



Administrative Committee on Coordination

ACC/1995/23

1 December 1995

ENGLISH AND FRENCH

ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION

SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF 1995

New York, 12 and 13 October 1995

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held its second regular session of 1995 at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 12 and 13 October 1995, 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. African economic recovery and development.
 3. Coordinated follow-up to international conferences, including follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.
 4. Functioning of ACC: follow-up to the Secretary-General's letter of 27 March 1995.
 5. Administrative questions.
 6. Other matters.
2. A private meeting between the Secretary-General and the executive heads of the specialized agencies, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the World Trade Organization, present in New York, was held on 12 October 1995.
3. The present document outlines the issues raised under the agenda items and provides the text of the conclusions and decisions adopted by the Committee.

ACC/1995/23

English

Page 2

9538309

I. AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT

4. Following consideration by ACC, at its second regular session of 1994, of an agenda item relating to the development situation in Africa, the Secretary-General, in February 1995, proposed that a steering committee be established to (a) develop further practical initiatives to maximize the support provided by the United Nations system to African development and (b) raise the priority given to African development in the international agenda. At its first regular session of 1995, ACC welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal and decided to include "African economic recovery and development" as an item in the agenda of its second regular session. The Steering Committee was requested to complete its work and submit proposals for follow-up action to ACC at that session.

5. The following organizations and bodies participated in the work of the Steering Committee, which was co-chaired by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA): the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Bank, UNDP, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), ECA and the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat. Five working groups were formed under the Steering Committee on: water, under the chairmanship of UNEP; food security, under the chairmanship of FAO; governance, under the chairmanship of UNDP; social and human development, under the chairmanship of UNESCO; and resource mobilization, under the chairmanship of the World Bank. The Steering Committee met three times. Meetings of the Working Groups were complemented by consultations between organizations on specific programme proposals relevant to the Initiative.

6. Commenting on the report submitted to it by the Steering Committee, ACC members stressed that the launching of a system-wide special initiative in support of African development was both essential and timely. There was an urgent need to reinforce peace-building efforts in the region at this critical juncture. It was equally urgent to mobilize the international community to reverse Africa's marginalization in the world economy.

7. ACC noted that the Initiative, as set out in the report of the Steering Committee, was built around two elements: first, a set of specific development actions, to be undertaken jointly by the organizations of the system, within the context of their ongoing programmes and in close cooperation with other

/...

development actors, including regional organizations, civil society, the non-governmental organizations and the private sector; and second, a year-long campaign, to be initiated in early 1996, for political and resource mobilization.

8. ACC members expressed appreciation for the important work undertaken by the Steering Committee. The need for selectivity and focus was widely stressed. The view was expressed that the Initiative, to have the desired results, should comprise programmes in priority areas, where the system had a clear comparative advantage, and where cooperative action could lead to greater effectiveness and impact. Such programmes should be an integral part of the contribution of the system to the implementation of plans of action adopted by the respective legislative bodies, and should be fully integrated into the work programmes of the concerned organizations. They should be carried out in cooperation with the African Governments and civil society, and in close consultation with concerned regional and subregional organizations. They should be based on a realistic assessment of the human and financial resources that they required, and of the system's capacity to mobilize those resources. They should be focused on country-level action, where the resident coordinator system must play a central coordinating role. Above all, programmes under the Initiative should support policies and programmes decided on by the African countries themselves, and should be pursued as an integral part of a major effort by the system as a whole to generate greater political commitment for African development by the entire international community.

9. Critical aspects of the African situation cited during the discussions as requiring greater emphasis as part of the Initiative included food security, water, desertification, land degradation and soil improvement. Other areas referred to as requiring attention included the strengthening of the agricultural and industrial sectors, investment and commodity diversification, debt relief, trade, transport and communications, and access to technology. Cutting across all these sectors, the importance of giving special attention to the key role and contribution of women to African development was strongly emphasized. An additional proposal relating to water and sanitation was circulated during the meeting and generally supported. The need to ensure that humanitarian emergency requirements were met as a matter of priority was emphasized; development activities should consolidate solutions to humanitarian crises and prevent them from recurring; the essential requirements of humanitarian assistance must be addressed with sustainable development in perspective. It was stressed that the effective allocation and utilization of available resources by the organizations of the system, and the mobilization of additional resources, would be critical to the success of the Special

Initiative. The willingness of the World Bank to play a leading role in resource mobilization was especially welcomed.

10. ACC confirmed its determination to launch a United Nations system-wide Special Initiative for Africa early in 1996. The Secretary-General requested the Co-Chairmen of the Steering Committee to revise the Committee's report in the light of the discussions at the current session and further consultations, as required, and to obtain ACC's final clearance by correspondence before the end of the year. Within the same context, the Co-Chairmen would consult further with organizations and finalize, on that basis, the Declaration on the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, in the light of the draft elements for such a declaration which were before ACC. These consultations should be completed in time for the simultaneous launching of the Special Initiative by organizations of the system early in 1996.

11. Executive heads confirmed their intention to bring the Special Initiative to the attention of their respective governing bodies, and to actively contribute to the campaign to mobilize political commitment and support, so as to ensure the effective implementation of the Initiative.

12. With regard to arrangements for following up and monitoring the Special Initiative, ACC agreed to extend, for this purpose, the Steering Committee for a further year, and requested it to submit a progress report to it at its next session. The work of the Steering Committee would be pursued in an open manner, with the full participation of all interested organizations.

13. The Steering Committee was encouraged to work closely with the relevant parts of the ACC machinery, as well as with the arrangements being put in place for the coordinated follow-up to recent global conferences.

II. COORDINATED FOLLOW-UP TO INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES, INCLUDING FOLLOW-UP TO THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

14. At its first regular session of 1995, ACC emphasized the need to approach the follow-up to recent United Nations conferences in an integrated manner. Subsequently, in a letter to executive heads dated 21 June 1995, the Secretary-General addressed the question of the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development in the larger context of the conference "continuum", and put forward, for the consideration of ACC members, some proposals on arrangements for pursuing the Summit recommendations at the inter-agency level.

/...

Subsequently, the Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 1995, also considered an item on the coordinated follow-up to United Nations global conferences and adopted agreed conclusions on the subject. 1/

15. On 26 September 1995, the Secretary-General addressed a second letter to executive heads, enclosing, for consideration by ACC members, further proposals, drawn up in the light of executive heads' responses to his letter of 21 June 1995 and subsequent consultations conducted on his behalf by the Administrator of UNDP. In that letter, the Secretary-General reiterated that strong inter-agency coordination would be required at all levels, to promote effective, integrated follow-up to the commitments and plans of action emanating from recent global conferences. He noted, however, that it was in relation to national-level action - in assisting individual countries in translating the outcome of these conferences into concrete national policies and programmes, and in providing resident coordinators and country-level teams with coherent system-wide support - that existing inter-agency efforts needed to be especially reinforced. To the extent that follow-up mechanisms for the Rio Conference were already in place (and were to be reviewed again in 1997), the proposals in the attachment to the letter identified proposed priority themes, and related mechanisms aimed at supporting an integrated follow-up at the country level to the Cairo, Copenhagen and Beijing conferences, around key common objectives.

16. Executive heads agreed that monitoring the follow-up by the United Nations system to recent global conferences would continue to be a main concern of ACC in the period ahead. In order to promote an integrated follow-up to these conferences, ACC decided that, in the future, it would undertake such reviews on the basis of a thematic approach, bringing together related results of recent global conferences, and drawing for this purpose on relevant inter-agency mechanisms supporting ACC in different sectoral and cross-sectoral areas. The selection of the themes for such reviews would take into account the need to monitor progress in the implementation of conference results and to provide the Economic and Social Council, particularly its coordination segment, with consolidated information, analyses and assessment of system-wide activities in support of the Council's own thematic reviews.

17. ACC concurred with the proposal that coordinated support for country-level action be organized, in the first instance, around three interrelated themes:

- (a) The enabling environment for social and economic development;
- (b) Employment and sustainable livelihoods;

(c) Basic social services for all.

It considered that these themes were especially relevant to a concerted attack on poverty which constituted a main, over-arching priority objective emanating from these conferences.

18. With regard to arrangements for pursuing these themes, ACC agreed that the existing Inter-Agency Task Force on the International Conference on Population and Development, under the chairmanship of the Executive Director of UNFPA, should be expanded to focus more broadly on social services for all, and that task forces should be set up to address respectively the "enabling environment for social and economic development", and "employment and sustainable livelihoods". The World Bank agreed to serve as lead agency for the Task Force on the enabling environment for social and economic development and ILO for the Task Force on employment and sustainable livelihoods.

19. During the discussions, several suggestions were made with regard to the scope of work of each of these task forces. It was agreed that the lead agencies would consult members of ACC on the definition of the work of, and participation in, these task forces and on the contribution that different organizations could make to their work, from their varying perspectives.

20. Recognizing that different methods of work would be adopted in each case, ACC agreed on some common assumptions, including the following:

(a) The relevant mechanisms should be timebound; should be called upon to develop, at the outset of their work, a clear definition of the tasks to be accomplished; and should be discontinued when such tasks were completed, with responsibility for subsequent monitoring and follow-up assigned to an appropriate lead agency or a standing committee of ACC;

(b) The relevant mechanisms should operate within the framework of ACC; should not duplicate the work of the standing machinery; but should, however, interact closely with that machinery which should contribute actively to their work, so as to ensure that the results of their respective activities were complementary and mutually supporting;

(c) The introduction of these mechanisms should not result in an increase in the total number of inter-agency meetings and in the cost of the coordination machinery. In this connection, ACC requested the Organizational Committee (OC) to review and monitor, during the course of the year, the periodicity and length of sessions of inter-agency bodies to ensure that the additional meetings to be

/...

introduced as a result of decisions taken by ACC at the current session would be offset by a corresponding reduction in the total number of meetings of standing and other bodies operating within the ACC machinery.

21. ACC noted that the Platform for Action, 2/ adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women, encompassed, yet went well beyond, the above themes. The gender dimension should be taken fully into account in the work of each of the thematic task forces. Following the relevant decisions by the General Assembly, consideration would need to be given to the best means of promoting sustained and coordinated follow-up to the Platform for Action, and of ensuring that the improvement of the status of women in all its aspects was placed within the mainstream of the work of the system.

22. With regard to regional level arrangements, ACC noted that the executive secretaries of the regional commissions, in consultation with the Administrator of UNDP, would work with the concerned agencies and programmes, drawing on the strengthened inter-agency consultative arrangements put in place further to the Secretary-General's letter of 4 March 1994, to develop concerted action programmes at the regional level in support of conference objectives.

23. At the country level, resident coordinators, in close cooperation with United Nations system partners, should take the lead in establishing thematic groups which would draw on, but would not be necessarily identical with, the inter-agency task forces referred to above, reflecting the particular country situation, priorities and needs. These groups should fully involve national and local authorities and non-governmental organizations, and work with all concerned agencies and programmes, including those not having field representatives.

24. ACC also considered, under this item, issues relating to the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in the light of the recommendations of its Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD). In this connection, ACC adopted a note submitted to it by IACSD on the review of its functioning. The text is contained in the annex to the present document.

III. FUNCTIONING OF ACC: FOLLOW-UP TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S LETTER OF 27 MARCH 1995

25. The attachment to the Secretary-General's letter to executive heads of 27 March 1995, and their replies to that letter, brought out a number of

/...

considerations and approaches that were relevant to an assessment of the functioning of the ACC machinery as reorganized in 1993, and the introduction of further improvements in its effectiveness.

26. These included:

(a) The importance of ensuring that the programme of work of ACC and its subsidiary machinery was responsive not only to the agendas of the central intergovernmental bodies but also to the main concerns of each of the organizations making up the system;

(b) The need to infuse further flexibility into the functioning and methods of work of ACC and its subsidiary machinery, to find means less costly than meetings for the exchange of information, and to focus coordination efforts around specific substantive themes suitable for joint programming and implementation;

(c) The need to enhance feedback between global coordination arrangements and country-level action, so that such arrangements served to maximize support for country-level coordination, and so that their agendas and programmes of work reflected needs and priorities, as perceived at the country level;

(d) The need to develop new approaches to the scheduling of meetings of inter-agency bodies, avoiding to the extent possible automaticity;

(e) The desirability of greater delegation of authority to the consultative committees;

(f) The importance of strengthening arrangements for monitoring the follow-up to ACC decisions.

27. The proposal, in the attachment to the Secretary-General's letter of 27 March 1995, to utilize the private meetings of the executive heads of agencies attending ACC sessions for broader exchanges of views on major developments affecting the organizations of the system, received wide support from executive heads. Thus, at the private meeting held in conjunction with the current session, special attention was given to the financial difficulties that were, in different degrees, facing the system as a whole, and their implications for the reform processes under way in the various organizations.

28. Support was also expressed for the suggestion included in the Secretary-General's letter of resorting more systematically to ad hoc task forces or other

/...

inter-agency arrangements with the participation of executive heads or senior staff especially concerned with a given subject. There was also wide support for more frequent resort to "lead-agency" or "task manager" arrangements to further coordination in different sectors.

29. ACC decided to revert, the following year, to the Secretary-General's proposal of holding a single annual regular session, in the light, inter alia, of the initial experience with the inter-agency arrangements launched at the current session in connection with the Special Initiative for Africa and the coordinated follow-up to international conferences, as well as the experience with the convening of senior-level meetings of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) as a whole.

30. ACC requested the Organizational Committee (OC) to review, meanwhile, the programmes of work and scheduling of meetings of inter-agency bodies within the ACC machinery and to make recommendations for their streamlining. Within the same context, OC was requested to strengthen its capacity for monitoring, and reporting on, the follow-up to ACC decisions within not only the ACC machinery but also the individual organizations making up the system.

IV. ADMINISTRATIVE QUESTIONS

31. Under this item, ACC was briefed by the Chairman of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions (CCAQ(PER))), and by the Chairman of the special high-level meeting of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions held at Geneva on 1 and 2 June 1995. ACC also had an exchange of views with the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), the President of the Coordinating Committee of International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA) and the President of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA).

32. The discussion focused on two issues - the consultative process and functioning of ICSC, and the parallel question of United Nations common system remuneration. ACC members considered that the report finally submitted by ICSC to the General Assembly fell short in its treatment of both subjects.

33. With respect to the functioning of the Commission, ACC considered that the limited measures taken by ICSC were not sufficient to restore an active and full consultative process. It was clear that a serious crisis of confidence had been engendered by the perception both of the organizations and of the staff

associations that ICSC was unresponsive and lacking in the technical skills to contribute to the changing needs of the system. In an effort to improve the consultative process, ACC put forward a proposal to revise the appointment procedures for Commission members in order to reflect the totality of the common system.

34. At a time of increasing demands and scarce financial resources, ACC members were particularly conscious of the need for improved performance management and enhanced cost effectiveness, and expressed their commitment to achieving increased productivity. In this regard, they reiterated the essential need to restore competitive conditions of service to enable the organizations of the system to attract and retain staff of the highest calibre. ACC members welcomed the salary measures, albeit late and partial, proposed by ICSC, as a first step towards restoring competitiveness, while acknowledging the need for management flexibility in some organizations in order to accommodate the cost requirements of a salary increase in the next biennium. They also emphasized the need for a longer-term strategy to update the application of the Noblemaire principle in order to reflect the realities of the global labour market.

35. ACC adopted the following statement on the functioning of ICSC and the question of common system remuneration, for submission to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session:

During the course of the last year, the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) has faced two types of issues that are central to the governance of the United Nations common system. The Commission and its interlocutors were requested by the General Assembly to review, with all urgency, how the consultative process of the Commission could best be furthered. At the same time, in the light of the considerable delays incurred by the Commission, that body was urged by the Assembly to complete its examination of all aspects of the Noblemaire principle as the basis for the remuneration of staff in the Professional and higher categories.

In the view of the executive heads, the Commission, regrettably, has fallen short on both counts.

With regard to the consultative process, ACC is of the view:

! That the measures already taken by ICSC are smaller than those needed to restore an active and full consultative process;

/...

! That a key element of reform is the selection of members with the requisite technical skills and broad managerial capabilities to enable ICSC to take bold initiatives to keep pace with global trends in human resources management and the changing needs of the organizations.

In order to assist the Commission in achieving its objectives, ACC wishes to put forward at this time a specific proposal to enhance the consultative process, namely to revise the appointment procedures for members of the Commission in such a way as to reflect the totality of the common system. Specifically, 10 of the 15 members of the Commission would continue to be appointed from candidates proposed by Member States. However, three members would be appointed by the General Assembly from a list of at least six candidates put forward by ACC and two would be appointed from a list of at least four candidates put forward by the staff bodies.

The common system dimensions of the work of ICSC would be more fully reflected by appointing some of the members from among governing bodies other than the General Assembly, on the basis of a formula that would provide adequately for the representation of different agencies.

ACC would also urge that a tripartite search mechanism be put in place which would enable the consultative partners to engage in a collaborative effort to identify and screen candidates for ICSC.

ACC further proposes that the terms of appointment of Commission members be limited to two times four years, and, in furtherance of General Assembly resolutions on the advancement of women, targets should be set for achieving gender balance among Commission members.

With regard to the parallel question of United Nations common system remuneration, executive heads are particularly cognizant of the need for improved performance management and enhanced cost effectiveness. This requires staff and managers of the highest calibre. ACC has repeatedly stressed the critical need to restore competitive conditions of service which would enable the organizations of the system, in their diversity, to attract and retain such staff. Current uncertainties, in respect of both predictable financing and conditions of service, risk undermining meaningful reform in the organizations and the delivery of improved programmes and services to Member States.

ACC therefore requests the General Assembly:

- (a) To adopt the recommendations of ICSC to:
 - (i) Increase remuneration levels with immediate effect in order to bring the current margin to the mid-point of its range;
 - (ii) Restructure the salary scale in order to correct existing imbalances;
- (b) To instruct the Commission, as part of a longer-term strategy of restoring competitiveness:
 - (i) To update the application of the Noblemaire principle in order to reflect the current realities of the global labour market;
 - (ii) To make the remuneration system more competitive with bilateral and other multilateral financial and aid agencies;
 - (iii) To adjust the margin range so as to begin to close the gap between United Nations remuneration and national and international, public and private comparators;
 - (iv) To introduce innovations that would help to motivate staff, reward quality of performance and better reflect the dynamics of organizational change.

In conclusion, ACC welcomes the salary measures proposed by ICSC. Although they are very late and not sufficient to make the United Nations common system truly competitive, they are an urgently needed step towards a proper compensation for the work of the staff. For its part, management is committed to achieving increased productivity and efficiency. Given prevailing financial uncertainties, it is necessary that the Secretary-General and the executive heads have the maximum management flexibility to accommodate the added expenditures involved, inter alia, through offsetting cost-containment measures to be identified and put in place during the course of the next budget cycle.

36. ACC once again expressed its concern about the security and safety of United Nations staff and associated personnel. In particular, the need for effective measures to enhance the security of United Nations personnel working in dangerous locations was emphasized.

/...

37. ACC adopted the following statement and requested its Chairman to bring the matter to the attention of Member States:

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) is gravely concerned by the increase in attacks on the staff of the United Nations, its programmes and funds and the specialized agencies which, over the past three years alone, has led to the death of over 100 staff members working in humanitarian emergencies and development activities.

ACC notes that the personnel of the United Nations, its programmes and funds and the specialized agencies are increasingly called upon to work in high-risk, insecure situations and calls for the adoption of effective and comprehensive measures to enhance the security of personnel.

To this end, ACC calls upon all Governments to take all possible measures to ensure the safety of United Nations staff. In this respect ACC welcomes the commitment made by the Security Council on 26 September 1995 at its fiftieth anniversary meeting to continue to attach the utmost importance to the issue of staff security.

ACC also welcomes the adoption by the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session of the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel and encourages those Governments that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention. ACC regrets that the drafters of the Convention were not able to take into account the observations made by ACC in a previous statement regarding the limited application of the Convention. ACC, therefore, trusts that the Office of Legal Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat will study the Convention with a view to proposing measures that would ensure that its coverage extends automatically and equally to all United Nations and associated staff working in unsafe or potentially insecure situations.

ACC notes the progress that has been made in coordination with the United Nations Security Coordinator by the United Nations, its programmes and funds and the specialized agencies on measures such as the development of security training, stress management and communications systems which can reduce the risk to which personnel are exposed. ACC encourages its members to prioritize such measures and, where possible, to share and combine resources and experience in this area.

ACC, while deeply concerned by the financial crisis affecting the United Nations, insists that projects relating to the safety and security

of staff be excluded from any budgetary restrictions resulting from the crisis.

ACC requests its Chairman to bring this matter to the attention of the Member States, and decides to review progress on these recommendations at its next session.

V. OTHER MATTERS

38. At the first regular session of 1995 of ACC, an invitation was extended to hold the first regular session of 1996 of ACC at United Nations Environment Programme headquarters in Nairobi.

39. Noting the uncertainties connected with the financial situation, and stressing the importance of attendance by all executive heads, the Secretary-General indicated that he would finalize arrangements for the session, following further consultations with all organizations, including on the feasibility of holding the session in Nairobi around the time of the ninth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) which is to be held in South Africa from 27 April to 11 May 1996.

Notes

1/ A/50/3 and Add.1, chap. III, para. 22.

2/ Report of the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing, 4-15 September 1995 (A/CONF.177/20), chap. I, resolution 1, annex II.

Annex

NOTE ON THE REVIEW OF THE FUNCTIONING OF THE INTER-AGENCY
COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION

1. In accordance with the decision of ACC, the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) at its fourth meeting launched a review of its functioning. This review is expected to lead to a full assessment of the United Nations system response to Agenda 21 a/ that will be submitted to ACC in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly that will take place in 1997 to review and appraise overall progress achieved since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. IACSD decided that the second phase of its review, which would take place during its fifth and sixth meetings, would include the preparation of a study on its functioning. The present draft of that study was considered at the fifth meeting of IACSD in February 1995; the second draft of the study b/ incorporates the specific proposals made during the fifth meeting of the Committee and the evaluation of relevant results of the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

2. The present note focuses on the main findings and recommendations of the study. It has been approved by IACSD and is submitted for the consideration of ACC at its second regular session of 1995.

I. OVERALL ASSESSMENT OF IACSD

3. There is a broad agreement that IACSD and its system of task managers provide an effective and at the same time flexible mechanism for system-wide coordination and promotion of inter-agency partnerships, cooperation and coordination in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, in the implementation of Agenda 21 and in sustainable development work in general. The work of IACSD and its task managers has received support both from ACC and from Governments during the second and third sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development and at the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly. In particular, as was demonstrated during the third session of the Commission, Member States particularly appreciate the fact that the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the work of the Commission enjoy strong support from the entire

/...

family of United Nations organizations in a coordinated and collaborative way. In that light, it would seem that the current modalities agreed in IACSD for preparations for and participation in the work of the Commission should be maintained.

4. At the same time, it is felt that IACSD should move beyond procedural and organizational discussions and reporting arrangements and devote more time to substantive policy issues. A number of encouraging steps towards joint programming of Agenda 21 activities have recently been taken by IACSD and individual task managers. Nevertheless, additional steps are needed to ensure that IACSD effectively performs its primary roles in policy advice, strategy development and promotion of joint programmes.

5. As agreed at the Committee's fifth meeting, the review of its functioning took into account the following:

(a) The need to clarify the coordinating mandate of IACSD in relation to the coordination mandates of intergovernmental and other inter-agency bodies dealing with specific topics related to Agenda 21. This has to be done on the basis of an "added value" approach and should take into account the need to minimize the consequences of overlaps in existing coordination mandates;

(b) The need to ensure greater balance in the coordination at the global, regional and field levels on the basis of the optimal use of all existing coordinating mechanisms available, including the regional commissions and the system of United Nations resident coordinators;

(c) The need to ensure a greater balance in IACSD work in support of ACC and United Nations system requirements, and the Commission on Sustainable Development. Particular needs of specific clients of IACSD work need to be clarified;

(d) The need to involve more fully financial institutions and other relevant non-United Nations bodies that have an important role to play in regional and/or global action;

(e) The need to promote problem-driven and forward-looking approaches in determining specific issues that require in-depth attention by IACSD;

(f) The need to ensure the continuity of day-to-day inter-agency coordination requirements, including the full use of various informal

arrangements and the development of informal contacts among the organizations concerned.

6. Sustainable development is a broad and complex area that encompasses economic, social and environmental dimensions and their interrelationships. From that point of view, it relates to virtually the entire spectrum of activities of the United Nations system in the economic, social and environmental fields. In addition to IACSD, which was established to promote effective and coordinated response to Agenda 21 and sustainable development at a central level, there are a number of other coordinating mechanisms and arrangements that either deal with specific dimensions of sustainability or promote inter-agency coordination within specific regions and/or at the national level, including:

(a) The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) mandate to coordinate environmental activities in the United Nations system;

(b) Other subsidiary bodies of ACC that do not report through IACSD, such as the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) (which, *inter alia*, deals with operational aspects of United Nations activities in the area of science and technology), and the ACC Subcommittee on Rural Development;

(c) Coordination structures under the auspices of the regional commissions and regional offices of organizations of the United Nations system;

(d) The system of United Nations resident coordinators;

(e) A wide range of cooperative arrangements among several United Nations system bodies on a specific aspect of sustainable development (for example, the Joint World Health Organization (WHO)/Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)/United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) Panel of Experts on Environmental Management for Vector Control (PEEM), the Interorganizational Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), the Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Facility, and the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Joint Programme).

7. IACSD should provide an umbrella framework for ensuring policy coherence in a United Nations system-wide approach to sustainable development by identifying overall policy issues, major gaps and constraints, and by formulating recommendations to enhance the effectiveness of cooperation and coordination within the United Nations system in sustainable development, as envisaged by

/...

ACC. It should not duplicate the functions of other existing mechanisms for inter-agency coordination that also fit under the overall concept of sustainable development but that address specific developmental, social or environmental components. Similarly, IACSD should not replace or duplicate existing coordination arrangements or micro-manage coordination at the field and regional levels. What is essential is to ensure better communication and interaction between IACSD and those other mechanisms.

8. Following the outcome of the discussion at the 1995 coordination segment of the Economic and Social Council of the coordinated follow-up by the United Nations system and implementation of the results of the major international conferences organized by the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, it may be useful for IACSD to review the possible implications of that discussion for its future role and support to ACC.

9. IACSD should carry out an assessment of existing and proposed United Nations system coordinating mechanisms related to social, environmental and developmental objectives, at the inter-agency, intergovernmental and national levels, with a view to clarifying the IACSD role and priorities in support of the overall ACC responsibility for coordination. Such an assessment would also provide an input into the review of the implementation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development commitments in 1997.

10. A harmonized United Nations system approach to national sustainable development strategies could help to achieve greater balance and coherence in coordination at the international, regional and national levels. IACSD could agree on such an approach for United Nations system assistance to countries in the elaboration and implementation of such strategies, while relevant organizations and bodies for coordination at the regional and field levels could pursue approaches that would respond to specific concerns of individual countries in relevant sectors.

11. Improvement of IACSD functioning would, indeed, require better definition of the needs of the Committee's users and ensure active involvement in its work of all the relevant actors. The main users of the Committee's work are:

(a) ACC, for which IACSD (i) identifies major policy issues relating to the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development by the United Nations system, and recommends ways and means of addressing such issues; (ii) assists in the coordination of United Nations system-wide sustainable development activities related to the follow-up of other United

Nations conferences. Functions carried out in support of ACC should be seen as the primary focus of the work of IACSD;

(b) Individual organizations of the United Nations system, which can benefit from greater synergy and better use of limited resources through more effective coordination and cooperation;

(c) The Commission on Sustainable Development and other relevant intergovernmental bodies in the United Nations system, which can benefit from policy proposals and recommendations being jointly elaborated through inter-agency consultation and pooling of the expert capacities available in the United Nations system;

(d) Individual countries, which may benefit from a more coordinated and thus a more effective response on the part of the United Nations system to their national sustainable development requirements.

12. The actors essential for successful functioning of IACSD would include all parts of the United Nations system, with a more active and substantive involvement than hitherto of the regional commissions and financial institutions, as well as the involvement (upon invitation, as the need might arise) of intergovernmental organizations that are actively involved in sustainable development but are not part of the United Nations system. Furthermore, IACSD could consider appropriate ways and means to involve in its work relevant non-governmental organizations and major groups that carry out programmes in the field of sustainable development.

II. POSSIBLE WAYS TO IMPROVE THE FUNCTIONING OF IACSD

13. The improvement in the functioning of IACSD is to focus on achieving a better balance in its work in support of ACC and the promotion of United Nations system-wide partnership in the implementation of Agenda 21, as well as in support of the Commission on Sustainable Development and related intergovernmental processes, bearing in mind the primary function of IACSD to serve ACC. The main approaches to enhancing the Committee's functioning are described below.

Greater reliance on task managers

14. The concept of the task manager, as it has evolved over the past two years, has proved to be an effective mechanism for meeting the demands related to the functioning of IACSD and the Commission. This mechanism needs to be strengthened and given clearer expression, while taking into account current trends of financial constraints and decentralization of human and financial resources. Furthermore, the Committee stresses that one of the important functions of the task managers should be to facilitate the development of joint programmes and approaches for implementation at country level.

15. IACSD also recommends that in the future, task managers should promote cooperative forms of implementation of Agenda 21 activities, while IACSD itself should, as a rule, focus on specific problems identified by the task managers, as the need may arise. This would allow the Committee to devote more time to conceptual and policy-oriented aspects of coordination in the field of sustainable development and thus perform its functions more effectively.

16. IACSD also agrees that greater reliance on task managers for more concrete forms of cooperation would assist the Committee in promoting a more focused approach to coordination within a concrete context and elaborating action-oriented recommendations on main policy and cooperation issues. IACSD agrees to include, starting from the sixth meeting of the Committee, the agenda item entitled "Discussion of policy and coordination in a specific thematic area".

17. Task managers should facilitate better communication and interaction between IACSD and other coordinating mechanisms related to sustainable development, both from horizontal and from vertical perspectives. To achieve this goal, it would be important for the task managers to establish and/or develop direct links with relevant coordinating bodies dealing with specific sectors, as well as at the regional and field levels.

18. The system of IACSD task managers can help facilitate closer cooperation with other relevant parts of the United Nations system in specific areas that could help IACSD to more effectively implement its functions and meet the expectations of both ACC and the United Nations system, as well as of the Commission. Furthermore, the task managers, whether their work is related to promoting cooperative programmes to implement Agenda 21 or to the preparation of reports for the Commission, are in the best possible position to involve in those processes all actors who have an expertise in given fields but who for formal reasons cannot be directly involved in IACSD meetings.

19. Furthermore, it would seem that continuing the practice of holding meetings of ad hoc groups of task managers to discuss in detail the preparations of reports and modalities of United Nations system participation in the Commission would allow IACSD itself to give more attention to policy issues related to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the coordination of inter-agency activities in the field of sustainable development.

Direct day-to-day informal contacts and better information exchange

20. An improved system of direct informal contacts and information exchange among the task managers and between the task managers and other organizations of the system, as well as other relevant parties, would highly facilitate IACSD work both in support of ACC and in the promotion of joint programmes and activities, as well as in the preparation of reports for the Commission. Further tailor-made measures could be taken with a view to enhancing and facilitating information exchange, including the use of electronic means, such as circulating, as expeditiously as possible, information received from national reports as well as from relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

Better preparation for the meetings of IACSD

21. It is essential to enhance the effectiveness of preparation for the meetings of IACSD. This could be done through preparing a concise, focused discussion paper for each item (or sub-item) on the agenda, circulated well in advance to all organizations and containing text with proposed draft decisions under that item. This would greatly facilitate decision-making by IACSD, would save time and would avoid general discussions that tended to circle the issue rather than formulate specific conclusions and recommendations.

Restructuring the programme of work of IACSD and agendas of its meetings

22. To achieve greater balance in the implementation of Committee functions, the first regular meeting of the year of IACSD should be largely devoted to matters related to the support of ACC and the coordination of sustainable development activities in the United Nations system, while its summer meeting should focus on the assessment of the outcome of the Commission and other related intergovernmental processes and required follow-up action by the United Nations system. Specific suggestions on rearranging the agendas of Committee meetings and the format of future discussions in the Committee have been elaborated.

23. Both meetings of IACSD could address, either on a regular basis or at the suggestion of the IACSD Chairman and/or members, as the need might arise, other items such as:

- (a) Matters arising from and/or related to sessions of ACC;
- (b) Discussion of policy and coordination in a specific thematic area;
- (c) Reports of IACSD subsidiary bodies (other than reports of those bodies acting in the capacity of a task manager);
- (d) Streamlining of reporting requirements;
- (e) Matters arising from and/or related to preparations for intergovernmental bodies other than the Commission, for example, the ACC report to the Governing Council of UNEP;
- (f) A strategy for the involvement of major groups;
- (g) A short recent information exchange segment, in which members could brief the Committee on relevant developments.

24. Furthermore, after the General Assembly decides at its fiftieth session on the scope and format of its special session in 1997, IACSD should also include in its agenda an item related to assisting ACC in system-wide preparations for that forum.

Notes

a/ Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

b/ Document ACC/IACSD/1995/CRP.8/Add.1 (to serve as background for ACC discussion but not to be submitted for approval or endorsement (see para. 50 of the report of the sixth meeting of IACSD (ACC/1995/17)).
