal the responses required to advance the comprehensive agenda of policies and measures agreed upon at recent global conferences; and to contribute to the creation of an international environment supportive of growth and sustainable development;

(ii) Special attention will be given to strengthening the advocacy role of the United Nations system in promoting effective national action for poverty eradication and people-centred sustainable development, and to enhancing the cost-effectiveness and coherence of the support provided by the system at the country level, through such mechanisms as the resident coordinator system;

(d) Support for the promotion of effective democratic governance and respect for human rights, including a coordinated system-wide response to the follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights, and a concerted response to the demands being placed on the system in new areas of institution-building;

(e) Promoting the further development of international environmental law and mobilizing an effective international response to global environmental threats, through innovative mechanisms and cooperative arrangements to address key concerns, such as climate change, ozone depletion, desertification control and the preservation of biological diversity, and meeting new challenges in the areas of energy and transport;

(f) Mobilizing an effective system-wide response to the rise of global problems, such as drug trafficking and abuse, and emerging and re-emerging diseases, both by enhancing the effectiveness of existing joint programmes and by introducing new dimensions in existing policies and programmes;

(g) Strengthening support for development cooperation in the new international environment, by helping redefine its goals and priorities and reinvigorating public support for its financing, and by catalysing the role of the private sector;

(h) Strengthening the links of the United Nations system with civil society, and enhancing the relevance of existing cooperative arrangements with non-governmental actors to both the overall effort to achieve democratization in international relations and international cooperation, and the promotion of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

12. Heads of State and Government, gathered on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, pledged to give to the twenty-first century a United Nations equipped, financed and structured to serve effectively the peoples for which it was established.

13. The present international context offers unprecedented opportunities for growth and development, and for realizing the objective of promoting social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom that lies at the heart of the missions of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. At the same time, new global challenges are emerging. They require comprehensive solutions that the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, working together with unity of purpose, are uniquely equipped to advance.

14. The basic objective of the reform processes under way is to adapt the functioning of the United Nations system to those challenges so that it can respond to them with maximum impact and cost-effectiveness. The executive heads are committed to that effort, and appeal to member States, in providing policy guidance to those processes, to ensure that their efforts are geared to a

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genuine strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations system in the service of humanity.

Annex II

ACC STATEMENT ON CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

1. The basic tenets of the Charter of the United Nations on the international civil service are unambiguous: "The paramount consideration in the employment of the staff and in the determination of the conditions of service shall be the necessity of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence, and integrity" (Art. 101, para. 3).

2. The far-reaching transformations taking place in the world and the unprecedented demands being placed on the United Nations system have greatly widened the missions of the United Nations organizations and have led to an unparalleled expansion of the responsibilities of their staff. New, often very complex tasks in insecure living/working environments, especially for staff employed by humanitarian agencies, and mobility in both function and location are the main features of the current work of the international civil service.

3. Now more than ever, in order to meet the increasing demands of the international community on the United Nations system, it is essential to have a reinvigorated international civil service of the highest calibre. ACC has repeatedly stressed the critical need, to this end, to restore competitive conditions of service that would enable the organizations of the system, in their diversity, to attract and retain staff of such calibre.

4. Most organizations are operating at present under conditions of serious financial constraints and uncertainty. Many are undergoing major reforms and restructuring processes. Restoring competitiveness in conditions of service must be viewed as an integral part of this necessary process of reform, and a key requirement in the search for enhanced productivity and greater cost-effectiveness.

5. In its statement addressed to the General Assembly last year in connection with its examination of the report of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), ACC stressed that current uncertainties, in respect of both predictable financing and conditions of service, risked undermining meaningful reform and the effective delivery of programmes and services to Member States. ACC urged the General Assembly to adopt the recommendations of ICSC to bring the current margin of remuneration level to the mid-point of its range, and to restructure the salary scale to correct existing imbalances. At the same time, as part of a longer-term strategy to restore competitiveness, ACC members sought action to

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update the application of the Noblemaire Principle in order to reflect the current realities of the global labour market, and to introduce innovations that would help to motivate staff, reward quality of performance and better reflect the dynamics of organizational change.

6. While regretting the decision of the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, to postpone action on those recommendations, ACC understands the circumstances surrounding that decision. ICSC has now completed the re-examination of its 1995 recommendations, as requested by the General Assembly. It has reconfirmed its technical recommendations related to the measurement of the margin and with regard to the national civil service comparator. The Executive Heads fully endorse those conclusions. They also strongly support the Commission's decision, as a consequence, to go forward with its recommendation to restore the margin of United Nations to United States net remuneration to its desirable mid-point in 1996. Under the methodology approved by ICSC, this is the second year in succession that net remuneration remains below the lower limit of the range of 110 to 120 established by the General Assembly in its resolution 40/244 of 18 December 1985.

7. In the period ahead, it appears increasingly important that there should be simultaneous movements on two fronts: the active, continuing pursuit of efficiency, enhanced performance, including managerial performance, and structural and management reform; and an equally active pursuit by ICSC of the measures required to restore competitive conditions of service through the rebuilding of the Noblemaire Principle. Both of these objectives are part of the established policy of the General Assembly. They both must be pursued vigorously and in a mutually reinforcing way.

8. The grave financial situation which the system is undergoing remains of the utmost concern to the Executive Heads. The search for solutions to the financial crisis must be given the utmost priority by the membership. Meanwhile, at the level of the secretariats, no efforts are being spared towards improved management, as well as cost containment, in the face of long-standing budgetary constraints. The system's record in this regard is well established. These efforts will continue in the period ahead. Key conditions for their ultimate success will be flexibility and innovation in staff management and the capacity to attract, motivate and retain the best performers, so as to continue to adhere to the tenets of the Charter with regard to the international civil service. ACC is confident that the membership, as represented in the General Assembly, will demonstrate renewed commitment and support for these essential efforts.

9. In urging that action on the ICSC recommendations be taken at the current session, members of ACC reiterate their responsibility for the management of the cost structure of their organizations, as stated in the ACC submission on the subject to the fiftieth session of the General Assembly. Also, as indicated in that statement, modalities and arrangements for implementation may need to vary from organization to organization, in consultation, as necessary, with the respective governing bodies, taking into account resource constraints while fully safeguarding programme resources.

10. By acting on the immediate measures recommended by ICSC and giving clear direction towards the longer-term requirement of restoring the competitive edge of United Nations system remuneration, the General Assembly would give a clear signal of encouragement and support for ongoing efforts, within the framework provided by the common system, to retain staff of the highest calibre and enhance the motivation and performance of staff, as well as for the broader processes under way aimed at managerial reform and maximizing efficiency, productivity and cost-effectiveness, to which all Executive Heads are strongly committed.

11. Another requirement for progress on these fronts is the full participation of all partners in the ICSC consultative process. In a period of budgetary cutbacks and other measures affecting job security and conditions of service, and at a time of deepening reforms, when Executive Heads are endeavouring to introduce significant organizational change, it is particularly important that the concerns of staff be articulated at all levels, including that of ICSC. The absence of a dialogue with the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System and the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations in ICSC constitutes an important gap in this regard and a serious obstacle to improving governance and management of change in the common system.

12. ACC would also wish to take this opportunity to reiterate its previous recommendations concerning other aspects of the functioning of ICSC.
