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**Press Release
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**JOINT STATEMENT ON REFORM PROCESSES IN UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM ISSUED
BY ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION**

The following was issued today by the Spokesman for Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali:

The Secretary-General chaired a meeting of the Administrative Committee on Coordination on 25 and 26 October 1996 (see Press Release SG/SM/6098 of 28 October 1996). At this meeting, the executive heads of all the specialized agencies and United Nations programmes agreed to issue the following Joint Statement on reform efforts to date, and on the future direction of these processes in the United Nations system:

ACC Joint Statement Reform and strengthening of the United Nations system

The Secretary-General and the executive heads of all the specialized agencies and United Nations programmes and funds, meeting in the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) under the Secretary-General's chairmanship on 25 and 26 October 1996, reviewed the overall direction of ongoing reform processes within the United Nations system, and their implications for the strengthening of the system.

They reaffirmed their individual and collective commitment to pursue and intensify the reform effort, in order to strengthen effectiveness and impact in meeting the changing requirements of Member States.

Organizations of the United Nations system have been responsive to the changing international environment and to the evolving demands of Member States. They have reviewed, individually and collectively, policy orientations and are redefining priorities and refocusing programmes and activities, while, at the same time, enhancing efficiency and cost-effectiveness.

Central to these efforts are the far-reaching management reforms being introduced in the organizations of the system. Significant intergovernmental reforms and other organizational changes are also being actively pursued. These have included reviews of mission statements and strategies, and progress

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in streamlining intergovernmental structures and processes to reduce costs and increase efficiency. Information on all of these processes is being shared and will be disseminated throughout the system. This

should help ensure that these processes are mutually supportive, that implications for other organizations are identified and taken into account, and that best practices are institutionalized and drawn upon systemwide.

The ACC underscored the importance of ensuring that intergovernmental reforms progress in parallel with managerial and other organizational reforms. Secretariat and intergovernmental reforms should draw strength from each other and influence each other's course in a positive way. As the experience of a number of organizations shows, this is key to ensuring that the reform process genuinely contributes to overall organizational effectiveness.

At the inter-agency level, ongoing measures to enhance programme complementarity are being accompanied by a renewed effort at identifying and focusing on common priority objectives and priority themes; developing joint arrangements to respond to emerging requirements; and coordinating overall policies and strategies. The strengthening of country-level coordination and country-level impact is a key objective and measure of this effort.

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

A common challenge facing the system, in an environment of growing budgetary constraints, is to preserve programme delivery while refocusing programme priorities in response to changing demands. Cost-effectiveness, the most productive use of funds, and maximizing the resources devoted to the

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delivery of programmes and services of direct benefit to countries are, and will continue to be, a main concern of the executive heads. At the same time, it must be emphasized that the ultimate objective of reforming and revitalizing the system is not about cost-cutting, but about effectiveness and responsiveness. The effort will ultimately succeed only if it is accompanied by sound and predictable funding for programmes and activities.

The peace-building and development objectives of the United Nations system require a long-term perspective. The impact of reform measures should be assessed in the same perspective, and not be measured only in the short-term. Effective reform is a process, not an event. The consensus achieved at

recent global conferences is providing new impetus for revitalizing international cooperation for development and is introducing a coherent framework for system-wide action in support of development. It should, as such, be viewed as an integral component of the reform process.

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

In this perspective, the ACC identified a number of broad objectives around which it intends to focus its contribution to the reform process in the period ahead. Among them:

-- Enhancing the capacity of the system to address effectively the challenges arising from the new types of conflicts and the complex emergencies that characterize the post-cold war period. The strengthening of the system's early warning capacity, and the reinforcement of inter-agency coordination in situations where peacemaking and peace-keeping are to proceed in parallel with emergency relief, reconstruction and the resumption of economic and social development, will be given special attention in this context. Renewed efforts are equally required to provide system-wide support for the process of disarmament, including verification, and to give new impetus to controlling conventional weapons and arms trafficking and curbing the production and spread of land-mines, with a view to their ultimate banning;

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-- A renewed, system-wide effort to address the implications of globalization and liberalization in the world economy, bearing in mind the major new opportunities being opened up for trade and investment and information and technology flows, but also the risks of marginalization of the poorest countries, and the poorest groups within countries. These issues are central to the arrangements for enhanced cooperation being developed within the United Nations system. Examples include arrangements among the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Trade Organization and the Bretton Woods institutions in the trade and finance area; between UNCTAD and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in the investment area; and among the financial and trade institutions, the International Labour Organization (ILO), and other concerned specialized agencies and United Nations programmes and funds on links between trade and finance and social development. Accelerating the development of instruments and structures to ensure that all countries maximize their benefits from globalization, and strengthening technical cooperation and other support for capacity-building in these areas, will be important objectives of the system in the period ahead;

-- Mobilizing and coordinating the contribution of the system to the over-arching goals of poverty eradication and people-centred sustainable development, in key areas such as the elimination of hunger and malnutrition, social development and social integration, the environment, health, education, employment and sustainable

livelihoods, population, shelter, gender equality, and the special needs of children. Mainstreaming a gender perspective and contributing to advancing the status of women in society is a crucial dimension of this effort. The United Nations system is uniquely placed to develop international standards and legal norms and support international conventions to attain the specific objectives set by the international community in these areas; to marshal the responses required to advance the comprehensive agenda of policies and measures agreed upon at recent global conferences; and to contribute to the creation of an international environment supportive of growth and sustainable development. Special attention will be given to strengthening the system's advocacy role in promoting effective national action towards poverty eradication and people-centred sustainable development, and to enhancing the cost-effectiveness and coherence of the support provided by the system at the country level, through such mechanisms as the resident coordinator system;

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

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

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

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

-- Strengthening the system's links with civil society, and enhancing the relevance of existing cooperative arrangements with non-governmental actors to both the overall effort towards democratization in international relations and international cooperation, and the promotion of poverty eradication and sustainable development.

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

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

The basic objective of the reform processes under way is to adapt the functioning of the United Nations

system to these challenges, so that it can respond to them with maximum impact and cost-effectiveness. Executive heads are committed to this effort and appeal to Member States that, in providing policy guidance to these processes, they ensure that the effort is geared to a genuine strengthening of the capacity of the system in the service of humanity.

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