



Administrative Committee on Coordination

9 June 1998

English and French only

Summary of conclusions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination at its first regular session of 1998 (Geneva, 27 and 28 March 1998)

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held its first regular session of 1998 at Geneva on 27 and 28 March 1998, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In opening the session, the Secretary-General welcomed to the ACC Mr. El Baradei, the new Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA); Mr. Magariños, the new Director-General of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO); Mr. Idris, who had taken up duties as the new Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) since the last session but was unable to be present at the meeting; and Mr. Töpfer, the new Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). He also introduced to members of ACC the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ms. Fréchette. 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: poverty eradication.
3. Strengthening and reform of the United Nations system, including the conclusion of the ACC review of the functioning of the inter-agency machinery
4. Administrative questions: staff security.

5. Other matters:

- (a) Peace-building: draft strategic framework for Afghanistan;
- (b) Follow-up to recent ACC conclusions;
- (c) Other issues.

2. A private meeting of ACC, attended by all ACC members, was held on 27 March 1998.

3. The present report covers the outcome of discussions at the regular session of the Committee.

I. Review of developments affecting international cooperation and development, and their implications for the United Nations system: poverty eradication

4. The ACC had before it, as a basis for its consideration of this issue, a joint note entitled "Combating poverty: towards a common response", prepared at the Secretary-General's request by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat, together with comments and observations by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) and the Organizational Committee (OC). Also available to ACC was a draft matrix entitled "Freedom from poverty: actions and recommendations",

which had been prepared within the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and had been the subject of an initial round of discussions in CCPOQ. A United Nations position paper on the subject was also made available to the ACC as a background document.

5. The joint note was designed to identify, in concise and inclusive terms, broad policy orientations around which partnerships for action against poverty should be built among the organizations of the system, the donor community, Governments, civil society and the poor themselves. The note was complemented by the draft of a matrix entitled "Freedom from poverty: actions and recommendations", which represented an initial attempt to identify policy measures and their core components at a more operational level, as well as possible areas of inter-agency collaboration.

6. The Secretary-General, in opening the discussion, recalled that poverty eradication was a key international commitment and a main underlying theme of recent global conferences. He noted that it was a priority objective for many United Nations organizations and agencies, and that the activities of all the organizations of the system contributed to it. He emphasized the need for common priorities and a clear sense of the roles of international organizations as well as other development actors in this area, and for a comprehensive plan of concrete measures, with an identification, in relation to each set of measures, of the agencies that should take the lead as well as of the contributions required of other organizations.

7. ACC noted with appreciation the joint note. It considered that the note and the draft matrix, together with OC observations, provided a good point of departure for the preparation of a draft statement and for a renewed effort to coordinate policy approaches and give new impetus to collaborative actions by United Nations organizations and agencies in that crucial area. A number of elements emerged from a wide-ranging discussion of the broad policy orientations that need to be pursued in the fight against poverty:

(a) Economic growth is essential. It must, however, be underpinned by sound policies to promote social justice, including better income distribution and environmental sustainability, and such policies need to take into account the potential impact of globalization and liberalization on income distribution, employment and social cohesion;

(b) Promoting rights-based approaches that help to address poverty as a violation of human rights, and furthering good governance, democracy and the protection of all human rights, including the right to development and

economic, social and cultural rights, are important ingredients of effective anti-poverty strategies;

(c) Poverty reduction strategies must be developed and implemented through partnerships among Governments, civil society, other actors in development, and the poor themselves. The United Nations system must provide effective support for such partnership-based strategies, through collaborative and complementary actions;

(d) Policies for the empowerment of the poor and their active involvement in poverty reduction strategies, participatory and rights-based approaches to poverty-eradication that promote self-reliance of the poor and enable them through civil society and community-based organizations to be the main actors for the success and sustainability of such strategies, as well as ethical and cultural dimensions, should be integral components of anti-poverty policies and programmes;

(e) Women contribute significantly to food production and household income yet they are often the main victims of poverty. Poverty eradication strategies, to be successful, must address gender issues and the many linkages between population growth and other population variables on the one hand, and poverty on the other. They must empower women and ensure access by women, including in rural areas and the informal sector, to basic social services;

(f) A significant majority of the poor in developing countries live in rural areas and depend to a large extent on agriculture for their livelihood and employment. It is essential to promote, through targeted assistance programmes, a favourable microlevel environment that creates the conditions for the poor to raise their productivity and income and enables them to have access to assets, technology, education and training, credit, infrastructure and fair markets, thus allowing the poor themselves to become principal agents in poverty eradication;

(g) Lack of economic opportunities in rural areas leads to large-scale rural-urban migration and growing urban poverty. By the year 2000, a majority of the poor worldwide are expected to live in urban areas; similar measures to those described above for creating a favourable micro-environment are thus also essential to address urban poverty;

(h) Access by the poor to basic social services must be ensured and safeguarded, including through targeted assistance. In the process of economic adjustment, special

attention should be paid to maintaining an adequate level of resources for social services;

(i) An enabling environment at the macroeconomic level should be built around sound, non-inflationary policies that facilitate both domestic and foreign investment, promote small and medium-scale enterprises, advance job creation and further trade liberalization and better integration into the global economy;

(j) Strong measures are required at the international level to improve market access and to provide development financing and debt relief to developing countries, particularly the least developed and the low-income countries, to support sound policies and actions at the national level;

(k) The natural resource base and energy availability to the poor can be expanded by resource-saving and energy-saving technologies. Environmental education and access to such technologies by the poor need to be assured;

(l) Preparedness for natural disasters is an important component of poverty prevention strategies which ensures that people do not slip into poverty and become marginalized;

(m) Poverty is a global phenomenon. It persists in industrial societies and is growing in countries with economies in transition. It must be addressed in all its manifestations. Member States at the national and international level have the primary responsibility in that regard.

8. ACC agreed that coordinated policies needed to be pursued among its members, and decided to issue a policy statement on commitment for action against poverty to spur national and international action and to signify the engagement of the system as a whole in support of poverty eradication. It requested that the policy statement be finalized, in the light of above elements, through consultations by OC based on the joint note, taking into account the views expressed by individual members of ACC in their discussion and the annotations submitted to ACC.

9. ACC concluded that such a statement should help to guide further inter-agency work by OC, CCPOQ and the other ACC standing committees with a view to completing the matrix, which should identify priorities for common action as well as allow for an appropriate distribution of responsibilities. Once finalized and agreed upon, those documents should together serve as common working instruments for guiding and promoting inter-agency collaboration, particularly at the country level, as well as

for monitoring and assessing the impact of such collaborative activities on the ground.

II. Strengthening and reform of the United Nations system, including the conclusion of the ACC review of the functioning of the inter-agency machinery

Reform process

10. In introducing this item, the Secretary-General noted that although the Committee had been exchanging views for some time on reform initiatives in the various United Nations organizations and agencies, he regarded the current discussion as the beginning of a new phase, in which the system as a whole would carry out an in-depth assessment of the impact that the reform processes under way in the various organizations were having on each other and on the coherence and effectiveness of the system as a whole. Such an assessment should include the identification of further measures that needed to be taken individually and collectively. It should show Member States that not just the individual organizations but the system as a whole was undergoing significant reforms, and stood ready to address effectively the new challenges before the international community. The Secretary-General thanked the executive heads who had responded to his request for their personal assessment of the reform processes in their respective organizations and their relevance to the system as a whole; these had been collated for review by ACC.

11. The Secretary-General noted that although the reform processes under way in different organizations varied significantly in both focus and coverage, there appeared to be remarkable convergence in regard to objectives and approaches. In distinctive ways, those processes aimed to enhance competences and comparative advantages, while at the same time strengthening partnerships and networking to ensure that the system as a whole worked more effectively and cohesively.

12. The Secretary-General recalled the brief exchange of views at the retreat last fall immediately following the second regular session of ACC on the idea he had put forward in his reform report of launching a special commission to review the constitutional framework within which the system operates. He had indicated at that time that it was up to the organizations of the system to show that the system was capable of achieving an effective

division of labour and of acting jointly, whenever required, without need for constitutional change. He intended to follow that approach in a further report he had been called upon to present to the General Assembly in regard to the proposed special commission. That report would refer to the assessment that was being now initiated by ACC, and would indicate that the outcome of the review, as it evolved, would be shared with Member States. It would propose to Member States that the idea of establishing a special commission might be held in abeyance while that review was under way. The Millennium Assembly would then take stock of the progress achieved and determine whether the idea needed to be pursued further or not. ACC would have a role to play in that process. Meanwhile, the publication on the reform process under way in the system, currently being finalized, would serve to convey to Member States the sense of the review being initiated.

13. ACC members reaffirmed their collective commitment to the renewal and reform of the system as a whole. They emphasized their determination to refocus on core competencies, define common priorities and enhance the efficiency and impact of the activities of the system. They expressed their readiness to change and adjust the system to the new realities and the complex challenges ahead.

14. ACC recognized that the opportunity provided at the current juncture to qualitatively strengthen inter-agency coordination and thereby improve the coherence and effectiveness of the system must be seized. It considered that that called for a common vision and a sense of common direction for the system as a whole, while at the same time preserving its rich diversity and essentially decentralized character. How best to further those objectives should be the subject of a collective reflection, both at the level of ACC and at the intergovernmental level. All parts of the system must be engaged in the process of bringing about a concerted response to the crucial challenge of the strengthening and reform of the system.

15. ACC members considered that improving coordination did not imply the setting-up of new mechanisms or increased bureaucratization, and that centralization was not necessarily conducive to good coordination. Rather, flexible and decentralized approaches, such as the task manager and lead agency arrangements used in the follow-up to recent global conferences, should be the model. The aim should be to pool the efforts of member organizations to achieve common objectives, thereby demonstrating the capacity of the system to work together.

16. ACC agreed that continuous exchange of information and timely consultations among executive heads were necessary when important initiatives were contemplated by various organizations or in devising comprehensive responses to different aspects of major international developments, such as the current crisis in Asia. To that end, information and communication networks should be used more systematically, which would greatly facilitate complementarity of action and help to avoid unnecessary duplication within the system.

17. ACC stressed the importance of upstream coordination in the development of new initiatives by individual members, while at the same time reinforcing coordination at the field level so as to mobilize the capacities of all parts of the system to provide effective support to countries. A proposal for enhanced field collaboration was circulated by the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). ACC considered that the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, including its effective leadership, was critical, as was the reinforcement of linkages between the normative and operational aspects of the system's work and between global, regional and country-level programmes and activities of the various organizations. In the same context, ACC concluded that the complementarities between the work of UNDG and CCPOQ needed to be further strengthened.

18. ACC noted the many initiatives under way to pursue administrative and managerial reforms, streamline structures and enhance effectiveness. It also welcomed the growing number of collaborative mechanisms being established among different organizations and the measures being pursued to strengthen interaction with and the engagement of intergovernmental bodies in improving inter-agency coordination. Some of the specific areas of focus for reform and those where progress was being made are:

- (a) Building strategic alliances among organizations;
- (b) Better coordination/consultation to ensure clarity of role, respect for mandates and capacities of individual organizations;
- (c) Improving the overall profile of the United Nations system vis-à-vis the public as well as Governments;
- (d) Strengthening partnerships and interactions with civil society, including the private sector.

19. ACC further considered that in its review and assessment of the overall direction and impact of reform

processes under way within the system, particular attention would need to be paid to:

(a) The need to develop broad policy understandings and a common vision as a basis for programme and operational coordination;

(b) The respective roles of Member States and secretariats in promoting policy coherence and programme coordination;

(c) The need to avoid unnecessary duplication while allowing different perspectives to be brought to bear on the issues before the system so as to maximize value added;

(d) The importance of selecting the right programme managers at the field and headquarters levels.

ACC functioning

20. The Secretary-General stressed that the reform of ACC itself was an integral part of the overall reform process within the system. He appreciated the commitment of the organizations of the system to making the Committee a centrepiece of a more united and effective system. In that spirit, his letter of 28 January 1998 had addressed some organizational implications of the envisaged strengthened role for the Committee. These included the strengthening of consultative mechanisms engaging groups of executive heads, as well as arrangements for ensuring a continuous dialogue among ACC members through the establishment of a dedicated, interactive ACC information system, as well as frequent ACC consultations using teleconferencing. He had also proposed that such consultations be accompanied by one session of the Committee each year, alternating between New York and Geneva, possibly in connection with annual sessions of the Economic and Social Council.

21. The Secretary-General further noted that those new approaches to the work of ACC implied new work methods for its subsidiary machinery. They also required full-time and more in-depth secretariat support for ACC. To that end, he had already established the new Office for Inter-Agency Affairs. That Office, while remaining small, would be staffed so as to reflect the broad range of disciplines and expertise represented within the system. He thanked executive heads for their initial positive response to seconding staff to the Office. In that context, the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) stated his full commitment to the reform process, announcing that he was seconding the ITU Head of External Affairs to the new Office for Inter-Agency Affairs.

22. Complementing the Secretary-General's proposals, ACC had before it the elements of an operational plan for improving the functioning of ACC machinery prepared by OC. The plan envisaged that the new arrangements would be fully in place by the beginning of 1999, and outlined the intermediate steps to be taken during the rest of the year.

23. The plan identified a number of broad objectives for ensuring a qualitative strengthening of the effectiveness and impact of ACC's work. These objectives included bringing about greater policy coherence and functional complementarity at the level of the system, strengthening the system's collective capacity for forward planning and strategic thinking, formulation of complementary responses to global problems and strategies for resource mobilization, enhancing the system's flexibility and rapid response capacity to major international developments and crises, promoting a more continuous dialogue among ACC members, streamlining ACC machinery, and demonstrating the relevance and impact of the work of ACC.

24. The plan also identified issues that would ensure a policy-oriented and forward-looking ACC agenda, including issues arising from international developments and trends, such as the linkages between peace, development, the environment, democratization and human rights and their implications for the work of the system as a whole, and the many interrelated facets of globalization as they related to the work of the system; issues that affected the functioning of the system as a whole, such as threats to multilateralism, resource flows for development, or that cut across sectors and organizational boundaries, such as mainstreaming the gender dimension, and population; and policy and strategic aspects of administrative, financial and management issues of particular concern to the future of the common system.

25. The plan summarized progress achieved in improving the functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery since 1993, and indicated issues that needed to be addressed, including the strengthening of information flows, more substantive and timely preparation of ACC sessions, providing substantive support capacity required by ACC, introducing more flexible approaches to the functioning of ACC, delegation of authority to OC and ACC standing committees with accountability, increasing efficiency and coherence in the functioning of subsidiary bodies, and strengthening linkages between ACC and central intergovernmental bodies. To that end, it identified a series of actions that needed to be taken:

(a) Steps would be initiated by OC, with the support of the new Office for Inter-Agency Affairs and in

consultation with the concerned organizations, to develop an integrated capacity to monitor developments and trends in the international environment with a view to bringing to the attention of ACC topical and critical development issues that required coordinated or complementary responses by the system. To that end, the existing capacities within the system (such as those relating to knowledge management and forecasting, food security, environment, climate, debt, finance and trade) would be drawn upon;

(b) An ACC information network would be completed in phases under the guidance of OC, using, wherever possible, existing modes and capabilities in the system, and drawing on the capacity of the Information Systems Coordination Committee. In the first phase, a network would be developed for exchange of information, geared to the senior management level of the various organizations, focusing on major initiatives and developments within individual organizations; in a second phase, the network would be expanded to cover information on programmes and activities in member organizations that were relevant to other parts of the system;

(c) The Office of Inter-Agency Affairs would develop close contacts and linkages with inter-agency secretariats in order to provide better and more coherent secretariat support to ACC and OC. In close consultation with members of the Organizational Committee, it would propose to OC the modalities for preparing ACC discussions at both the regular sessions and in periodic consultations, by distilling relevant policy considerations from the work of the subsidiary machinery of ACC and making the best use of the knowledge and expertise available throughout the system, including through task manager and lead agency arrangements;

(d) The ACC standing committees and their subsidiary bodies would be asked to align their working methods and meeting arrangements with those of ACC itself, and to develop working arrangements that minimized the need for meetings and travel and used modern communication means and innovative methods for periodic consultations;

(e) The standing committees would be delegated the authority to take decisions on behalf of ACC while submitting to ACC selected policy issues that required its attention. Such an approach would also imply careful monitoring and accountability arrangements to be managed by the Organizational Committee;

(f) The timing and sequencing of the meetings of the standing committees would be coordinated by OC on behalf of ACC, taking into account the specific conditions

and needs that influenced the scheduling of meetings of the various committees, particularly in administrative and technical areas.

26. Reviewing its own methods of work, the Committee noted the improvements in documentation and organization brought about in recent years. Executive heads welcomed the establishment of the new Office, and several indicated that they would second staff to it. It was felt that the new Office, in addition to providing the secretariat of ACC, should also serve as a clearing house for ideas and information and help to keep organizations fully informed of developments within the system with a view to avoiding duplication and ensuring synergies between their actions. The importance of appropriate linkages between the Office and different secretariats of ACC subsidiary bodies was also stressed. It was noted that the Office should help rationalize secretariat support for ACC machinery and serve to reduce bureaucratization and fragmentation within ACC machinery. A further strengthening of the work of CCPOQ, particularly with regard to the consideration of programmatic matters, was also advocated.

27. Executive heads welcomed the intention of holding frequent ACC consultations through teleconferencing. At the same time, they considered that the current pattern of two regular sessions of ACC a year offered an extremely valuable opportunity for personal interactions among them, and concluded that they should be maintained at least for the time being. They felt that more time should be devoted to private meetings and informal exchanges on important developments and policy questions. They also suggested that retreats should become a regular feature of ACC work, and could be held every two years, preferably on a specific theme or issue.

28. ACC decided to approve the elements of the operational plan and requested OC to proceed with its implementation, taking into account the above conclusions, as well as comments made during the Committee's discussion. Executive heads reiterated their commitment to consult with other members of ACC prior to launching major initiatives within their organizations that might have broad implications for the system as a whole, and agreed that ACC meetings using teleconferencing as proposed by the Secretary-General would greatly facilitate the timeliness of those consultations.

III. Administrative questions: staff security

29. ACC was briefed by the Under-Secretary-General for Management of the United Nations Secretariat on the outcome of the high-level meeting of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) convened at Geneva on 9 February 1998. Regarding the issue of staff security which had provided the main focus of the meeting, he indicated that the high-level meeting had addressed the four aspects of the issue that had been referred to it, namely: adequate financial provisions for security, including the establishment of separate budget lines for security; security arrangements for local staff, including their possible relocation in crisis situations; implementation of security training, particularly its budgetary implications; and strengthening the role of and increased support for the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD), including the issue of a unified chain of command, preferably at the Headquarters level. Other major items addressed by the Committee included the issue of management of information technology, future high-level meetings of CCAQ and their terms of reference, and matters arising from the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel Questions), particularly human resources management reforms, and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions), particularly accounting for and funding of after-service medical benefits.

30. ACC was also briefed by the United Nations Security Coordinator on the outcome of the Ad hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Security held at Montreal from 17 to 19 March 1998, which addressed other staff security issues referred to it by OC, namely improved arrangements for the establishment of thresholds for determining the timing and/or termination of operations at the field level; implementation of programmes for stress management; improved information management to facilitate staff security operations; coordination of security policies with peacekeeping missions; improved coordination of staff security policies with non-governmental organizations; and operational aspects of staff security policies on common security logistics. He expressed special appreciation for the assistance being provided by UNDP, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Food Programme to supplement the small core staffing resource of UNSECOORD.

31. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees expressed satisfaction with the progress being achieved, and with the recommendations and decisions of both the high-level CCAQ meeting and the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency

Meeting on Security, and submitted for the consideration of ACC a draft decision on the subject.

32. On the issue of the legal aspects of staff safety, ACC noted that in response to an initial request at its first regular session of 1998, which was reiterated at its second regular session, a meeting of legal advisers of the organizations of the United Nations system had been held at International Monetary Fund headquarters at Washington, D.C., on 21 and 22 January 1998, focusing on the legal aspects of staff safety, including the strengthening of privileges and immunities, with a view to identifying possible options for enhancing the legal protection available to staff on mission.

33. ACC members welcomed the progress being achieved; reaffirmed the importance of staff security; endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the high-level meeting of CCAQ; highlighted the need for speedy implementation of items where inter-agency agreement had been reached; and requested CCAQ to continue its ongoing consideration of staff security issues. ACC also endorsed the conclusions of the meeting of legal advisers, and requested the meeting to continue to address the linkage between physical safety of staff and the legal protection afforded by privileges and immunities. ACC approved the following decision on staff security:

Decision of the Administrative Committee on Coordination: staff security

Part I

The Administrative Committee on Coordination,

Endorsing the report of the high-level meeting of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions held at Geneva on 9 February 1998,

Also endorsing the report of the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Security held at Montreal from 17 to 19 March 1998,

Strongly reiterates the importance that it attaches to the issue of staff safety and security, and reaffirms once again its commitment to spare no efforts to improve the security of staff members of the United Nations system;

Recommends that, within each organization, a single budget chapter/line be created to fund security expenditures of a foreseen nature, and that organizations ensure that funds exist for unforeseen security-related expenditures;

Endorses the proposal for the provision of security training on a mandatory basis to all staff members at high-risk duty stations, and agrees to the immediate implementation of such training by the United Nations Security Coordinator, to be funded on a cost-shared basis among organizations, based on ACC personnel statistics for staff at duty stations;

Instructs the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) to take the necessary measures to ensure the availability of financial resources to implement the present decision as expeditiously as possible and no later than 1 June 1998;

Approves the establishment of a security trust fund by the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator to supplement existing security funding mechanisms, and undertakes to bring the existence and the terms of reference of the fund to the attention of Member States and to solicit contributions;

Endorses the recommendations regarding the strengthening of the security management system in the field, as outlined by the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions at its high-level meeting and the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Security;

Endorses the recommendation that a working group be established under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator to review the operational capabilities of field security officers;

Confirms the existing policy outlined in the field security handbook regarding the security of local staff, and reiterates the need for its consistent application and implementation by all organizations;

Confirms the institution of security measures recommended by CCAQ at its high-level meeting with regard to ensuring the security of locally recruited staff;

Endorses the recommendation that organizations participating in the malicious act insurance policy extend coverage of that policy to locally recruited staff on a 24-hour basis;

Endorses, in principle, the criteria recommended by the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Meeting on Security for the establishment of minimum operational security standards beyond which United Nations operations would have to be temporarily suspended;

Decides that all matters regarding security of staff should continue to be addressed directly to ACC through the Organizational Committee, and that only matters of direct concern to the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) and the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel Questions) be referred to those bodies.

Part II

The Administrative Committee on Coordination

Deploring the continued threats on the safety and the security of United Nations staff in all parts of the world, including hostage-taking,

Reminds Member States of the United Nations of their obligations under international law to ensure the safety and security of its staff and to safeguard their privileges and immunities.

34. While fully supporting the decision, the Executive Director of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East expressed caution that given the size of his organization, full implementation of the decision would have major financial implications that its current financial situation would not enable it to meet.

35. Regarding other issues addressed by the high-level meeting of CCAQ, ACC noted that the meeting had adopted on its behalf a statement on the reform of human resources management in the organizations of the system. Concerning the future functioning of CCAQ, ACC confirmed that its terms of reference would be amplified in light of the conclusions and recommendations set out in the report of its 9 February 1998 meeting. At the same time, ACC recalled that in accordance with established practice, appointments in jointly financed inter-agency bodies were subject to rotation, and concluded that that practice should also be followed by CCAQ. With regard to reporting arrangements for the Information Systems Coordinating Committee (ISCC), ACC, while recognizing that the coordination of information systems had important implications for management policy on which CCAQ should provide guidance, recalled that the work of ISCC also had substantive programme implications of a cross-cutting nature and thus of concern to different parts of the ACC subsidiary machinery. It concluded, therefore, without prejudice to CCAQ's involvement, that ICSC should continue to report through the Organizational Committee of ACC.

36. During the consideration of the item, ACC heard statements from the representatives of the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations and the Federation of International Civil Servants' Association. The statements focused, *inter alia*, on issues related to the ICSC consultative process, particularly the state of discussions in the working group on the subject, where consensus had been reached on the working arrangements of ICSC, but not on the process of selection and election of members to the Commission; the participation of staff in the reform processes under way in the system; the development of a comprehensive human resources management strategy which would, *inter alia*, ensure the competitiveness of conditions of service; security of staff, particularly the progress achieved to date in high-level CCAQ meetings, the Ad Hoc Meeting on Security Matters, and the meeting of legal advisers of the organizations of the United Nations system; and the United Nations Code of Conduct.

IV. Other matters

A. Peace-building: draft strategic framework on/for Afghanistan

37. In his letter of 28 February 1998 to members of ACC, the Secretary-General had recalled that at its April 1997 session, ACC had agreed that peace-building as a broad-based approach to crisis prevention and resolution should comprise integrated and coordinated actions for addressing any combination of political, military, humanitarian, human rights, environmental, economic, social, cultural and demographic factors. The objective was to ensure that conflict was prevented or resolved on a lasting basis, and that the process of long-term and sustainable development was in place and was not interrupted, where possible, or was resumed as expeditiously as possible. ACC had recognized that political, humanitarian, economic and social factors could not, in most situations, be effectively dealt with independently of one another, and were best addressed in an holistic and mutually reinforcing manner, and had agreed that the aim should be to mobilize a timely and well-coordinated system-wide response to potential and actual crisis situations, tailored to the requirements of each particular case. A draft strategic framework for Afghanistan, resulting from a mission to the country and ensuing consultations, had been annexed to the Secretary-General's letter, together with draft assistance strategy for

Afghanistan, as well as draft generic guidelines for strategic frameworks.

38. Opening the discussion at the current session, the Secretary-General stressed the special importance that he attached to strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to act in a mutually reinforcing and integrated way in crisis situations. He noted that the strategic framework process launched by ACC as a follow-up to its April 1997 discussion had potentially far-reaching implications for the system and should be regarded as an integral part of the ongoing reform effort. He added that translating the process into practical action at the country level would require not only the full commitment of the United Nations system but also the active engagement of a whole range of actors, including donors, non-governmental organizations, and other civil society actors who, in crisis situations, looked to the United Nations system for leadership.

39. The Secretary-General further observed that the testing of the strategic framework process in Afghanistan was yielding a number of valuable lessons and was serving to elucidate the many problems that needed to be addressed by the system in acting in concerted manner in crisis situations. In the especially difficult circumstances that characterized the Afghanistan situation, the exercise had given rise to difficulties, both in substance and process, that needed to be addressed. He expressed the hope that there would be an open discussion on those difficulties leading to a renewed commitment to move forward in the testing process in Afghanistan, as well as in relation to the strategic framework process as a whole. In that connection, he also informed ACC that he was entrusting the Deputy Secretary-General with the responsibility for the further development of the strategic framework initiative.

40. In the ensuing discussions, members of ACC reiterated their commitment to contribute actively to ensuring that the process was pursued in a positive and concerted manner. ACC members welcomed the clarification provided by the Secretary-General that the various documents annexed to the Secretary-General's letter all represented work in progress and were not for adoption by ACC; that the process applied only to a limited number of situations; and that the exercise in Afghanistan was ongoing and was intended as a first step in the process.

41. The Committee reviewed the especially difficult circumstances characterizing the Afghanistan context, including gender issues, those relating to drug control, and those arising from the lack of an effective and internationally recognized national authority. The challenge of involving the Afghanistan people and their institutions,

as well as regional organizations, was emphasized. The view was expressed that the circumstances prevailing in Afghanistan starkly emphasized the need for what the framework process was trying to achieve – a coordinated assistance approach that went hand-in-hand with the political effort and endeavoured to promote the elaboration of common and realistic positions in dealing with the issues at hand. At the same time, the special circumstances of the Afghan situation highlighted the uniqueness of Afghanistan as a test case country.

42. ACC agreed that in developing the process further, due account should be taken of existing mechanisms and structures (CCPOQ, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, UNDAF, the Consolidated Appeals Process etc.). Also, documentation on the process should be revised and as far as possible simplified and consolidated. In the same context, it was emphasized that gender issues should be fully integrated in such documentation and more generally in the strategic framework process. ACC recognized that although the strategic framework exercise was a system-wide endeavour, different organizations became involved at different times and under different circumstances. Members of ACC also underlined the importance of ensuring optimal linkages between relief and development, including taking advantage of pockets of stability where development work could be initiated at an early stage, thereby showing the benefit of peace.

43. ACC welcomed the decision by the Secretary-General to entrust the Deputy Secretary-General, assisted by an appropriate support structure, with responsibility for steering the further development of the strategic framework initiative, bearing in mind the nature of the situation in Afghanistan and its urgency. In the first instance, it would be necessary to ensure that the process in Afghanistan reached a successful outcome and that full benefit was derived from that experience in the interest of helping the Afghan people. ACC also noted with appreciation that the Deputy Secretary-General intended to ensure that lessons learned and the resulting generic guidelines would be widely shared and acted upon in a wholly participatory way, thus engendering genuine involvement in and ownership of the process, both within the United Nations and among its partners. In moving the process forward, the Deputy Secretary-General would consult with the members of ACC in determining the criteria for and the selection of other test case countries.

B. Follow-up to recent ACC conclusions

1. International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

44. Members of ACC underlined the importance of ensuring the follow-up to the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). In that context, the ITU Secretary-General informed ACC members of the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference on Emergency Telecommunications (ICET 98), scheduled for 16 to 18 June 1998 at Tampere, Finland. The Conference would adopt a convention on the provision of telecommunications resources for disaster mitigation and relief operations. Following the discussion, ACC adopted the following statement:

ACC statement on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

ACC notes with concern the growing vulnerability of humankind and their property to natural and environmental hazards. Natural disasters inflict severe human suffering and considerable loss of life. Recorded economic losses amount to more than US\$ 240 billion in 1995-1996 alone, and current estimates of the 1997-1998 period already look potentially greater. In some disaster-prone countries, natural disasters can reduce gross domestic product by up to 10 per cent, often requiring several years for recovery.

Under those circumstances, the achievement of sustainable development as promulgated in Agenda 21 requires the continued attention of the world community to the threat of natural disasters, and is dependent on proactive approaches towards dealing with them. Response alone is no solution. Effective measures of early warning, prevention, preparedness and mitigation are needed to reduce the vulnerability and to increase the resilience of societies at risk. Disaster reduction saves human life and property, and contributes to protecting natural resources, basic infrastructures and services, and financial and economic assets. Thus, disaster reduction should form an integral part of sustainable development strategies and national planning of vulnerable countries and communities.

ACC recognizes that the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, as adopted by the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, provides a platform for the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and for

concerted joint action by the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

ACC further notes the action taken by its members to bring the issue of disaster reduction to the attention of their executive bodies so as to elicit their support in the completion of the goals of IDNDR, and to ensure that there is a concerted and coordinated inter-agency approach to reducing the adverse impacts of natural disasters in the twenty-first century. That will require continued enhancement of collaboration among the members of the United Nations system in addressing the effects of natural hazards on humankind and the earth's environment.

In addition, ACC requests the Member States of the United Nations:

(a) To bring the issues related to natural disaster reduction to the highest level of international deliberations during the final phase of the Decade, including discussions of relevant issues at the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council in the closing year of IDNDR, in 1999;

(b) To participate in an international forum to discuss the achievements of the Decade and propose a platform for future action in relation to disaster reduction, particularly with respect to the contributions from improved science and technology;

(c) To ensure the continued functional visibility and authority for disaster-reduction activities within the United Nations system in the twenty-first century;

(d) To contribute, as called for in General Assembly resolution 52/200, to the specific review of impacts attributed to the El Niño event of 1997-1998 for the benefit of enhanced recognition and application of disaster reduction measures at all levels. Such review should include an evaluation of the cost and effectiveness of contingency planning in specific regions;

(e) To continue to develop and improve the national, regional and global systems necessary for detecting, observing and predicting meteorological, hydrological, geological, oceanographic and other natural phenomena that cause disasters;

(f) To ensure that meteorological, hydrological and geophysical data and other scientific information needed to prepare forecasts and early warnings of natural disasters are efficiently exchanged among all Member States;

(g) To provide a capability for preparing and issuing early warnings of natural disasters, based on existing capacities within the system, including the important support activities of risk assessment, reduction and awareness education for the benefit of humankind.

2. Implementation of the Special Initiative on Africa, including the outcome of the last meeting of the Steering Committee; integrated and coordinated follow-up to recent global conferences; relationship between the United Nations system and civil society; universal access to basic communications and information services; assistance to countries of the Great Lakes Region; preparations for the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly on drug abuse control; inter-agency collaboration in the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action

45. ACC had before it an information note on developments in the above areas designed to keep ACC members apprised of actions under way to follow up previous decisions of the Committee. On a number of the above issues, ACC had a brief exchange of views, as outlined below.

United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa

46. The UNDP Administrator briefed ACC on the outcome of the seventh meeting of the ACC Steering Committee, which he had co-chaired with the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The Steering Committee had considered a number of recommendations arising from earlier sessions of its technical working group and from a retreat held in New York in February 1998 to assess progress and address the remaining challenges two years after the launch of the Special Initiative.

47. The Steering Committee expressed appreciation for the very supportive message recently issued by the Secretary-General, and agreed that it should be widely circulated.

48. ACC was informed that agreement had been reached on criteria for determining progress of the Special Initiative, including national ownership of strategies, policies and programmes, demonstrated leadership of

United Nations coordinating agencies, collaboration with other partners, especially among donors, effective resource mobilization strategies, and regular and reliable information dissemination. Accordingly, it had been decided that the future direction of the Special Initiative should be refocused on priority areas where progress was evident and in which it was clearly making a difference, (namely education, health, governance and harnessing information technology for development), as well as on the components of population and gender, which needed to be given additional priority. As illustrations of progress being achieved, attention was drawn to action plans for 15 countries with low enrolment rates in primary education, prepared by the World Bank and UNESCO, in collaboration with other United Nations organizations, geared to overcoming policy and programme impediments and improving access to greater resource flows. In the same context, reference was made to the Africa Governance Forum series, which operated under the auspices of ECA and UNDP and shared experiences on best practices in good governance, promoted in-country coordination and generated additional resources. The Forum had attracted participation of 14 countries in 1997, and an additional 16 countries were being invited to meet in June 1998 in Ghana. The Steering Committee considered that those examples of the added value of the Special Initiative represented the type of benefits that accrued from the system working together effectively and productively.

49. The Steering Committee had also recognized the importance for Africa's development of the priority areas of food security, water, trade and informal sector development, and emphasized the value of reinforcing their linkages within the Special Initiative framework. In the area of population, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had provided a plan for fuller integration of population issues. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had been invited to consider utilizing the inter-agency arrangement for the World Food Summit as a means of strengthening relationships with the Special Initiative. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had undertaken to organize a technical working group, along with UNIDO, to focus attention on trade, technology and investment issues. UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) were invited to examine what needed to be done in the water sector to ensure improved implementation. The meeting had also decided that the mainstreaming of gender needed to be given greater prominence.

50. During the discussion that followed, the Secretary-General of WMO stressed the need to demonstrate the

added value of the Special Initiative, especially in terms of resource flows. He recalled that from the outset it had been recognized that success in implementing the priority programmes depended on the availability of required resources. In view of the high priority of water to the Special Initiative, WMO initiatives included the launching of a world hydrological cycle observing system through the mobilization of additional resources. The Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO) called attention to other important initiatives, such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, and encouraged greater collaboration between such initiatives and the Special Initiative, as well as the redistribution of available resources within organizations to those initiatives. The Executive Director of UNEP highlighted the need for an early warning system and the development of management plans for river basin resources to prevent the likelihood of potential future conflict. The Director-General of UNESCO asserted that effective partnership between Africa and the United Nations was important for building a common vision of the future, overcoming major developmental problems, such as debt, and fostering self-reliance. He also called for greater attention to and cooperation in capacity-building in Africa.

51. ACC agreed to keep the Special Initiative under review, and called upon members to continue to direct their field representatives to support the efforts of the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team in the implementation of the Special Initiative.

International drug abuse control

52. The Executive Director of the United Nations Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) briefed ACC on the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly to be held in New York from 8 to 10 June 1998, and devoted to the fight against the illicit production, sale, demand, traffic and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances and related activities. He extended invitations to executive heads to attend the special session and address the Committee of the Whole.

53. ACC noted that the preparations for the special session were well under way. Major new features of the strategy against drug abuse included guiding principles on demand reduction and the establishment of a global plan for eradicating drug crop production with a monitoring component, largely based on national plans in the major illicit crop-producing countries with time-bound targets. Members of ACC noted that the general principles of the plan had been accepted by Member States, and that whereas

UNDCP had a major responsibility for monitoring the implementation of the plan, other organizations of the system were called upon to contribute to its implementation in their relevant substantive areas.

54. ACC members welcomed the encouraging sign that a large number of senior government officials, including several heads of States, were likely to attend the special session, and indicated their willingness to assist further in this regard. ACC also noted that the slogan for the special session would be "A drug-free world: we can do it".

55. ACC members, while concurring with the draft ACC statement on the issue endorsed by CCPOQ, considered that the two elements of rehabilitation and interdiction should be more fully covered in the statement.

56. The Executive Director of UNDCP agreed that the issue of rehabilitation should be highlighted in the statement. Interdiction was already fully covered in the political declaration to be adopted by the special session.

57. ACC requested OC to finalize the statement, taking into account the comments of members during the discussion.

Observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action

58. The High Commissioner for Human Rights briefed ACC on inter-agency collaboration in the observance of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the preparations for the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Plan of Action.

59. ACC noted that the inter-agency collaborative process was working well. A number of United Nations agencies and organizations had already outlined in their statements to the recent session of the Commission on Human Rights the steps that they were taking to mainstream human rights in the activities of their respective organizations. These included issues of freedom of association and the right to organize, as well as the right to communicate, both through exchange of mail and modern electronic means. In several other organizations, human rights issues were being actively addressed in meetings of their intergovernmental bodies.

60. ACC members agreed that it was important to consider the best means of sharing available information within the system on human rights violations, as part of the system's commitment to the mainstreaming of human rights issues and to contributing to the further implementation of

the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action. ACC had a first round of discussion on the issue, and decided that it might revert to it in the future.

C. Other issues

1. Communications from the Meeting of Legal Advisers of the United Nations System concerning the advisability of introducing a second-tier appellate mechanism with a view to enhancing the system of administration of justice in the United Nations and related organizations; and review of legality of decisions taken by the International Civil Service Commission

61. ACC had before it two communications emanating from the Meeting of Legal Advisers of the United Nations System concerning the possible introduction of an appellate mechanism in relation to the decisions of the International Labour Organization Administrative Tribunal and the question of a judicial review of the decisions taken by ICSC. While recognizing that the Meeting of Legal Advisers was an ad hoc informal mechanism rather than a subsidiary body of ACC, ACC expressed appreciation for the initiative of bringing the state of inter-agency consultations in these two areas to its attention, and decided to mandate the Meeting of Legal Advisers to pursue actively those two issues further on behalf of ACC and to report thereon at an early opportunity.

2. Five-year review of the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development

62. ACC noted the arrangements that were being put in place by the Executive Director of UNFPA for the convening of a special session of the United Nations General Assembly from 30 June to 2 July 1999 for a five-year review of the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. The Executive Director of UNFPA would update ACC on those preparations at its second regular session of 1998.

3. Gender equality and mainstreaming

63. ACC adopted the following statement, which had been prepared by the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality:

ACC statement on gender equality and mainstreaming in the work of the United Nations system: a commitment for action

The Charter of the United Nations affirms "... faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women ...".

We reiterate our commitment to working with all members of the international community to uphold these principles of the Charter by promoting gender equality.

We are firmly convinced that the overriding United Nations goals of peace, sustainable development and human rights cannot be achieved without the elimination of all forms of gender discrimination. The United Nations system is uniquely placed to bring about change, and provides a platform for the effective realization of gender equality.

Gender equality is a major strategic objective of the international community. The global United Nations conferences, in particular the World Conference to Review and Appraise the Achievements of the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace (Nairobi, 15-26 July 1985) and the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995), have set out a comprehensive global agenda for achieving this goal.

We commit ourselves to giving strong support to national, regional and international efforts to implement the Beijing Platform for Action and other global agreements.

The United Nations system has to date made considerable progress in advancing the status of women and their human rights. We are determined to accelerate those efforts, and pledge to mainstream a gender perspective in all our institutions, policies and programmes by implementing the specific recommendations on gender mainstreaming contained in agreed conclusions 1997/2 of the Economic and Social Council.

We shall be accountable to ensure that institutional culture is both gender-sensitive and gender-responsive, and that our staff policies, programme budgets and resource allocations reflect our commitment to gender equality goals.

4. Forest fires

64. The Executive Director of UNEP briefed ACC on the situation concerning the recurrence of the large-scale forest fires in East Kalimantan, Indonesia, highlighted the major proportions of the crisis and its multidimensional character, the growing threats it posed to the country and the regions, and the importance of all concerned United Nations system organizations, within their terms of reference, to extend and/or expand their assistance in a concerted way so as to assist the Government of Indonesia to deal with the crisis and prevent its recurrence. It was recognized that FAO had a mandate, extensive capacity and experience in the forestry sector to contribute to those efforts, and that for longer term and structural aspects, the Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests would also have a contribution to make.

65. In addition, the Executive Head of WMO drew the attention of ACC to the General Assembly resolution in which the Assembly had called on all concerned United Nations organizations and agencies to address the El Niño phenomenon. Noting that the forest fires in Indonesia were directly linked to that phenomenon, he indicated the willingness of his organization, in the spirit of that resolution, to contribute actively to action to deal with the phenomenon and collaborate with UNEP on the forest fires issue.

66. The Secretary-General stressed that the forest fires in Indonesia represented a dramatic environmental calamity which required concerted response by all relevant parts of the United Nations system. It was in that light that he had designated the Executive Director of UNEP to coordinate the efforts of the United Nations system to address the environmental impact of the crisis. He therefore urged all organizations to cooperate with UNEP in that regard. The Secretary-General and a number of the executive heads further noted that it might become necessary to extend concerted support also to Brazil, where a similar phenomenon was developing.

5. Future meetings of ACC

67. ACC accepted the invitation extended by the World Meteorological Organization to host the regular session of ACC at its headquarters at Geneva in 1999.

Appointments and meetings in ACC subsidiary bodies

68. ACC noted and endorsed the appointments and meetings of ACC subsidiary bodies set out below, recognizing that those dates might need to be adjusted in the light of decisions taken on the dates of ACC and its Organizational Committee.

Appointments in the subsidiary bodies

69. The appointment of Mrs. Mary Chinery-Hesse (ILO) as Chairperson of CCPOQ was extended for the period June through October 1998.

Meetings of ACC subsidiary bodies

70. The following meetings were scheduled:

IACSD

United Nations Office at Geneva

14 to 15 September 1998

CCPOQ

United Nations Headquarters, New York

21 to 25 September 1998

Tribute to the Director-General of the World Health Organization

71. Since the term of office of the Director-General of WHO would be coming to an end before the next meeting of ACC, the Secretary-General thanked Dr. Nakajima on behalf of ACC members for his contribution to the work of ACC and the United Nations system in general, noting that he had led one of the most complex United Nations agencies during an especially challenging period, and had throughout shown a profound dedication to social justice and international cooperation and a deep commitment to ACC and inter-agency cooperation. He conveyed to him ACC's best wishes in his future endeavours, expressing the confidence that he would remain active in support of international solidarity and the causes being pursued by the United Nations system.
