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GLOBALISATION A CHALLENGE TO THE G-77, SAYS MOROCCAN MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND COOPERATION

UNITED NATIONS, Jan (G77/IPS) -- Just after he formally accepted the chairmanship of the Group of 77, the Foreign Minister of Morocco Mohamed Benaissa singled out globalisation as one of the greatest challenges facing developing nations in the coming year.

"In fact, if globalisation offers chances for development, no one could deny that it continues, at the moment, in deepening inequalities between the poor and the rich and the most vulnerable societies have been marginalised", he said.

Mr. Benaissa warned that few developing countries have been able to improve their export sectors and win places in the international market by opening more broadly their economies.

This had even perverted effects, by exposing some of them to acute financial crises. It is, then, high time to remedy dysfunctions of the global economy and imbalances of

international structures in the fields of finance, trade, technology and investment so that globalisation could be beneficial to all, he added.

Last year's international conference on financing for development, which was held in Monterrey, tried to provide some responses by calling for coherence in monetary, financial and trade policies and for the enhancement of the participation of developing countries in decision and normative processes.

"It goes without saying that the United Nations, as a universal organization, has a central role in the implementation of a multilateral approach associating

all the parties to consolidate international peace and security, promote the coherence of the global policies of development and favour a balanced sharing of benefits and advantages of globalisation," the minister said.

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EDITORIAL



At the dawn of the XXIst century, the United Nations is confronted with new challenges, different in nature from those which existed during the formative years of the world body. The current crisis in international relations reminds us that the concept of security can only be global, and that military and strategic aspects should go parallel with social and economic issues.

The phenomenon of globalisation did not attenuate the still important inequalities within the various countries and between the North and the South. The concentration of wealth widened existing gaps between the haves and the have-nots, which, in turn, engendered serious social consequences, which the State in itself is unable to redress due to the lack of sufficient means.

This situation can only aggravate ethnic and religious tensions and spark military conflicts and clashes. Therefore, actions undertaken in the field of peace-keeping cannot be separated from efforts carried out in the pursuit of economic development.

In this context, the Group of 77 and China should be further mobilised in its efforts for economic equity and justice in the developing world.

The revival of the world economy must take into account the needs and aspirations of the economically-deprived countries in order to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

Therefore, it will be necessary to acquire the means to achieve the objectives spelled out at the Millennium Summit, and also to implement the pledges and promises made at successive global conferences held under the auspices of the United Nations.

To keep up with these challenges, the Group of 77 and China must tackle with great care the solidarity between its members, by encouraging regional integration organizations and development programs at the regional level, such as NEPAD for Africa, and, on a larger scale, by renewing South-South cooperation.

We hope that the forthcoming high-level Conference to be held in Morocco will contribute to this end.

Self-reliance and support, through dialogue, from those favoured by History, remains the approach and course of action to be followed by our Group, in conformity with the concept of partnership as highlighted in the Millennium Declaration.

MOHAMED BENNOUNA

**Ambassador, Permanent Representative
of the Kingdom of Morocco to the United Nations
Chairman of the Group of 77**

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Reinforcing multilateralism, particularly, through the reform of the United Nations, remains the only way to ensure that the opening of markets have as ultimate finality the improvement of the fate of the human person under all latitudes and without discrimination.

He also pointed out that the Millennium Summit was a historical occasion to reaffirm the principles of international law, solidarity and cooperation and to set development goals with targets and deadlines.

"The Millennium Declaration is a reference for all of us and a framework for assessing the efforts undertaken at all levels, national, regional and international", he added.

"The Monterrey Consensus allowed us to adopt an integrated approach of development where issues of development, trade, debt, Official Development Aid, investment and systemic questions of global coherence of trade, monetary and financial policies are apprehended in a global manner," he said.

The Monterrey Consensus marks the beginning of a new phase, he added. "Besides, we have to gather our efforts and unify our position to ensure the implementation of the Monterrey political commitments. Discussions will continue within the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and dialogue will be carried on with Bretton Woods Institutions and the World Trade Organization as well as in the context of meetings with G-8".

"The mechanisms of follow-up which have been set will enable us to make an assessment of the progress achieved in the implementation of these commitments by member States, the United Nations system and the international financial institutions, on the national, sub-regional, regional and international levels. At Johannesburg, we have deepened the thought on sustainable development and raised awareness on threats to our planet," the Minister added.

And even though the Johannesburg Implementation Plan does not respond totally to developing countries' aspirations, it represents a first firm commitment for the achievement of the goals set by the international community since Rio Summit.

It needs to be implemented with the fight against poverty as a central goal.

"During this year, we will have then, the occasion to take up discussions on environment and development issues, at the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development. But, from now on, we have to start our consultations in a manner to ensure the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Action".

In this respect, a particular attention should be granted to the establishment of a working program reflecting the interests of our Group.

"If our first goal consists in the implementation of Johannesburg commitments and the results of the major international Conferences since Rio, we have to be ready to examine any new question, representing a particular interest to our countries," he said.

Mr. Benaissa also said that the Doha Conference decided to place developing countries interests at the heart of negotiations and make them a development cycle.

Member States of the United Nations also committed themselves at Monterrey, then at Johannesburg to give effects to the Doha Declaration and improve access to markets to developing countries.

Nevertheless, the evolution of the world economic situation and the stalemate in negotiations, as well as the worrying rise of protectionism, may seriously hinder the achievement of the goals set forth in the Doha Declaration, he warned.

Moreover, during the last year, the Heads of State and Government of countries members of the United Nations conveyed their support to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and recognized that its success will depend on the support of donors as well.

The United Nations also decided to adopt NEPAD as a new political framework of cooperation with Africa. In fact, NEPAD constitutes a clear and courageous response to multiple challenges to which the African continent is confronted and a resolute will of the African countries to strive together for democratisation of their political systems and reform of their economic policies.

This development program represents a reference for regional integration, by trying to integrate countries and sub-regions, to widen trade areas and create large scale economies.

"Consequently, we have to follow very closely its implementation and call on the international community and donors to keep the promises made to Africa, which remains a disaster-stricken and marginalized continent, in spite of its huge potentialities".

For this reason, efforts should be significantly improved to enhance growth and reduce poverty. Furthermore, a particular attention must be given to peace consolidation and reconstruction of African countries emerging from conflicts.

He concluded that the Group of 77 was pleased with the creation of the Bureau of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), landlocked countries and Small Island Developing States and expressed the hope that the creation of this structure will ensure the effective coordination of the implementation of the new program of action in favour of LDCs for the decade of 2001-2010.

“The Millennium Declaration is a reference for all of us and a framework for assessing the efforts undertaken at all levels, national, regional and international.”

ANNAN URGES GROUP OF 77 TO FOCUS ON EMERGING ISSUES

UNITED NATIONS, Jan (G77/IPS)-- Addressing a meeting of the Group of 77, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan urged delegates to pay greater attention to emerging issues that will have a profound effect on the ongoing efforts to meet the challenges of development and globalisation.

One such issue, he said, is migration, which now involves hundreds of millions of people, and which requires political leaders from both developing and developed countries to strengthen cooperation.

Annan said the challenge is threefold: to better protect the human rights of migrants, who are mostly from developing nations; to fairly share the burdens and responsibilities of providing assistance for refugees; and to fully realize the positive potential of international migration -- for migrants, for transit and receiving countries alike.

The Secretary-General was speaking at a formal turnover ceremony where Morocco was inducted as the new chairman of the Group of 77 for 2003 by outgoing chairman (Venezuela).

He said that Venezuela presided over the Group of 77 during a year of major global events in the economic and social realms, including the International Conference on Financing for Development, World Summit on Sustainable Development, Second World Assembly on Ageing, the World Food Summit and the General Assembly Special Session on Children.

"These events have provided important opportunities to address the challenges of globalization, achieve concrete progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, and bring development issues back to the centre of the global agenda. They have enhanced the credibility and visibility of the Organization's work in these areas. And they have seen very constructive participation by the Group of 77".

Annan also took the opportunity to thank Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and his team for their great dynamic and sustained leadership during a busy and difficult period.

"I would also want to applaud the work of his Ambassador here, Milos Alcalay and his team, for the great skill and determination they showed during this past year".

Annan also congratulated the Foreign Minister of Morocco Mohamed Benaissa and Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna on the assumption of Morocco's duties as Chairman of the Group of 77 during the year 2003.

Morocco assumes this responsibility at a challenging time, he said. First, the world economy is recovering very slowly from its largest setback in a decade, and substantial risks remain, including geo-political tensions and uncertainties with possibly grave effects on the economies of all countries, especially the developing countries, and on efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Overall, the prospects

today look far more troubling than they were a year ago.

Second, the optimism generated by the agreement at Doha needs to be sustained through renewed efforts to make the multilateral trade negotiations a success.

These negotiations are the first in the history of GATT/WTO to have embraced development as their principal objective.

"We now have a commitment to reduce trade barriers and subsidies, and to set trade rules in ways that will bring new benefits to the developing countries. At the same time, the Doha negotiations have encountered difficulties, in particular with regard to TRIPS and the question of developing-country access to life-saving medicines".

But this should not lead to pessimism. Major trade negotiations have rarely concluded without moments of near-despair, when reasonable deals seem beyond reach. Indeed, with so much at stake, we have no option but to persist.

Poor countries should do their utmost to defend their interests. And rich countries must recognize that it is in their self-interest to open up trade, he added.

"Third, we continue to face the urgent need to improve the way conference follow-up is carried out within the UN system and I think all the speakers have touched on this".

This issue will be a major priority in the months ahead. The recently established open-ended ad-hoc working group of the General Assembly will have to address an array of critical issues, including how to ensure policy coherence; how best to integrate the system's wide-ranging efforts without duplicating them in different intergovernmental bodies; and how to monitor progress, he added.

UN departments, specialized agencies, programmes, funds and other entities will likewise be focusing intently on this question, as a major part of our effort to continue strengthening the Organization. Implementation will be everyone's job.

This year's development calendar also offers a number of important opportunities, he pointed out. The Economic and Social Council will examine the key question of rural development, and look as well at how it can sharpen its contribution to the implementation of what was agreed at global conferences.

And in December, he said, the World Summit on the Information Society will try to find new ways to place the great power of information technologies at the service of economic and social development.

"Morocco's voice has contributed greatly to the development debate. I am confident that the Moroccan delegation will lead with expertise and determination in the coming months. I congratulate them and I wish you all success", Annan concluded.

SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION EXPRESSES G-77 SOLIDARITY, SAYS UNDP ADMINISTRATOR

UNITED NATIONS, Jan -- (G77/IPS) -- The Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) told a meeting of the Group of 77 that South-South cooperation is the programmatic expression of G-77 solidarity.

Mark Malloch Brown said an upcoming meeting of the High Level Committee on Technical Cooperation Among Developing Countries (TCDC), scheduled to take place in May, is important, because it highlights another dimension of partnership that is dear to the Group of 77: South - South cooperation.

"In our TCDC projects we support members of the G-77 helping each other, demonstrating that partnership and solidarity do not stop in New York, but are a reality in the lives of the peoples of the South", he said.

"When expertise is shared, when the experience of one benefits the other, when the best practices of a country in Africa for instance are used by practitioners in Latin America or Asia, then we have the Group of 77 in practice, we have South-South cooperation," he told delegates at the G-77 handover ceremony where Morocco succeeded Venezuela as the new chairman of the Group of 77.

"As Administrator of UNDP, I firmly believe that developing countries have much to learn from each other, that they can offer to each other a wealth of experience, of support, of technical cooperation. I believe by supporting South- South cooperation we are translating your solidarity as a Group of 77 to the field, we internalize your vision and mainstream it in our programming," he noted.

"More broadly, we, in UNDP offer our support, our solidarity, and the full range of resources at our disposal as we move forward together to meet the needs of all our peoples and achieve the Millennium

Development Goals," Malloch Brown said.

Addressing the Foreign Minister of Morocco, he said: "Your country, Mr. Minister, has the responsibility for taking our agenda forward at a time when the focus has shifted from vision to action - from agreeing our framework to delivering on it".

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), he said, provide clear, measurable targets. "They are the benchmarks by which we will track our implementation of the mandates of the Conferences and

Summits. And they are the tools - through our MDGs country reports, through our new research, through our advocacy and through our work on the ground - that translate development objectives from abstract concepts to real jobs for people; from agreements reached in committee rooms to more children in schools, fewer people hungry and without access to clean water and full gender equality".

As such, he said, "the MDGs are our common responsibility". As the Group of 77 argued in Monterrey, and as the world agreed, MDGs are a global partnership for

development which commits donors to greater development assistance, to a more open and equitable trade environment, and to wider and deeper debt relief.

"Our common responsibility: for developing countries in Monterrey agreed that the rule of law is important for development, that good governance fosters efficiency and long term growth, and that national savings, and a committed private sector, will lead to development that is genuinely self-sustaining.

"Our common responsibility: for we, in the United Nations, and in UNDP, the UN's global development network, are committed to support you along the way. Your goals are our goals, and we are your development organization".

"As Administrator of UNDP, I firmly believe that developing countries have much to learn from each other, that they can offer to each other a wealth of experience, of support, of technical cooperation. I believe by supporting South- South cooperation we are translating your solidarity as a Group of 77 to the field, we internalize your vision and mainstream it in our programming."

KING OF MOROCCO HOPES TO MAKE SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION A PRIORITY ISSUE

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb (G77/IPS) - Addressing the Thirteenth Summit of Non-Aligned Countries in the Malaysian capital, Mohammed VI, King of Morocco, said that the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) should look to the future and focus its efforts and energies on restructuring the Movement in order to make it a powerful international advisory body capable of helping to make the world a better place.

“As Chairman of the Group of 77, I am keen to work towards this objective, by mobilising all our resources to ensure that the voice of our nations is duly heard and taken into account in major international debates and forums,” he added.

The summit, which was held in Kuala Lumpur in late February, was attended by more than 60 heads of state and government. Malaysia was elected the new chairman of the 116-member NAM succeeding South Africa.

In his address to the summit, the Moroccan King said that, given its doctrine, its broad and diversified membership and the wide cross-cultural spectrum it represents, NAM can, and must, play a significant role in the resolution of a number of regional conflicts which are a serious threat to regional and international peace and security”.

International peace and security in this new context can only be safeguarded by a strong and efficient universal Organization.

“This is why our Movement must continue to wield all its clout to maintain the role of the United Nations Organization, mainly by supporting the Secretary General, Mr. Kofi Annan in his quest for peaceful solutions to conflicts”, he added.

Morocco, as a founding member of the NAM and a staunch advocate of its noble ideals, pledges to endeavour, during its term of office as Chairman of the Group of 77, to rally support for efforts to build a new world where the values of democracy prevail, along with security, justice and solidarity, the King said.

“By working towards this objective, we will show how loyal we are to the spirit of the forefathers of our Movement, and we will earn the respect of coming generations,” he noted.

It is now almost half a century since the NAM came into being. During this period it has been confronted with major challenges, including those of securing decolonization, establishing modern states, and fighting poverty and underdevelopment, two scourges which are potentially as serious and dangerous for world peace and security as was the bipolarization of the planet during the cold war.

Furthermore, the Movement has struggled to secure a more equitable international order, and it is now striving to rise to the challenges of globalization and to tackle the danger of terrorism, he said.

However, if the latest developments in the world tend to confirm the validity of our Movement’s vision, why is it

then, that the anticipated success in defending its just causes is not forthcoming?, he asked.

“The answer, in short, is that our Movement has lacked the authority and political will needed to press our case. Without blaming each other, we must admit that we are all somewhat responsible for this lack of efficiency”.

Speaking of the Group of 77, he said, Morocco hopes to make South-South cooperation a priority issue.

“It goes without saying that it is in the interest of our countries to promote cooperation and partnership between them, by enhancing- their self reliance in their joint effort to meet the challenges of globalization. This is a dynamic and complex phenomenon, with ever-growing economic and social ramifications”.

He said it is an irreversible process with a potential to trigger off an unprecedented expansion of the world economy, and cause national economies to be more and more interdependent.

It is a fact that developed countries are adequately equipped to adjust their economies to the new world context; but what can the countries of the South do today to cope with major constraints which might hinder their gradual and effective integration into the world market, or, might even exclude them from the globalization process altogether?, he asked.

“It is, therefore, high time to enforce the decisions made at the multilateral level, with a view to controlling the globalization process in a way which safeguards the interests of developing countries”.

Thus, as far as the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus is concerned, there is particular need to ensure that the economic and financial policies of the relevant multilateral institutions are consistent with each other.

The aim is to harmonize the efforts made by the international community and devote them to mobilising national and international resources for the purposes of development and of external debt reduction.

Moreover, it is important to design an international financial architecture capable of protecting the international financial system, particularly financial markets in developing countries, against the devastating effects of sudden crises and unbridled speculation, the King said.

Furthermore, the negotiations initiated by the Doha Process should lead to the establishment of a fair and balanced international trade system which has the potential to give tangible expression to the special and differentiated treatment principles, and also to open the markets of the North, on a preferential basis, to goods and services which are important to developing countries in terms of export.

In addition, he warned about the real dangers which pose a particular threat to populations in the South, especially the alarming extension of poverty, the inability to contain the spread of epidemics and devastating diseases, the irreversible damage caused to the climate, to the environment and to

biodiversity, and also the dwindling water resources.

“All these hazards warrant prompt implementation of the recommendations of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development,” he added.

In this context, careful attention and a great deal of energy must be devoted to the African continent which is still suffering from the exacerbation of devastating regional strifes.

Notwithstanding the numerous efforts made by African countries and by other partners and institutions, he said, Morocco is of the view that the international community has not, so far, been able to come up with appropriate solutions to settle these conflicts.

With courage and determination, Africa has decided to take control of its own destiny, mainly through the implementation of the NEPAD initiative which should be fully supported and encouraged.

There is a pressing need for our Movement to use its full weight and influence to deal with the Middle East conflict which poses a serious threat to international peace and security, because of Israel’s stubborn occupation of Arab territories and its persistent aggression against defenceless Palestinians, he added.

“We hope this Summit will lead to efficient efforts being resumed in support of a just, lasting and comprehensive peace for all peoples of the region. To achieve this, it is necessary to restore dialogue and go back to the negotiating table, in accordance with international legality”.

“In this context, we reaffirm the right of the brotherly Palestinian people to an independent state, with Al-Quds Al-Shareef as its capital”.

Morocco is following with deep concern the current developments in Iraq, and urges for the scourge of war to be averted through adequate implementation of UN Security Council Resolutions.

A new world seems to be emerging before us, bringing with it so many uncertainties along with unprecedented dangers which we will have to deal with, he added.

Among these uncertainties and hazards, the danger of international terrorism is being given special consideration by the Summit.

“In this regard, I am sure that the Non-Aligned Movement can, and should, through multilateral consensual efforts, join in the struggle being waged against such a serious threat which can by no means be accepted or tolerated. It is a true menace to international peace and security”.

NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT SUMMIT CLOSES WITH CALL FOR A NEW GLOBAL HUMAN ORDER

KUALA LUMPUR, Feb (G77/TWN) - The Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) Summit ended with the call for a new political, economic and human global order that is equitable, just and democratic.

The main message emerging from the Summit was the urgent need to reaffirm the central importance of multilateralism in face of the threat of rising unilateral actions in international affairs exemplified by the probability of a US-UK led war against Iraq.

The Summit’s closing plenary adopted several documents: the “Final Document” of the 13th NAM Summit; the Kuala Lumpur Declaration on continuing the revitalization of the NAM; and separate statements on Iraq and Palestine. It also agreed to hold the next Summit in Cuba in 2006.

In the closing speech, the new NAM chairman, Malaysian Prime Minister Dr. Mahathir Mohamad, said the Summit had been extremely useful for exchange of views, stock taking and formulating strategies for the future of the Movement.

He said the unipolar world today is different from the multipolar world when our forefathers started the NAM. That NAM, which embodies our hopes and aspirations for economic prosperity in a peaceful, secure and just world, has become even more relevant today to protect and promote

the interests of the South.

“It is clear the well being of the world will be better served by a strong multilateral system revolving around a UN that is more representative and democratic, than a unilateral system based on the dominance of one power, however benign that power may be,” he said. “We are resolved to give strong and sustained support to the UN for its future is linked with that of the NAM and multilateralism.”

Mahathir summarized three new challenges facing NAM: international terrorism and our part in the international effort to combat international terrorism; globalization and efforts towards integration of developing countries into the new political, economic and human global order that is equitable, just and democratic; and information and communications technology that is changing the world and widening the North-South digital divide.

In the face of these challenges, it is in our interest to strengthen our unity and cohesion and speak with one voice on issues of vital importance. “While we do not need to be confrontational in our approach, there is also no need to be subservient or defensive in our relations with the developed countries.”



Kuala Lumpur

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Mahathir added the challenges require urgent responses, pragmatic strategies and coordinated actions. He referred to the just adopted Kuala Lumpur Declaration as a blueprint for collective action, with guiding principles and practical action plans to chart NAM's future course. With revitalization, NAM would be more pro-active and responsive to member states' concerns. As the new Chair, Malaysia will work closely with other members to enhance NAM's profile and clout in global affairs.

The reference in Mahathir's speech to globalization and the need for a "new political, economic and human global order" seemed to summarise a key part on globalization in the NAM Summit's Final Document. Para 224 states: "Noting that integration into the global

economy in order to benefit from multilateral rules without destroying national comparative advantage is a critical challenge for developing countries, and recognizing that economic reforms are only a means to an end and that in the pursuit of development, the human goals of security, freedom, justice and the opportunity for a fulfilling and empowering life for all humanity must not be neglected, the Heads of State or government emphasized the need for a New Global Human Order aimed at reversing the growing disparity between rich and poor, both among and within countries, through inter alia, the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable development."

The NAM Summit's call for a New Global Human Order based on narrowing disparities is in direct contrast to

the American-articulated paradigm of a New World Order first advanced by US President George Bush in the early 1990s and now further extended by President George W. Bush in increasingly unilateralist superpower policies including the justification for unilateral pre-emptive military strikes and withdrawal from multilateral agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol.

The "new global human order" also harks back to the developing countries' movement for a "new international economic order" in the 1970s and 1980s, which petered out in face of the backlash from developed countries, the debt crisis and commodity price declines, the Bretton Woods institutions' structural adjustment policy conditionalities, the Uruguay Round agreements and the current developments in the WTO.

G-77 REITERATES CASE FOR GENDER EQUALITY AND GENDER EMPOWERMENT

UNITED NATIONS, Feb (G77/IPS)-- Making a strong case for gender equality and gender empowerment, Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna, Permanent Representative of Morocco and Chairman of the Group of 77, told the Commission on the Status of Women that concrete actions should be taken or reinforced at national and international levels in order to provide women with their rightful place in global society.

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, he said there were two priority themes that were of particular relevance to the current session of the Commission.

The two themes were: (a) participation in, and access of women to the media, and information and communication technologies, and their impact on and use as an instrument for the advancement and empowerment of women, and (b) women's human rights and the elimination of all forms of violence against women and girls, as defined in the 1995 Beijing Platform for Action, and the outcome documents of the 23rd Special Session

of the General Assembly.

"Addressing these two themes is very important in our quest for achieving gender equality and women empowerment," he added.

Ambassador Bennouna said that eight years after the Beijing Conference, and three years after the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, "one can rightly ask whether the objectives, particularly those related to women's access to and participation in the media and information and communication technologies, were reached".

In this regard, the Group of 77 and China share the views expressed by the Secretary General in his report (E/CN.6/2003/6) that any objective and rational analysis in this field lacks reliable statistics and data and that most studies available on the use of information technologies are rarely disaggregated by sex.

Certainly, information and communication technologies constitute an essential tool of development that aims at enhancing the empowerment of women and promoting gender equal-

ity, he argued, but access to information and communication technologies offers considerable opportunities for economic, social and human development and contributes to the emergence of new societies based on knowledge and information dissemination.

However, he said, a considerable part of the world population living in poverty, particularly women, cannot benefit from the advantages offered by modern technological progress, which further deepens the "digital divide" between high tech societies and those lagging behind.

Such a situation explains the legitimate concerns raised by developing countries. Moreover, disparities in terms of illiteracy and the relatively limited access to education in some developing countries-- along with high costs of information technologies-- reduce women's chances to develop their basic knowledge and skills in information technologies and to benefit from the opportunities they offer.

Consequently, he said, a large number of women in developing countries

are deprived from contributing more effectively to the economic and social development of their communities.

The Moroccan envoy warned that the digital divide is likely to become wider if no concrete and voluntary effort is urgently undertaken to facilitate and enhance the access of developing countries to information and communication technologies.

This should be, *inter alia*, through international assistance in the fields of training and technology transfer.

Without such a solidarity and strengthened international cooperation, new information and communication technologies will only perpetuate existing inequalities rather than contribute to development, he said.

Increased efforts in this respect should also lead to and encourage a genuine technology transfer to developing countries.

This is one of the main challenges to be taken up by the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) scheduled to take place in Geneva later this year.

It should be noted, he said, that the development of new information and communication technologies in recent years has unfortunately witnessed a certain measure of abuse that impacted adversely on women's image and dignity.

In this regard, the specific interests and concerns of women have to be duly kept in mind, in particular issues relating to violence against women and trafficking in women and girls.

The 23rd Special session of the General Assembly has reaffirmed the commitment of the international community to "create an enabling environment and design and implement policies that promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights-civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights, including the right to development- and fundamental free-

doms, as part of the efforts to achieve gender equality, development and peace."

With this commitment in mind, the Group of 77 and China hold the view that violence against women impairs their basic rights and fundamental freedoms and prevents them from enjoying fully those rights, he noted.

"Our group is of the view that, in spite of efforts made at national, regional and international levels to eliminate all forms of violence against women and its repercussions on development efforts, it is important that concerted, multidimensional and multisectoral approaches be adopted at all levels," he said. The UN's contribution towards this end is highly significant.

The Moroccan envoy described the trafficking in women and girls as one of the worst forms of violence against women. Such criminal practice, which benefits organized crime, has unfortunately increased in an alarming manner.

"Such a horrid and degrading phenomenon has widely taken advantage of the economic opportunities offered by globalization, as well as from technology and communication advances, especially the Internet", he added.

To face up to this problem, the Group of 77 and China believes that national legislations and policies should allow for a better protection of the rights of women and girls.

These measures should include the prevention and repression of trafficking in women and girls, the laying down of civil and criminal sanctions against the perpetrators of such crimes, and the creation of efficient support, training and reintegration programmes for victims of trafficking.

Additionally, the participation of civil society, in particular NGO's, in the efforts to fight trafficking in women and girls is very important.

IMPLEMENTING PLEDGES MADE AT UN CONFERENCES A BIG CHALLENGE

UNITED NATIONS, Feb. (G77/IPS) -- Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the delegate of Morocco told the 11th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) that the big challenge facing the international community is to ensure the effective implementation of the wide-ranging commitments made at some of the major international conferences since the Earth Summit in Rio in June 1992.

This is even more crucial considering the growing poverty worldwide and the increasing global environmental degradation.

In particular, he said, the commitments made at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg last year were of crucial importance.

The focus on implementation of the Johannesburg Plan of Action calls for a new adaptation of the CSD methods of work which should focus primarily on action-oriented rec-

ommendations while avoiding, whenever possible, conceptual discussions except when new and emerging issues arise, he said.

"We therefore believe that sufficient time for informal consultations prior to the substantive session of the CSD is highly recommended. These consultations, in our view, will pave the way towards a productive discussion on the program of work which we hope will lead to the effective implementation of the targets and goals commonly agreed upon at the Johannesburg Summit," he added.

The Moroccan delegate also said that the plan of implementation and the political declaration of the WSSD underlined the urgency to effectively implement Agenda 21, an environmental blueprint which was adopted in Rio in 1992, as well as the new and emerging issues of vital importance in the field of sustainable development.

G-77 SEEKS SUPPORT TO REMEDY NEGATIVE IMPACT OF GLOBALISATION

UNITED NATIONS, Feb (G77/IPS) - Speaking before the Commission for Social Development, Ambassador Mohammed Loulichki of Morocco said that in a world that is increasingly influenced by globalization, international cooperation proves to be more necessary than ever before to remedy the negative impacts of globalization on developing countries.

At the 1995 World Summit on Social Development in Copenhagen 1995, he said, the international community recognized the necessity to urgently enhance the situation of developing countries in vital areas such as education, literacy and the fight against poverty.

In the programme of action adopted at the Copenhagen Summit, the participants underlined the pressing need to reinforce international solidarity with developing countries, particularly African countries and Least Developed Countries (LDCs) so that they could benefit from globalization.

"We are the first to admit that Gov-

ernments' responsibility is essential in implementing social development policies and that any development strategies must be well designed, transparent and realistically implemented so as to be given every chance of success," he said.

At the same time, the Group of 77 and China reiterate the crucial importance of reinforcing cooperation with a view to achieving the goals of social development.

This reinforcement necessarily entails an increased, untied and important assistance by the international community in favour of the developing countries in order to achieve social development goals in general and to eliminate poverty in particular.

This cooperation also requires more significant financial and technical support in terms of sharing data on experiences and practices in the field of social development.

The Millennium Declaration recalled that all States should have sufficient basic capacities in order to achieve

social development goals.

He said that governments have a leading role to play as a primary entity responsible for setting up national frameworks in order to promote new ideas and creative partnerships.

Civil society and the private sector have, for their part, a specific responsibility to assume with a view to establishing creative partnerships focused on achieving the goals of social development.

"Nevertheless, these efforts will remain insufficient if they are not accompanied by substantial financial support allowing the developing countries to achieve the goals of social development", he warned.

"We would like to recall that the Heads of State and Government undertook in Copenhagen to "facilitate the flow to developing countries of international finance, technology and human skill in order to realize the objective of providing new additional resources that are both adequate and predictable".

G-77 REJECTS PROPOSAL TO CHARGE INTEREST ON ARREARS TO UN BUDGET

UNITED NATIONS, Mar (G77/IPS) - The Group of 77 has expressed strong reservations over a proposal to charge interest on arrears and late payments of assessed contributions to the UN budget.

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, the delegate of Morocco to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly said that the Group is of the view that such measures - although aimed at encouraging payment of arrears to the Organization - would impose an additional burden on developing countries already facing difficulties in meeting their financial obligations.

Additionally, she said, such measures would also undermine the full participation of increased number of member states in the activities of the Organization.

"Furthermore, the Group is of the view that if interest were to be imposed on arrears due to the Organization, one may argue that it could also be expected to pay interest on amounts due to Member States, many of which are developing countries," she added.

However, she said, the Group of 77 and China reaffirm the legal obligation of Member States to bear expenses of the Organization in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the requirements to pay their assessed contributions in full, in time and without conditions, while recognizing the need to extend sympathetic understanding to those Member States that are temporarily unable to meet their financial obligations because of genuine economic difficulties.

The Group would also like to reaffirm decisions contained in Resolution 57/4B regarding multi-year payments as a useful tool for reducing unpaid assessed contributions and a way to demonstrate a commitment to meeting financial obligations of Member States to the United Nations, while remaining voluntary and not automatically linked to other measures.

She also pointed out that other measures such as ineligibility of Member States in arrears, for election to certain committees, or the restriction of the access of those Member States to opportunities of recruitment and procurement, do not fall within the terms of reference of the Committee on Contributions and pose a variety of complex issues.

GENEVA CHAPTER CALLS FOR EXPORT DIVERSIFICATION

GENEVA, Feb (IPS) - Governments' support is needed to diversify exports in the developing world, which is highly dependent on commodities trade, say experts convened by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Public intervention is an essential part of any plan to tackle the commodity crisis in producing countries, said Jeremy Hobbs, Executive Director of Oxfam International, the UK-based non-governmental organisation dedicated to fighting poverty and injustice worldwide.

The same conclusion can be reached considering Peru as a case study, said the Peruvian representative in Geneva, Jorge Voto-Bernales. He noted that after a decade of economic liberalisation, his country remains dependent on external sales of its raw materials.

"It seems evident that active public policies are needed to promote the diversification of exports of developing countries", Voto-Bernales told the UNCTAD gathering.

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Krisana Chandraprabha of Thailand said that efforts must be made to promote export diversification, which would contribute towards reducing the economic vulnerability of commodity-dependent developing countries.

"Commodities trade is the dominant economic activity of the developing South, particularly for the Least Developed Countries (LDCs)", stressed Samuel Amehou, delegate from Benin, speaking on behalf of the 49 nations that the UN has designated LDCs.

The figures Amehou cited show that commodities represent 70 percent of the LDCs' exports, and in some cases surpass 98 percent of total export revenues.

And only an average 7.8 percent of commodities undergo a value-added process prior to export, said

the LDCs spokesman. Amehou called on the international community to create solutions to this imbalance through rules, principles and mechanisms that take into account the needs of developing countries and of LDCs in particular.

Germany's representative in Geneva, Walter Lewalter, took a more cautious stance, warning against the artificial distortions that can arise from governments' intervention.

The advantages of the multilateral trading system should be made use of, he added. Representatives from UNCTAD, a body with representation from the wealthy countries of the North and of the developing South alike, issued a statement that governments should act at critical junctures to facilitate the conduct of business.

The UNCTAD document clarifies that diversification of the commodity sector should not be construed as an attempt to produce and export a diversified set of products and services at any cost. The goal is to make the commodity sector a positive factor in generating a virtuous circle of development, says UNCTAD.

In the past, countries like the United States, Canada and Australia followed strategies like this, and more recently countries of Southeast Asia and Latin America have taken similar steps, according to the text.

But UNCTAD recognises that international trading rules are much less accommodating now than they were earlier for the implementation of supportive policies by governments.

One of the recurring examples in the debate was the crisis affecting coffee-exporting countries, which have seen global revenues plunge from 13 billion to seven billion dollars in the last three years, despite the increased volume of coffee exports.

Germany's Lewalter noted that the World Bank likely played a role in the disruption of the international coffee market. The Bank financially stimu-

lated the rapid expansion of the crop in Vietnam, which may have contributed to supply-versus-demand imbalances, he said.

Oxfam director Hobbs agreed, saying, that the coffee-market failure is also, in part, a result of stunning policy failure by international institutions.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank have encouraged developing countries to liberalise trade and pursue export-led growth in their areas of 'comparative advantage', he said.

But for many poor countries that advantage can be very slim, said Hobbs, pointing to the flood of coffee and other farm commodities onto global markets.

Most of the speakers at the UNCTAD meeting attributed the difficulties confronting commodity-exporting countries to the market distortions caused by the heavily subsidised agricultural commodities in industrialised countries.

UNCTAD Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero commented that state aid for cotton production in Spain reaches 75.9 cents on the dollar per pound (0.453 kg) of that product.

In Greece it is 59.4 cents and in the United States 23.5 cents on the dollar per pound of cotton produced. In contrast, Cote D'Ivoire subsidises its cotton-growers with just 2.2 cents on the dollar per pound, Mali 2.5 cents, and Brazil and Turkey three cents on the dollar per pound of cotton.

According to Oxfam, the solution to the problems confronting commodity exporters lies in requiring big subsidisers like the United States and the European Union to commit to a drastic reduction in trade subsidies.

Hobbs urged the creation of diversification programmes with adequate levels of funding and the adoption of international regulations for the commodities markets.

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