



Administrative Committee on Coordination

8 December 1998
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Summary of conclusions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination at its second regular session of 1998 (New York, 30 and 31 October 1998)

Summary: ACC conclusions requiring specific follow-up

Reform processes under way in the United Nations system

ACC members agreed that uninterrupted flows and exchanges of information at both the executive head and working levels were crucial. In particular with regard to the ongoing reform processes, it was stressed that organizations could gain from and should build on each others' experience. **In this context, the Committee considered that a renewed effort should be made to collect information, in executive summary form, on major initiatives and on new policy directions, strategic plans and programme priorities being adopted by the various organizations, and to make it available electronically to all ACC members (para. 10).**

It was agreed that there should be a systematic exchange of strategic planning proposals, so as to further greater unity of purpose and coherence of action. To this end, existing procedures for the exchange, in draft form, of programme budget and medium-term plans, where they existed, should be given renewed attention and utilized as an instrumentality not only to reduce duplication but also to identify new opportunities for cooperation (para. 11).

In the same context, it was agreed that a participatory process of continuous consultations should be set in motion to elaborate the ACC agenda and prepare its discussions. ACC should take up issues that capture the interest of the governing bodies of the system and the international community at large. To the same end, the outcomes of the ACC discussions should take the form of communiqués, as appropriate, aimed at having a policy impact on Governments and civil society (para. 12).

It was agreed that the broad objectives identified in its 1996 joint statement on the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system should be reviewed through correspondence in the light of developments that had occurred since (para. 16).

The need to associate more closely the business sector, labour unions, research institutions, foundations, and non-governmental organizations with the work of the United Nations system was generally emphasized. In the same context, the importance of nurturing grass-roots support as a condition to ensure that the work of the system had lasting impact

was stressed. As part of this effort, it was agreed that the capacity of the United Nations system to make the results of its work better known and to engage civil society, and to use the various channels and mechanisms available through them for this purpose, should be strengthened, as a priority objective (para. 18).

Causes of conflict and promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa

It was agreed that issues relating to peace and development in Africa should continue to receive priority attention by ACC. Future ACC discussions on this subject, it was suggested, should be focused around well-defined topics or clusters of policy issues to be addressed, so as to facilitate agreement on common actions to be taken (para. 27).

Following discussions, it was decided that (para. 30):

(a) The Secretary-General's report will be brought to the attention of the various governing bodies of the system, as part of the common effort to mobilize the necessary political will;

(b) Strategic and policy analyses relevant to the peace-building and development objectives set out in the report will be more systematically shared, through existing mechanisms, among the organizations of the system;

(c) Relevant inter-agency mechanisms, including IASC and both CCPOQ and IACSD, are directed to give attention to ways of pursuing the objectives set in the report; and Africa-related inter-agency mechanisms, including those established in connection with the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa, will be reviewed with a view to facilitating the harmonization of Africa-related initiatives;

(d) Inter-agency consultations, through existing mechanisms, will be strengthened in connection with the preparation of and follow-up to international and bilateral donor initiatives relating to Africa;

(e) An ACC press statement will be issued in order to convey to African countries and peoples, Africa's development partners and other concerned parties, the commitment of the United Nations system to giving continuing priority in its activities to working with Africa to address existing problems and to push forward towards sustainable development (see annex I).

Culture of peace

ACC members agreed that the concept of the culture of peace was at the heart of the work of the United Nations system. ACC requested its Organizational Committee to (para. 35):

(a) Ensure, through the utilization of existing mechanisms, the preparation of a system-wide media and public information strategy for the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace;

(b) Ensure continuous exchange of information, on a system-wide basis, on activities to be undertaken in follow-up to the decision of the General Assembly on the draft declaration and programme of action.

ACC also agreed that the International Year for the Culture of Peace should be launched at all United Nations system headquarters and field offices, to the extent possible, on International Day of Peace 1999 (para. 36).

Staff security and safety

ACC requested CCAQ (FB) to give renewed and continued attention to the financial and budgetary aspects of United Nations system staff security and safety decisions (para. 43).

It was agreed that a joint ACC statement on security would be finalized by the Organizational Committee on behalf of ACC. It was agreed that the statement would include a strong appeal to Member States to sign the 1994 Convention of the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, which to date had 21 signatories and would come into force at the twenty-second signature (see annex II) (para. 44).

ACC endorsed the conclusions of the meeting of legal advisers of the organizations of the United Nations system, and requested it to continue to address the linkage between physical safety of staff and the legal protections afforded by privileges and immunities (para. 46).

ACC members also agreed that it would be useful to enhance the exchange of information between organizations on such issues as instances in which legal protections had not been respected by member countries, developments in the negotiations of bilateral agreements, and the implementation and application of organizational policies for dealing with cases of arrest and detention of staff (para. 45).

Other matters

Meeting with the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission and staff representatives

With regard to reporting on monitoring the status of women in the United Nations system, ACC invited ICSC to identify in its reports best practices of those organizations that were more successful in increasing the representation of women (para. 49).

International Civil Service Commission

ACC welcomed the proposal to establish a review group to undertake an examination of the mandate, membership and function of ICSC, and endorsed the proposed terms of reference (see annex III). It was proposed that the group of experts be appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of ACC, after consultation with concerned ACC members. It also suggested that the report of the review group be submitted to the General Assembly together with the views of the concerned organizations of the system, including, as appropriate, of their governing bodies (para. 54).

The Committee was informed that the legal advisers had proposed an amendment to the ICSC statute which would allow it and participating organizations to request advisory opinion from an ad hoc panel composed of the Chairmen of the United Nations and the ILO Administrative Tribunals, and a third person chosen by them. The two Chairmen were currently being consulted on the proposal. **ACC agreed that given the consensus among the legal advisers, the views of the Presidents of the United Nations and ILO Administrative Tribunals should be obtained on an urgent basis and conveyed to all members of ACC. The final endorsement of the recommendations, in the light of the views of the Presidents of the Tribunals, should be obtained from all ACC members through correspondence (paras. 55 and 56).**

Other matters brought to the attention of ACC

ACC took note of the following recommendations from subsidiary bodies (para. 57):

(a) The recommendation of IACSD to expand the task manager system to include relevant thematic outcomes of other global conferences so as to avoid having multiple mechanisms at a global level for policy coordination in any given thematic area;

(b) The recommendation of CCAQ (FB), in the context of the constraints facing organizations wishing to increase funding from the private sector, to explore the possibility of a concerted United Nations system approach to exploring arrangements to permit the tax deductivity of private sector contributions;

(c) The appointment of Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, as Chairman of CCPOQ for the two-year period from November 1998 through October 2000;

(d) The appointment of Abraham Espino (IAEA) as Chairman and Gary Eidet (WFP) as Vice-Chairman of CCAQ (FB) for a two-year period commencing with the Committee's next session, in 1999.

1. The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) held its second regular session of 1998 at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 30 and 31 October 1998, under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. In opening the session, the Secretary-General welcomed to ACC Gro Harlem Brundtland, the new Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), and Kamil Idris, Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), who were attending ACC for the first time. The agenda for the session was as follows:

1. Adoption of the agenda.
2. Reform processes under way in the United Nations system.
3. The causes of conflict and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa.
4. A culture of peace.
5. Staff security and safety.
6. Other matters:
 - (a) Meeting with the Chairman of ICSC and staff representatives;
 - (b) International Civil Service Commission;
 - (c) Other matters brought to the attention of ACC.

2. A private meeting of ACC members was held in the morning of 30 October 1998.

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

I. Reform processes under way in the United Nations system

4. ACC had before it, as a basis for its consideration of this issue, a note from the Secretary-General transmitting an issues paper entitled "System-wide reform: an appraisal of the current phase".

5. In introducing this item, the Secretary-General expressed the hope that, at this session, ACC would focus on identifying some of the substantive policy implications that were emerging from the reform processes under way, and some of the system-wide priorities around which future efforts at inter-agency coordination might concentrate. He emphasized that his call to identify common priorities for joint action did not imply a rigid, top-down approach to the elaboration of the inter-agency agenda. He noted that some

of the most successful or promising joint activities had been the result of initiatives by groups of organizations which spontaneously saw that they needed each other to achieve some key objectives. The initiative on rolling back malaria was an excellent example. At the same time, it was important for the United Nations system, through ACC, to strengthen its capacity to maintain an overview so as to promote complementarity in the direction of reforms, and to facilitate and encourage joint action and inter-agency efforts focused on priority objectives which could maximize the system's overall impact on peace-building and development.

6. He was pleased to see that progress was indeed being made in conceiving policies and programmes within the wider perspective of the system. The strengthening of "partnerships" within the system and between the system and civil society was a common theme of many of the reform processes. There were key common concerns — from poverty reduction to the promotion of human rights — in relation to which the organizations of the system were increasingly acting in concert. And new modalities were being developed to facilitate the conduct of inter-agency business more flexibly and effectively.

7. A new culture of dialogue, consultations and accommodation was taking roots in the system. He was encouraged by the finding, resulting from the consultations that a high-level consultant (Mr. Rosenthal) had undertaken in preparation for this discussion, that while there continued to be a gap between the discourse and the practice of system-wide cooperation, qualitative improvements in the system's total performance could be brought about within existing structures by nurturing and strengthening such a culture. This was the basic approach that had guided the Secretary-General in the reform of the United Nations itself, and he had seen that it could bear fruit; the key to its success was in the hands of ACC members as executive heads. The governing bodies of the organizations of the system, however, also had an important role to play in that regard. In the United Nations itself, the Economic and Social Council was developing a new approach to its coordination function, which built more systematically on the capacities and inputs of the agencies, both individually and, collectively, in ACC. He remained committed to encouraging the Council to move even more decisively in that direction. The agency governing bodies must also feel, however, that they have a stake in the coordination process. Indeed, one of the measures of ACC's effectiveness was the extent to which executive heads could take back to their governing bodies, from ACC, system-wide perspectives on issues before these bodies.

8. The Secretary-General added that the dialogue among members of ACC could not be confined to two annual meetings if it was to focus on the development of common priorities in response to a rapidly changing world. ACC members must maintain continuous communications — within groups of organizations addressing together a given issue, and among all members in assessing the overall challenges that the system was facing. The new support structures being established for ACC and the executive information network currently being developed should all serve to facilitate this continuous dialogue.

9. ACC broadly endorsed the approaches and proposals set out in the documentation before it. Discussions focused on ways to strengthen the preparatory process for substantive discussions in ACC; to better project the outcome of the work of ACC to member States and the public; and to strengthen the impact of inter-agency work at the intergovernmental level.

10. ACC members agreed that uninterrupted flows and exchanges of information at both the executive head and working levels were crucial. In particular with regard to the ongoing reform processes, it was stressed that organizations could gain from and should build on each others' experience. **In this context, the Committee considered that a renewed effort should be made to collect information, in executive summary form, on major initiatives and on new policy directions, strategic plans and programme priorities being adopted by the various organizations, and to make it available electronically to all ACC members.** In this way, all organizations could complement and contribute to such initiatives and set their own orientations and priorities in full awareness of the directions that other parts of the system were taking.

11. **It was agreed that there should be a systematic exchange of strategic planning proposals, so as to further greater unity of purpose and coherence of action. To this end, existing procedures for the exchange, in draft form, of programme budgets and medium-term plans, where they existed, should be given renewed attention and utilized as an instrumentality not only to reduce duplication but also to identify new opportunities for cooperation.** The new Office for Inter-Agency Affairs and the executive information network, as well as the ACC dedicated information system currently being developed, would be instrumental in facilitating these processes.

12. **In the same context, it was agreed that a participatory process of continuous consultations should be set in motion to elaborate the ACC agenda**

and prepare its discussions. ACC should take up issues that capture the interest of the governing bodies of the system and the international community at large. **To the same end, the outcomes of the ACC discussions should take the form of communiqués, as appropriate, aimed at having a policy impact on Governments and civil society.** A challenge was to find ways to disaggregate issues so that they could be the subject of specific policy conclusions. Among the issues mentioned as requiring ACC attention in the future were the problem of globalization versus localization; the area of energy in the broadest sense; and the promotion of electronic commerce. It was also important to set aside time at ACC sessions for executive heads to have informal exchanges of views about topical global issues and problems in order to develop a collective vision and/or set the stage for collective action in addressing them. Even where no specific conclusions could be reached, such exchanges served to strengthen unity of purpose and nurture a corporate identity for the system and ACC's collective leadership role, under the Secretary-General's guidance.

13. The Committee recognized that the ongoing reform processes and the emphasis on "partnership" they shared would enhance opportunities for joint or collaborative actions. Cooperative arrangements which utilized flexible, pragmatic and differentiated approaches that were needs-driven, time-bound and brought together groups of concerned agencies around specific activities or programmes designed to bring their respective comparative advantages into play to enhance effectiveness should be encouraged and reinforced. The "issues management" approach highlighted in the Secretary-General's reform programme was intended to be developed around these elements. In the same spirit, ACC welcomed the progress being made to enhance cooperation at country level, where the impact of the system's work should be mostly felt. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) provided a most useful instrumentality to this end, and should be geared to facilitate effective participation also on the part of agencies with no field representation. Processes aimed at harmonizing the work of the system around common objectives must reflect the reality and substance of country-level situations so that appropriate use is made of the capacities available within the system. In the same context, ACC took note with appreciation of the ongoing work of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) on the matrix on poverty. It was observed that three quarters of the poor lived in rural areas, and that

activities relating to rural poverty should be highlighted as the matrix was being refined.

14. Some ACC members stressed the importance of ensuring cost-effectiveness of jointly financed bodies.

15. With regard to relationships between United Nations executive committees and the relevant inter-agency bodies, ACC noted that the executive committees were management mechanisms internal to the United Nations: the responsibilities of the ACC machinery and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) were quite different in nature and scope; coordination arrangements that commit the system could only be determined in the appropriate inter-agency bodies. There will, nevertheless, be issues that will continue to appear on the work programmes of both sets of bodies. It was important, in these cases, that there should be clear channels of communication to ensure that each set of mechanisms addressed issues within the limits of its respective functions, and that the outcomes of these processes reinforced each other.

16. **It was agreed that the broad objectives identified in its 1996 joint statement on the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system should be reviewed through correspondence in the light of developments that had occurred since.** Such a review should be approached as part of the broader process of ensuring that inter-agency efforts focused on priority objectives for the system as a whole.

17. It was noted that a stronger voice for ACC in the Economic and Social Council would contribute significantly to strengthening the effectiveness of the Council's coordination role. The recent progress made in this direction was generally welcomed. ACC members were encouraged to strengthen their participation in the Council's work in order to ensure that ACC and Council contributions to enhancing policy coherence in the system would be mutually reinforcing. ACC members were also encouraged to engage their governing bodies more systematically on system-wide issues and concerns. ACC considered that the system's policy coherence would also be greatly enhanced through more effective policy coordination at the national level within the Governments concerned. Whenever possible and appropriate, ACC members should assist in promoting such coordination.

18. The need to associate more closely the business sector, labour unions, research institutions, foundations and non-governmental organizations with the work of the United Nations system was generally emphasized. In the same context, the importance of nurturing grass-roots support as a condition to ensure that the work of the system

had lasting impact was stressed. **As part of this effort, it was agreed that the capacity of the United Nations system to make the results of its work better known and to engage civil society, and to use the various channels and mechanisms available through them for this purpose, should be strengthened, as a priority objective.** Mention was made of the fact that ACC lacked name recognition by the general public, and in this regard the question of changing its name was raised.

19. ACC members reiterated that the promotion of human rights was a core value of the system as a whole. There was a need to develop standards and parameters against which the impact of the system's work in relation to human rights could be measured. Equally important was to put in place procedures to promote consistency within the system on issues of principle, *inter alia*, by disseminating information on policy development and relevant decisions in United Nations system organizations. ACC had a special role to play in that regard.

20. Under this item, the executive heads of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), WIPO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organizations (UNIDO), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and the World Food Programme (WFP) briefed ACC on ongoing reforms within their organizations. The Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) briefed ACC on the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on the five-year review of the implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development; and the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) briefed the Committee on the follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly to counter the world drug problem, and referred to its integration into the ACC inter-agency mechanisms for the coordinated follow-up to global conferences. The Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) also briefed ACC on the report on the United Nations Task Force on Environment and Human Settlements. In addition, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights circulated a progress report on preparations for the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the five-year review of the outcome of the World Conference on Human Rights.

II. Causes of conflict and promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa

21. ACC had before it, as a basis for its consideration of this item, a note on the follow-up to the Secretary-General's report entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of peace and sustainable development in Africa".

22. The Secretary-General, in opening the discussion, underlined the need for a comprehensive and holistic approach by the international community and the United Nations system in addressing the multifaceted problems confronting Africa. He emphasized the importance of linkages between security and sustainable development dimensions, on the one hand, and of interrelationships between actions of Governments, the United Nations system and civil society actors on the other. His report called upon the United Nations system, the international community and the African countries to frame their actions within a broad common agenda. That approach, he noted, had been welcomed by member States in the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

23. The Secretary-General informed ACC that he had recently met with the foreign ministers of Development Assistance Committee countries, and had highlighted for them the priority areas for action to meet Africa's economic challenges outlined in his report. The foreign ministers had responded positively by expressing support for the overall approaches advocated in the report, as well as for its specific recommendations for priority action in the economic areas. They had stressed at the same time the importance of commitment and action by African States to create an environment conducive to investment and growth. Similar support and commitment for an approach based on direct global partnership was expressed at the Second Tokyo International Conference for African Development. High-level African participants, led by 15 heads of State/Government, had specifically reaffirmed their commitment to the orientations set out in the report.

24. The Secretary-General invited views on the system's contribution to furthering this integrated strategy. He raised, in the same context, the question whether ACC should consider applying the "strategic framework" approach in one or two countries in Africa.

25. Finally, the Secretary-General expressed his deep concern over the ravages of human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)

in Africa, as illustrated in the *World Population Estimates, 1998*. In human as well as economic terms, the consequences, if unchecked, could be incalculable. The United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) was an effective inter-agency instrument but more was required. There was a need for a concerted effort to mobilize the necessary resources and political will, and to harness all of the capacities available to the system to address the needs of the most severely affected countries. The private sector, particularly the pharmaceutical industry, should be mobilized to cooperate with the United Nations in this effort.

26. The Deputy Secretary-General reported on the implementation of the strategic framework for Afghanistan, as agreed upon at the inter-agency level. Work was currently being carried out by CCPOQ to develop, in the light of that agreement, generic guidelines for response to and recovery from crisis in other situations. She indicated that a draft of such generic guidelines had been received from CCPOQ (a communication on the subject from the Chairperson of CCPOQ was circulated to ACC). In the next weeks, she would consult with ACC members on the subject, as well as on the possible identification of African countries where the strategic framework approach might be usefully applied.

27. ACC expressed its full support for the Secretary-General's call for a comprehensive, holistic approach to all peace-building, development and democracy-building activities in Africa, and accepted the challenge of helping to generate the necessary political will to implement that approach. **It was agreed that issues relating to peace and development in Africa should continue to receive priority attention by ACC. Future ACC discussions on this subject, it was suggested, should be focused around well defined topics or clusters of policy issues to be addressed, so as to facilitate agreement on common actions to be taken.**

28. It was pointed out that in addressing the economic and social needs of Africa, it was important to give the necessary attention to actions related to capacity-building and infrastructure development, especially for water, and to the development and application of science and technology. Interlinkages between these actions and solutions to various social problems were highlighted. Other issues requiring special attention — from a qualitative focus on governance, and the setting up of mechanisms geared to enhancing human security, to the identification of new ways of funding reintegration activities in the transition from conflict to peace-building,

and the impact of population growth and distribution — were highlighted.

29. ACC stressed the importance of the full commitment and participation of all the parties identified in the report in furthering the objectives and goals set therein. First of all, there was a need to consult with and listen to the Africans themselves. This required close interaction with political leaders, Parliaments and civil society organizations in individual countries. The full involvement of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), and close interaction with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and various regional and subregional organizations, were also essential. Strong support was expressed for the proposal in the Secretary-General's report calling for the convening of national conventions on economic restructuring and reform in countries where serious adjustment is required.

30. Following discussions, it was decided that:

(a) The Secretary-General's report will be brought to the attention of the various governing bodies of the system, as part of the common effort to mobilize the necessary political will;

(b) Strategic and policy analyses relevant to the peace-building and development objectives set out in the report will be more systematically shared, through existing mechanisms, among the organizations of the system;

(c) Relevant inter-agency mechanisms, including IASC and both CCPOQ and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), are directed to give attention to ways of pursuing the objectives set in the report; and Africa-related inter-agency mechanisms, including those established in connection with the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, will be reviewed with a view to facilitating the harmonization of Africa-related initiatives;

(d) Inter-agency consultations, through existing mechanisms, will be strengthened in connection with the preparation of and follow-up to international and bilateral donor initiatives relating to Africa;

(e) An ACC press statement will be issued in order to convey to African countries and peoples, Africa's development partners and other concerned parties, the commitment of the United Nations system to giving continuing priority in its activities to working with Africa to address existing problems and to push

forward towards sustainable development (see annex I).

III. Culture of peace

31. In introducing this item, the Director-General of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) stated that the United Nations system was challenged to take up with renewed commitment and resources its fundamental task embodied in the United Nations Charter and the constitution of UNESCO — to save future generations from the scourge of war. This task required transforming not only the institutional structures and manifestations of war but also their deep cultural roots, the culture of violence and war, into a culture of peace. Quoting UNESCO's constitution, he stressed that since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

32. A culture of peace consisted of a set of values, attitudes and behaviours that reflected and inspired social interaction and sharing, based on the principles of freedom, justice and democracy, tolerance and solidarity; that rejected violence and endeavoured to prevent conflicts by tackling their roots; that resolved problems through dialogue and negotiations; and that guaranteed to all the full exercise of all rights and the means to participate fully in the endogenous development of their societies. Rather than intervening in violent conflicts after they had erupted and then engaging in post-conflict peace-building, it was more humane and efficient to prevent violence in the first place by addressing its causes. In essence, the culture of peace approach endeavoured to develop a universal ethic which should inform all aspects of work of the United Nations system.

33. The Director-General of UNESCO reviewed the development of UNESCO activities, many of which were being implemented in cooperation with other agencies. He also recalled that the General Assembly was considering at its current session a draft declaration and programme of action for a culture of peace. He expressed his appreciation to the Secretary-General for his support for the initiative, and thanked his ACC colleagues for the contribution that their organizations had provided to the draft. He invited them to commit their organizations to further cooperation in the development and promotion of a new universal ethic as embodied in the culture of peace.

34. ACC members expressed their support for this approach, and made a number of specific suggestions,

emphasizing the relevance of this overarching concept to the coordinated follow-up to recent global conferences. The need to make peace with the environment was also stressed. ACC also emphasized that the promotion of a culture of peace should be regarded as a continuing objective, extending beyond the designated year.

35. ACC members agreed that the concept of the culture of peace was at the heart of the work of the United Nations system. ACC requested its Organizational Committee to:

(a) Ensure, through the utilization of existing mechanisms, the preparation of a system-wide media and public information strategy for the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace;

(b) Ensure continuous exchange of information, on a system-wide basis, on activities to be undertaken in follow-up to the decisions of the General Assembly on the draft declaration and programme of action.

36. ACC also agreed that the International Year for the Culture of Peace should be launched at all the United Nations system headquarters and field offices, to the extent possible, on International Day of Peace 1999.

IV. Staff security and safety

37. The United Nations Security Coordinator briefed ACC on the status of implementation of the decision taken by ACC at its 1998 spring session concerning security and safety of staff and on the developments that had taken place since. The Coordinator noted that not only had the security situation continued to deteriorate but there had also been a change in the nature of the threat. Attacks and threats to United Nations system personnel and premises had increased, as had casualties. For the first time, civilian casualties had exceeded military casualties in peacekeeping operations.

38. The Coordinator noted that most of the elements of the ACC decision had been implemented or were in the process of implementation. A trust fund for the security of staff had been established, and he thanked the Governments of Japan and Norway for their contribution to it. This had enabled the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) to commence security training programmes which would eventually be extended to all 68 high-risk duty stations. He noted that it was vital to secure additional funds for the trust fund, and appealed to the executive heads to assist in that regard. With regard to hostage incident management training, he noted that the

staff already trained had, regrettably, had the opportunity to use their skills in managing responses to hostage incidents. He informed ACC that all but one of the eight United Nations system hostages had been released through the efforts of staff members who had received this training. In this context, he emphasized the importance of not giving in to demands for ransom since acceding to such demands only increased the risk for other staff members.

39. He further noted that the decision by ACC on security measures for locally recruited staff was being implemented at all duty stations and being monitored by his Office. He called on all organizations to cooperate in speeding up the recruitment of security officers for high-risk duty stations by providing the necessary account codes in a timely manner. He also stated that, given the changing security situation, his Office was finding it increasingly difficult to address, with the resources available to it, the growing demands being placed upon it. In this connection, he stressed the need for a full-time staff member to investigate incidents of attacks against United Nations system staff, including murders.

40. He called on ACC members to continue to cooperate in ensuring a collective, coordinated approach to security management in the field. He noted that it was of utmost importance for the United Nations system to speak with one voice and to act in unison when it came to this issue, and thanked executive heads for their cooperation in this regard.

41. ACC members agreed with the assessment of the Coordinator, and noted that the security situation was becoming ever more difficult given the nature of conflicts and the fragile peace in many areas where the United Nations was involved. They noted with satisfaction the increasing importance given to this issue on the ACC agenda. The need to look at security policies as these related to humanitarian workers and to discuss the role of peacekeepers in protecting humanitarian workers was noted. The importance of raising decisively issues with Member States when casualties do occur was emphasized, as was the need for recognition of humanitarian workers when they die in the line of duty and for the system to be more proactive in protecting all staff, as well as property and supplies.

42. Support was also expressed for a strengthening of the system's capacity to investigate directly security incidents. The Committee also recognized the importance of effective telecommunications and of using compatible equipment and systems which had been underscored by the Coordinator. ACC members noted with concern the resistance encountered in some countries where United Nations

system operations were denied permission to use telecommunication equipment, and agreed that this issue should be addressed by the system as a whole. With regard to emergency communications, the Committee was informed of an initiative by the Government of Finland, which had hosted an intergovernmental conference on emergency telecommunications, leading to the drafting of an agreement which would save many lives and millions of dollars if fully implemented. This agreement would be open for signature later in 1998.

43. ACC members strongly reaffirmed their commitment to security and safety of staff. The Committee reiterated that security of United Nations system personnel was non-negotiable, and that in the absence of decisive action by host countries, the United Nations system should act to withdraw staff or suspend operations. It expressed its appreciation to those countries that had contributed funds for security training and encouraged others to do so. It was noted that the nature of conflicts requires flexibility in responses to security threats. Nevertheless, ACC highlighted the need for the United Nations system to act in a concerted manner when it came to decisions on staff in the field (abiding by the decisions of the Security Coordinator and/or the designated official), and ensure that this message was clear to all staff of all concerned organizations. **ACC also requested the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) (CCAQ(FB)) to give renewed and continued attention to the financial and budgetary aspects of United Nations system staff security and safety decisions.**

44. **It was agreed that a joint ACC statement on security would be finalized by the Organizational Committee on behalf of ACC. It was agreed that the statement would include a strong appeal to Member States to sign the 1994 Convention of the Safety of United Nations and Associate Personnel, which to date had 21 signatories and would come into force at the twenty-second signature (see annex II).**

45. On the issue of the legal aspects of staff safety, ACC recalled that at its last session it had requested that the legal and practical issues involved with respect to staff safety be examined further. Pursuant to that request, the legal advisers of the United Nations system had recognized the efficacy of bilateral agreements in strengthening the legal protections available to staff and encouraged the continuation, at least for the time being, of this ad hoc approach, rather than pursuing a collective multilateral initiative. **They also agreed that it would be useful to enhance the exchange of information between**

organizations on such issues as instances in which legal protections had not been respected by member countries, developments in the negotiations of bilateral agreements, and the implementation and application of organizational policies for dealing with cases of arrest and detention of staff.

46. **ACC endorsed the conclusions of the meeting of legal advisers of the organizations of the United Nations system, and requested it to continue to address the linkage between physical safety of staff and the legal protections afforded by privileges and immunities.**

V. Other matters

Meeting with the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission and staff representatives

47. In accordance with established practice, ACC heard statements from the Chairman of the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) and the representatives of the Coordinating Committee for Independent Staff Unions and Associations, and the Federation of International Civil Servants Associations. The Chairman of ICSC, in highlighting the results of the Commission's work over the year, noted that the Commission had, *inter alia*, dealt with remuneration issues, such as the continuing review of the application of the Noblemaire principle, the Geneva post adjustment, and ways of improving the net remuneration ratios at the senior management levels; it had also completed a review of standards of travel and per diem, and had continued its monitoring of the status of women in the organizations of the common system. In this connection, the Chairman noted that according to a recent comprehensive report on the subject, women accounted for some 30 per cent of staff system-wide. The Commission had also proposed increases in dependency allowances, the education grant and hazard pay for internationally recruited staff. Following deliberations on the United Nations code of conduct, the Commission had decided to place on its work programme for 1999, the updating of the 1954 Standard of Conduct.

48. With regard to the application of the Noblemaire principle, ACC noted that following a comprehensive review of the subject in 1995, the Commission had reported to the General Assembly that the remuneration package of another Member State was higher than that of the current comparator. In view of the increasing difficulty in attracting

qualified staff, ACC requested clarification from the Chairman of ICSC as to the decision to postpone until 2001 a further review of this situation. In this connection, the Chairman of ICSC stated that the Commission would not have all the required technical information available to it to revisit the issue sooner. He also noted that the General Assembly had expressed interest in the use of a basket of comparators which some felt would be more representative and provide more stability. ACC members expressed concern that these delays in reviewing United Nations system conditions of service hindered the capacity of the system to meet Charter requirements for the selection of staff, thereby defeating the intent of the Noblemaire principle.

49. With regard to reporting on and monitoring the status of women in the United Nations system, ACC invited ICSC to identify in its reports best practices of those organizations that were more successful in increasing the representation of women. It also reiterated its concern with the continuing problems affecting the ICSC consultative process.

50. Concern was also expressed regarding the increasing tendency of Member States to attempt to influence all aspects of personnel decisions being taken by organizations of the system. It also noted with concern the growing trend in legislative organs of the system to micro-manage processes that are the purview of the management of the organizations of the system.

51. The statements of the representatives of the staff focused, *inter alia*, on issues related to human resources management reform, particularly the need for the full involvement of all levels of staff in the process. They welcomed the intention to establish a review group to examine the functioning of ICSC, and recalled their particular concerns regarding the process of selection and election of members to the Commission and the continuing problems with the ICSC consultative process. They also reiterated their continued concern for the safety and security of staff, especially with regard to the distinction made between internationally and nationally recruited staff and the provision of different degrees of protection for each. In the same context, they requested ACC to continue to appeal to Member States to sign the 1994 Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel. They also emphasized their continued concern for the continuing deterioration in conditions of service, and expressed disappointment at the Commission's decision regarding the recognition of language knowledge in the United Nations system. The need for recognition of domestic partnerships was also stressed.

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52. ACC recalled that in 1996 it had considered that, at a time when reform was high on the system's agenda, it was more essential than ever to have an effective and imaginative International Civil Service Commission capable of taking initiatives to keep pace with new trends in human resources management and the changing needs of the organizations of the system. Consequently, the Secretary-General in his reform programme recommended that the General Assembly initiate a review of ICSC, including its mandate, membership and functioning, in order to increase its effectiveness in meeting the challenges facing the United Nations system. The General Assembly, in its resolution 52/12 B, had requested the competent intergovernmental bodies to consider the modalities for such a review. Recognizing the implication of the proposed review for the system as a whole, the Secretary-General had requested that inter-agency consultations be carried out on the proposed modalities and terms of reference of the review.

53. The approach emerging from the consultations involves ACC recommending, *inter alia*, that a review group, composed of a small, geographically balanced group of experts, be created to undertake an examination of the mandate, membership and functioning of ICSC in the light of the challenges facing the United Nations system. The review group's report would be submitted no later than 30 November 1999. ACC also had before it for consideration the draft terms of reference for such a review which had resulted from inter-agency consultations.

54. ACC welcomed the initiative and endorsed the proposed terms of reference (see annex III). It was proposed that the group of experts be appointed by the General Assembly on the recommendation of the Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chairman of ACC, after consultation with concerned ACC members. It was also suggested that the report of the review group be submitted to the General Assembly together with the views of the concerned organizations of the system, including, as appropriate, of their governing bodies.

55. The Committee further recalled that at its last meeting, it had mandated the meeting of legal advisers to pursue the issue of possible options for the review of the legality of ICSC decisions. The Committee was informed that the legal advisers had proposed an amendment to the ICSC statute which would allow it and participating organizations to request advisory opinion from an ad hoc panel composed of the Chairmen of the United Nations and

the International Labour Organization (ILO) Administrative Tribunals, and a third person chosen by them. The two Chairmen were currently being consulted on the proposal.

56. **ACC agreed that given the consensus among the legal advisers, the views of the Presidents of the United Nations and ILO Administrative Tribunals should be obtained on an urgent basis and conveyed to all members of ACC. The final endorsement of the recommendations, in the light of the views of the Presidents of the Tribunals, should be obtained from all ACC members through correspondence.**

Other matters brought to the attention of ACC

57. ACC took note of the following recommendations from subsidiary bodies:

(a) The recommendation of IACSD to expand the task manager system to include relevant thematic outcomes of other global conferences so as to avoid having multiple mechanisms at a global level for policy coordination in any given thematic area;

(b) The recommendation from CCAQ(FB), in the context of the constraints facing organizations wishing to increase funding from the private sector, to explore the possibility of a concerted United Nations system approach to exploring arrangements to permit the tax deductibility of private sector contributions;

(c) The appointment of Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, as Chairman of CCPOQ for the two-year period from November 1998 through October 2000;

(d) The appointment of Abraham Espino (International Atomic Energy Agency) as Chairman and Gary Eidet (WFP) as Vice-Chairman of CCAQ (FB) for a two-year period commencing with the Committee's next session, in 1999.

58. Since the terms of office of the Director-General of ILO and the Secretary-General of ITU would be coming to an end before the next meeting of ACC, the Secretary-General thanked Michel Hansenne and Pekka J. Tarjanne on behalf of ACC members for their valuable contribution to the work of ACC and the United Nations system in general, and conveyed to them ACC's best wishes in their future endeavours.

Annex I

ACC press statement on the report of the Secretary-General entitled “The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa”

1. The executive heads of the United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies and of the Bretton Woods institutions unanimously endorsed the general thrust of the report of the Secretary-General entitled “The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa”. Meeting at United Nations Headquarters on 30 and 31 October 1998, as members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC),^a they agreed on the importance of focusing on the challenge of peace and prosperity in Africa and reducing its vulnerability, recognizing the crucial relationship between sustainable development, good governance, respect for human rights and durable peace.
2. At a time when the attention of the international community is focused on the current financial crisis and the countries and regions most immediately affected, the United Nations leaders agreed that it is especially important to ensure that there is not, as a result, a lessening of support for Africa and of the regional and national efforts to promote its development programmes. They also agreed that this commitment to recovery and sustainable development must continue to be implemented in full partnership with African leaders, the Organization of African Unity, subregional intergovernmental organizations, other institutions and civil society at large.
3. The United Nations leaders reaffirmed that peace and prosperity must be sought as a single objective, with equal priority and equal persistence, emphasizing the broader nature of human security and the diverse ways in which it must be pursued. In addition, they expressed their full support for a comprehensive and holistic approach to conflict resolution, peace-building, development and democracy-building. They also welcomed the support of the international community to ongoing initiatives, such as the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa and the Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development.
4. The leaders are particularly concerned over the many multifaceted and complex challenges Africa faces today, including poverty eradication and environmental sustainability. Within this context, they expressed serious concern over the ravages of HIV/AIDS, of which the consequences, in human, social and economic terms, could be devastating. They underlined the urgency for concerted action in addressing those problems.
5. It was agreed that both the report and its recommendations would be brought to the attention of the governing bodies of the respective organizations represented at ACC to gain wider understanding and commitment. Members of ACC appealed to the international community to exercise the necessary political will and unity of purpose in supporting the efforts of the Governments and peoples of Africa to address the challenges of peace and sustainable development.

^a United Nations, ILO, FAO, UNESCO, ICAO, WHO, World Bank, IMF, UPU, ITU, WMO, IMO, WIPO, IFAD, UNIDO, IAEA, WTO, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNDCP, WFP, UNRWA and UNHCR.

Annex II

ACC joint statement on the security and safety of staff of the United Nations system

1. Twenty-three staff members have lost their lives since the beginning of 1998, of whom eight were shot to death. There have also been five incidents of hostage-taking, involving 18 staff members, one of them still in captivity. The executive heads of the United Nations, its funds and programmes, and the specialized agencies, as well as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund,^a at a meeting of ACC chaired by the Secretary-General, deplored the increase in casualties and incidents affecting United Nations staff, both international and local. The executive heads are also deeply concerned by the increasing number of threats directed against United Nations system facilities and premises. These events reveal an unacceptable trend, and call for improved and increased action to increase staff security.

2. They expressed their appreciation for the measures taken by the membership of the United Nations to enhance the safety and security of the Organization's staff and operations, most notably in the General Assembly, the Security Council and the Diplomatic Conference of Plenipotentiaries on the Establishment of an International Criminal Court held in Rome in July 1998.

3. The United Nations leaders reiterate their call to host countries that safety and security of the United Nations system personnel is a non-negotiable issue, and that in the absence of decisive action by the host country, the United Nations system will act to withdraw staff or suspend operations.

4. They urge all Member States to ensure that United Nations system personnel at all duty stations have access to and are permitted to utilize telecommunications equipment essential to the security and safety of United Nations system staff. They also call on all Member States who have not done so to ratify the 1994 United Nations Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, and also the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of United Nations Staff.

5. The executive heads express their appreciation to the Governments of Japan and Norway, which have contributed

funds for security measures, including training, and appeal to others to do likewise. They note that system-wide training has been arranged by the United Nations Security Coordinator's Office (UNSECOORD) in some duty stations, and will be extended to others in early 1999. They express their appreciation for and pledge their continued support to UNSECOORD as the central United Nations system entity responsible for system-wide security coordination and training.

^a United Nations, ILO, FAO, UNESCO, ICAO, WHO, World Bank, IMF, UPU, ITU, WMO, IMO, WIPO, IFAD, UNIDO, IAEA, WTO, UNICEF, UNCTAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNFPA, UNDCP, WFP, UNRWA and UNHCR.

Annex III

Terms of reference for a proposed review group to undertake an examination of the mandate, membership and functioning of the International Civil Service Commission

1. The review group will assist the General Assembly in examining the mandate, membership and functioning of the International Civil Service Commission in order to increase its effectiveness in meeting the challenges facing the United Nations system of organizations.^a required of the International Civil Service Commission and propose changes to enable ICSC to meet the challenges facing the United Nations system of organizations.
2. To this end, the review group will review and analyse:
 - (a) The underlying objectives and expectations of Member States, organizations and staff in the establishment of ICSC; the extent to which those objectives and expectations have been met in the evolution of the Commission (and its secretariat) since that time and the reasons therefor;
 - (b) The several proposals and initiatives of the consultative partners and ICSC to modify the functioning and the working methods of the Commission (including its secretariat) to ensure its independence, impartiality, effectiveness and technical competence, the extent to which these proposals and initiatives have been implemented, and the reasons why they have succeeded or failed;
 - (c) The mandate, scope, functioning and evolution of national civil or public service commissions and similar bodies in various regions of the world in order to assess the extent to which their practices might provide appropriate reference at the international level;
 - (d) Other options that could enhance the technical expertise available to the international civil service in relation to new management methods and practices (for example, the use of expert advisory panels and of private consulting firms).
3. The review group will invite the representatives of Member States, through the regional groups in the General Assembly and the governing bodies of the organizations participating in the United Nations common system, together with the representatives of executive heads and of the staff bodies, to provide such submission as they may wish in respect of this review.
4. Taking into account this analysis and these submissions, the review group will redefine what is

^a As recommended by the Secretary-General in his report entitled "Renewing the United Nations: a programme for reform" (A/51/950).