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MOROCCO TO HOST HIGH-LEVEL CONFERENCE ON SOUTH-SOUTH COOPERATION

UNITED NATIONS, Nov (G77/IPS) -- The government of Morocco will host a high-level conference on South-South cooperation in Marrakesh, December 15-19.

The Conference will provide an opportunity for high officials representing countries from the three regions of the developing world to decide on new guidelines for strengthening cooperation among developing countries in the economic and social areas.

The meeting will be preceded by a forum of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the private sector which is scheduled to take place on December 15.

Additionally, there will be several events on the margins of the conference. These events will demonstrate South-South cooperation on fields such as information and communications technology.

The Conference will be open to participation by representatives of developed countries, civil society, the private sector, regional and international organisations and regional and interregional development banks.

Since the 1970s, the countries of the South, at the initiative of the Group of 77, have adopted a number of plans and programmes of action on economic and technical cooperation among developing countries. Some aspects of these plans and programmes of actions have been implemented, while a great many others have not been followed up.

The Marrakesh Conference is a follow-up to a decision taken by the South Summit held in Havana in April 2000.

The Havana meeting decided to convene a high-level conference on South-South cooperation in 2003 with a view to identifying ways and means of strengthening and expanding cooperation among developing countries.

The Marrakesh Conference will be called upon to take stock of cooperation among developing countries over the

past 25 years following the 1978 Buenos Aires Conference on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

The Conference will highlight the changes that have occurred since then both at the international level and within developing countries themselves.

In the light of these changes, the high officials are expected to review South-South cooperation in a world

characterised by the accelerated globalization, liberalised trade and interdependent national economies.

Through the preparatory process established in April 2003 in New York, the Group of 77 has identified a number of sectors and areas where specific initiatives could be undertaken-- namely, trade and investment, food and agriculture, health and education, information and communication technology-- while at the same time coordinating positions on the global issues on the international agenda.

The Marrakesh Conference will provide an opportunity to explore possibilities for exchanges among developing countries of resources, expertise and experience in the areas identified, among others.

The sectors and areas identified for specific action to be undertaken by the Marrakesh Conference include regional integration, trade and investment, food and agriculture, water, health and education and information and communication technology.

Additionally, the meeting will also focus on vulnerable groups in developing countries, South-South and North-South cooperation, triangular cooperation and the role of pivotal countries.

A web page has been launched about the Conference which can be accessed at <http://www.g77.org/marrakech/>.



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EDITORIAL



As decided by the Group of 77 early this year, the City of Marrakech in the Kingdom of Morocco will be hosting the first ever G-77 High-level Conference on South-South Cooperation from December 15-19, 2003.

This important meeting takes place at a historical juncture providing a unique opportunity for developing countries to create a new vision for the future.

The process of globalisation continues to effect fundamental transformation of the international economic system posing increased challenges to the developing countries in a number of different areas of the world.

This would require renewed emphasis on South-South cooperation as a key element in forging a new agenda for the South and a new vision for technical cooperation.

The Havana Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the South Summit held in Cuba in 2000 have paid particular attention to South-South cooperation as an effective instrument for optimizing the potential to promote development through, among others, mobilizing and sharing of existing resources and expertise in our countries, as well as complementing cooperation with developed countries.

As the international development community is striving to find more effective ways of strengthening development in the new century, South-South cooperation, especially triangular cooperation, can provide many useful answers to such fundamental issues as aid effectiveness, ownership, partnership, commitment, aid impact and sustainability.

In this context, triangular cooperation enhances the ownership and lowers the costs of development programmes and strengthens partnership among developing countries, on the one hand, and among developing and developed countries on the other.

Therefore, the new vision in Marrakech should place its focus on triangular cooperation and related innovative approaches, while promoting a leading role for pivotal countries in supporting and strengthening South-South cooperation.

Today, most of technical cooperation initiatives among developing countries occur within the framework of regional integration efforts. Regional cooperation and integration provides the most meaningful approach and effective conduit for the South to face the challenges of globalisation.

In this context, cooperation among regional groupings should be encouraged and technical cooperation should help bridge sub-regional and regional groupings in enhancing South-South cooperation.

That is why our leaders at the Havana South Summit called for mobilising and harnessing the available resources of the developing countries in support of South-South cooperation. That is also why the Monterrey consensus urged the international development community to intensify efforts to support such cooperation.

I am confident that the Marrakech Conference will formulate an action-oriented platform towards the strengthening of South-South cooperation. The Conference is also a precursor to the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the Group of 77 which falls in June 2004.

MOHAMED BENNOUNA

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

FOREIGN MINISTER STRESSES URGENT NEED TO CHANGE MACROECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

UNITED NATIONS, September (G77/IPS) -- Addressing the 27th annual ministerial meeting of the Group of 77, the Foreign Minister of Morocco Mohammed Benaissa said there is an urgent need to create an appropriate international macroeconomic environment in favor of rural development and poverty eradication.

The attainment of such a goal requires the establishment of mechanisms in favor of rural development, financing and market access for products originating from developing countries through, particularly, the elimination of tariff and non-tariff barriers, he said.

Furthermore, there is also a need for the reduction of export subsidies of agricultural products and the setting of appropriate mechanisms in order to alleviate the negative impact of the decline and fluctuations of commodity prices on the incomes of developing countries.

Addressing the Ministerial Meeting, the minister warned that external debt constitutes a heavy burden for the economies of developing countries, and therefore called for an urgent and adequate treatment with a view to freeing financial resources which can be devoted to the reinforcement of rural development policies and the fight against poverty.

Furthermore, during meetings devoted to operational activities, coordination and humanitarian assistance, as well as the general debate, the Group of 77 actively contributed to the adoption of several resolutions on issues of major interest to developing countries.

With regard to the operational activities, he said, "we have reaffirmed that the regular resources constitute the core of UN operational activities and are essential in maintaining the multilateral, neutral and universal aspect of the United Nations development system".

He said the Group of 77 and China have noticed with concern the stagnation-- if not the decrease-- of regular resources allocated to operational activities.

"We have called upon donor countries to increase their contributions in a substantial and predictable manner to the core budgets of the United Nations organs and emphasized that national authorities should participate in the assessment of the operational activities on the field".

The minister said that it was a matter of priority for the Group to strive to uphold the legitimate claims of developing

countries and lead the entire international community in its attempts to ensure that commitments to economic and social development are honoured.

"To this end, our Group took the initiative of setting up an ad hoc Committee to review the ways and means to ensure an integrated and coordinated follow-up of the recommendations of the Conferences and Summits held under the auspices of the United Nations in the economic and social fields", he added.

He said the adoption of resolution 57/270 B was a crucial landmark in the achievement of the internationally-agreed goals.

First of all, the decision to organise a Summit on development in 2005 in order to assess the progress made and the constraints encountered in the implementation of Millennium Development Goals.

This Summit will constitute an opportunity to access the

actions undertaken in order to translate into reality the commitments of the international community in favor of development, particularly, those pertaining to financing for development, international trade and sustainable development in the context of globalization and interdependence.

The minister welcomed the recent announcement by the President of the United States of America to grant a contribution of 15 billion Dollars over five years to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

The Group also seized the occasion of the 11th Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to reaffirm that the Rio Declaration, the Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of implementation, constitute an indivisible whole of commitments which should define the frame of the work of the Commission and its future orientations.

"We have also emphasized that if poverty eradication is considered today as an indispensable requirement for the achievement of sustainable development goals, the Commission has to pay special attention to the situation of Africa, LDCs and Small Island Developing States".

With regard to the crucial issue of financing for development, the Group has emphasized the importance of implementing the Monterrey-Consensus recommendations in a manner to achieve maximal mobilization of national financial resources and international financial flows in favor of the development process, he concluded.



Foreign Minister Mohammed Benaissa addresses the 27th Annual Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77 at the United Nations in New York.

RICH NATIONS SHOULD HELP MEET MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS, SAYS ANNAN

UNITED NATIONS, September (G77/IPS)--Addressing the annual ministerial meeting of the Group of 77, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan warned that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) can only be reached by joint resolve and action.

"Developed countries will need to be just as determined in meeting their commitments in the areas of trade, aid and debt relief, as developing countries must be in making effective use of the resources they devote to development," he said.

Many of the statements by world leaders in the General Assembly expressed the need for stronger international solidarity, greater respect for collective decisions, and greater determination to put them into effect.

"It may be hard to imagine making such gains any time soon, after the setback in Cancun. The inability to reach agreement there has led to widespread concern, particularly among developing countries, that the imbalances and inequities in the global trading system show little sign of being eliminated or even eased," he said.

At the same time, even if the result at Cancun was unsatisfactory, there are reasons to hope that progress is still achievable, Annan added.

First, the agreement in August on inexpensive generic drugs to treat AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases

was an important step forward.

Second, developing countries showed real strength in defending their interests, acting effectively in concert, notably on the issue of agricultural protection and subsidies.

And third, there was movement on some of the most contentious issues, including agriculture, although this was not reflected in the outcome at Cancun.

"I hope there will be no backtracking once negotiations resume. And that is precisely where our efforts should now be focused: on getting the negotiations back on track".

The Group of 77, he said, can play a key role. "I hope the talks will be seen by everyone not just as a narrow exercise in mutual concessions, but rather as a wider, universal effort to ensure that the impediments to development in the present international trading arrangements are removed. That is in everyone's interests. And the Doha development agenda remains valid".

Developing countries, for their part, have to redouble their own commitment to the MDGs, by investing in basic health care and education, nutrition, water, sanitation and infrastructure and by increasing agricultural productivity.

"And international institutions, including the United Nations, must continue to adapt themselves so that our efforts are fully behind the Goals," he added.



Seated at the podium (from left to right): Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of UNDP; Mr. Kofi Annan, Secretary-General of the UN; H.E. Mr. Mohammed Benaissa, Foreign Minister of Morocco; H.E. Mr. Mohamed Bennouna, Permanent Representative of Morocco to the UN and Chairman of the Group of 77 in New York; and Mr. Mourad Ahmia, Executive Secretary of the Group of 77.

FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT CRUCIAL FOR DEVELOPING NATIONS

UNITED NATIONS, October (G77/IPS) -- Pointing out that financing for development was one of the crucial issues that directly impacts on development, the Chairman of the Group of 77 Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna of Morocco said it was distressing to note that financial flows to developing nations have been reversed.

"We have witnessed during the recent years a worsening of the negative financial flow that reached, according to the Secretary General's estimates, more than 192 billion dollars in 2002," he said.

On the other hand, investments were mainly concentrated in a very limited number of countries. The majority of developing countries did not receive an appropriate share of the investments, equivalent to the capital outflows, he added.

Improving the regulatory framework alone will not lead to capital inflow if it is not accompanied by more dynamic measures, involving source and destination countries, in order to build partnerships at private, public and multi-lateral levels, as recommended by the Monterrey Consensus, the Chairman said.

Ambassador Bennouna underscored the necessity of preserving and reinforcing the Monterrey Consensus through a process of follow-up and gradual implementation of its recommendations.

By defining the main areas of action, the Monterrey Consensus has clearly established the mechanisms conducive to a favourable concerted and efficient financing of development through a global mechanism involving all the concerned parties: namely governments, multilateral organisations, the private sector and NGOs.

The developing countries have endorsed the validity of the recommendation included in the Monterrey Consensus that recognises that each and every country is primarily responsible for its own economic and social development.

In this framework, and well before the adoption by the international community of the Monterrey Consensus, the developing countries have undertaken bold economic and social reforms aiming at creating favourable macro-economic conditions, promoting an environment conducive to business, private and public investments, and at improving monetary and fiscal policies, he said.

But this willingness to reform should be accompanied and supported by the developing countries' partners.

He pointed out that most developing countries were facing new challenges, including climatic changes, natural disasters and the prevalence of devastating pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and malaria.

The report of the Secretary General on the progress achieved in the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus shows that despite an unfavourable international context, the developing countries have accelerated the reform process.

The Secretary General's assessment also indicates that the commitment of the countries of the South did not benefit from the expected international support. The donor countries and the regional and international financial institutions did not fulfil their respective commitments, the Chairman said.

"We consider today that the volume of Official Development Assistance (ODA) is insufficient to allow for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals," he said.

The flow of ODA increased in real terms by a mere 5% in 2002 compared to the previous year, and did not reach more than 57 billion dollars, which represents only 0.23 % of GDP. These figures are far below the needs of the developing countries in general and the least developed countries (LDCs) in particular.

In parallel, the economies of the developing countries continue to suffer from the debt burden, which prevents them from achieving their economic take-off.

It is widely agreed that a genuine economic take-off cannot take place without giving special attention to the issue of debt in a way that leads to debt relief and its cancellation in the case of the LDCs.

"Such a treatment of the debt issue will give the concerned countries the opportunity to optimise the use of their financial resources in enhancing their economic and social policies so as to attain growth and sustainable development and achieve the Millennium Development Goals," the Chairman added.

"And international institutions, including the United Nations, must continue to adapt themselves so that our efforts are fully behind the Goals," he concluded.

“The volume of official development assistance (ODA) is insufficient to allow for the achievement of the Millennium development goals. The flow of ODA increased in real terms by a mere 5% in 2002 compared to the previous year, and did not reach more than 57 billion dollars, which represents only 0.23 % of GDP.”

LACK OF RESOURCES HINDER IMPLEMENTATION OF NEPAD

UNITED NATIONS, Oct (G77/IPS) -- The Chairman of the Group of 77 has warned that a shortage of funds is threatening to hinder the successful implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD).

"We share the Secretary-General's view that the main challenge encountered so far by the African countries with regard to implementation lies in the lack of resources," Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna of Morocco told a plenary meeting of the General Assembly.

He said that the mobilization of national resources is not sufficient to ensure an adequate financing of economic and social development programs. "International support remains essential for the success of NEPAD", he added.

Last year, the General Assembly adopted a Declaration, which called on the international community and the United Nations System to support the implementation of NEPAD.

"The developed countries should help Africa by respecting and implementing their commitments undertaken in various United Nations Conferences and Summits," he said.

Ambassador Bennouna specifically called for measures to achieve the objectives set up by the United Nations with regard to Official Development Assistance (ODA); to resolve the foreign debt crisis; to open their markets to these countries exports; to promote and facilitate investment in Africa; and to support the African countries in their efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

The Group of 77 express its total and unconditional support to NEPAD, to its implementation and to the achievement of its objectives, he added.

The implementation of NEPAD also depends on the political will of each African country, particularly its national development strategies. Its success also depends on the ability of each Government to mobilize all the national capacities and all the stakeholders for the realization of NEPAD objectives.

The Chairman also thanked the Secretary-General for his exhaustive report on the progress made in the implementation of NEPAD and the support brought by the international community to this development program.

The Group of 77 is pleased to see this debate covering all the issues relating to the development of Africa.

"This approach is consistent with spirit of NEPAD, a comprehensive programme for economic and political development of the African continent and a framework for

co-operation and partnership with Africa's friends," he noted.

The report of the Secretary-General stresses the follow-up measures and decisions taken at the national level as well as the institutional mechanisms set up at the regional level.

The establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), for monitoring and assessment, constitutes a significant step made by the African countries for assessing their political and economic performances and reflects their determination to ensure their own development.

This mechanism will enable them to monitor the process of implementation and the achievement of the objectives of NEPAD. Four countries will start this mechanism by the end of this year.

Moreover, Africa has intensified its efforts to consolidate democracy and strengthen regional mechanism for conflict prevention, resolution and management, the Chairman said.

Similar efforts were made for the establishment of Panafrican Parliament and National Focal Points for NEPAD as well as initiatives, at the sub-regional level in various fields: infrastructures, agriculture, health, education etc.

As the report of the Secretary-General underlines, there has been a slight increase in the level of ODA intended for Africa, rising from \$16 billion in

2000 to \$18 billion in 2002.

"We are satisfied with the fact that this increase was accompanied by measures taken by certain donor countries aiming at lifting conditionality on ODA, thus giving more flexibility to the recipient countries," Ambassador Bennouna said.

The Group of 77 welcomes this positive trend and encourages donor countries to continue their efforts to achieve the goals agreed upon with regard to ODA.

In spite of the measures taken with regard to the Highly Indebted Poor Countries, however, "we are still far from resolving the problems encountered by these countries to take benefit of this initiative".

These problems range from tardiness in the payment of the contributions announced to the HIPC fiduciary funds, to the impact of international economic environment and of the economic and financial policies of the developed countries on the macroeconomic reform undertaken by these countries.

Such difficulties have delayed many countries in moving from the decision point to the "completion point".

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“The developed countries should help Africa by respecting and implementing their commitments undertaken in various United Nations Conferences and Summits.”

The developed countries have to redouble efforts to overcome these difficulties and to allow the African countries invest their financial resources in sectors generating employment, the Chairman added.

The increase of ODA and debt relief cannot allow the African countries to ensure a sustainable development and achieve the NEPAD objectives and those of the Millennium Declaration, if the developed countries maintain their protectionist practices.

The loss in export income of the African countries due to the agricultural subsidies and the non tariff obstacles-- in addition to the volatility of the prices of the basic commodities-- continue to have devastating impact on the efforts undertaken and plans for the development of the

African countries.

The role of the United Nations remains more than ever crucial in generating adequate international support to NEPAD. Without international solidarity, Africa would not be able to reach the objectives of NEPAD and the wellbeing of its populations, he said.

The creation of the Office of the Special Adviser of the Secretary General for Africa is a source of satisfaction for the Group of 77.

"We call all nations to supply this office with the necessary financial and human resources, to accomplish its mandate. We welcome, also, the initiatives of the different organisms of the United Nations system to support NEPAD," he added.

GROUP COMMENDS RESULTS-BASED BUDGETING

UNITED NATIONS, October (G77/IPS) -- Addressing the Fifth Committee, the chairman of the Group of 77 Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna of Morocco said that the proposed new programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 constitutes one of the items that requires careful and thorough consideration.

The Group welcomes the timely submission of the budget and commends the Secretary-General for the efforts made towards the implementation of a results-based approach in the presentation of the budget, he added.

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, he said that the Group wants to state its believe that Results-Based Budgeting (RBB) system should contribute to ensuring the effective and efficient implementation of all mandated programmes and activities, and that it should be implemented in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

"We also believe that RBB is not an end in itself, and that it should be implemented in a gradual and incremental manner, bearing in mind the intergovernmental, multilateral and international character of the United Nations".

Additionally, he said the Group believes that the formulation and application of the logical framework of RBB, in particular indicators of achievement, should also take into account the unique character of the United Nations.

He said the Group notes that the programme budget proposal has been significantly shortened and presented in a more strategic format.

"We wish to recall that the General Assembly was receptive to the proposal for a shorter format, on the understanding that the budget proposal should continue to fully justify resource requirements and better reflect the

priorities set out in the Medium-Term Plan, the Millennium Declaration, and the outcomes of major international conferences," he added.

Ambassador Bennouna also cautioned that it was imperative to ensure that Member States continue to receive adequate information that fully justifies resource requirements, in the main part of the budget document, including the impact thereof on the implementation of programmes, in order to enable Member States to take well-informed decisions.

The Group, he said, wishes to reaffirm, and welcomes the assurance by the Secretary-General, that the allocation of resources within the proposed programme budget fully reflects the priorities set out in the Medium-Term Plan for the period 2002-2005, the Millennium Declaration and the outcomes of the major international conferences, in accordance with resolution 57/300.

The Group of 77 also attaches importance to the meetings and conferences that will be held during the next biennium, inter alia, the International Meeting to Review the Barbados Programme of Action on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to be held in Mauritius in 2004; the Special Session of the General Assembly on Population and Development; the Eleventh Session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; and the Strategic Revision of the Yokohama Conference on International Disaster Reduction.

"It is also crucial that, on his part, the Secretary-General should continue to ensure that the resources put at the disposal of the Organization are utilized for the purposes for which they are approved, and in a cost-effective, transparent and accountable way. Our Group remains ready to examine these aspects in the consideration of this budget proposal", he added.

AFRICA FACES ROADBLOCKS IN MEETING UN MILLENNIUM GOALS

UNITED NATIONS, Oct (G77/IPS) -- The Group of 77 has expressed serious concern about the ability of the African continent to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) set by the General Assembly in the year 2000.

One of the primary goals is to reduce poverty-- those living on less than a dollar a day-- by half by the year 2015.

"The number of people living in extreme poverty is expected to decrease in all regions of the world except in Africa where the expected population increase will not help control the spread of poverty and therefore hinder the efforts towards the attainment of sustainable development," the Chairman of the Group of 77, Ambassador Mohamed Bennouna of Morocco, told the plenary of the General Assembly.

The attainment of sustainable development is a process, which depends on a number of factors, particularly the reinforcement of financing for development (through, debt relief and ODA increase), as well as the success of trade negotiations currently undertaken under the auspices of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

But new and complex threats have emerged thereby endangering the good atmosphere of international cooperation and consensus which remains indispensable for the attainment of durable peace and development.

"Restoring the atmosphere of international cooperation and consensus remains, in our view, the main objective, which should guide our collective multilateral action in order to preserve and reinforce the credibility of our universal Organization," the Chairman said.

Ambassador Bennouna also said that the G77 shares the Secretary General's view that a reinforced, balanced and equitable international trade is one of the means to assist the developed countries, particularly the least developed countries (LDCs), to eradicate poverty and famine and to achieve the Millennium Goals.

The Doha Declaration underscored the importance of putting the issue of development and the interests of the poor at the center of trade negotiations. Unfortunately, the subsequent discussions within the WTO did not succeed to ensure a concrete follow-up to this Declaration, he noted.

"The failure of Cancun negotiations should encourage us to intensify our efforts to attain, in a near future, satisfactory results in order to restore confidence and give a positive signal to world economy," he said.

The High-level Dialogue on Financing for Development, as a global follow-up and coordination mechanism, should allow, in the long term, for a coherent consideration of the implementation of the commitments made at the Monterrey Conference in order to evaluate the progress achieved.

He also underscored the efforts undertaken by the UN system to improve access to food and medical treatment and encourage the reinforcement of an international cooperation supported by the multilateral and bilateral donors in order to help developing countries elaborate, adjust and strengthen their respective food security and agricultural development pertinent to national strategies.

The endorsement by UN Institutions of a strategy aimed at achieving the Millennium Development Goals is a commitment, which will contribute, without any doubt, to the attainment of national priorities of developing countries.

The Chairman also pointed out that Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Action-- both of which constitute a repertoire of commitments in the domain of sustainable development-- require practical measures for their implementation.

"We would like to recall in this regard, that the 11th session of the Commission on Sustainable Development has succeeded in establishing a multi-year program of work (2004-2017) which will preserve the momentum generated by Johannesburg World Summit," he added.

By adopting the multi-year programme of work, the international community currently has at its disposal a road map for the attainment of sustainable development goals.

"We hope that the launching of the multi-year programme of work through the examination of these issues be crowned with success and inspire confidence and demonstrate a real willingness to materialize the objectives of sustainable development," he said.

He also said that reform is another decisive step towards restoring confidence in the UN system. "We are convinced that reforming the multilateral institutions turns out to be more than ever necessary in order to enable our Organization tackle, with efficiency, the challenges our world is facing," he said.

In June 2003, the General Assembly adopted a resolution on the integrated and coordinated follow-up to major UN Conferences and Summits in which it reaffirmed the willingness and determination to implement and respect the commitments made, and to place the achievement of the development goals set forth by the UN at the center of the cooperation and development policies.

Therefore, and in anticipation of the 2005 Summit, it is incumbent on all member States and UN organs to translate the provisions of this resolution into reality.

The 2005 summit, he said, will constitute an opportunity to evaluate progress made at the global level in the implementation of the multiple international commitments and to examine ways and means, which will lead to the attainment of development goals within the set time limit.

FIGHT AGAINST POVERTY HINDERED BY ECONOMIC INEQUITIES

UNITED NATIONS, Oct (G77/IPS) -- If poverty eradication efforts are to be effective, it is imperative that developing countries be integrated into the world economy and share equitably in the benefits of globalisation, Hassan Aboutahir, Deputy Permanent Representative of Morocco, told the Second Committee.

Urging that poverty eradication be at the centre of the United Nations System, he said: "We believe that the World Solidarity Fund is one of the tools that could contribute to the achievement of the objective of poverty eradication. Therefore, its operationalization is crucial and matter of urgency".

The first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006) has to contribute to achieving the targets of halving, by 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

The targets also seek to reduce the number of people who suffer from hunger-- primarily through decisive national action and strengthened international cooperation.

"We have noted with great concern that the progress is mixed and uneven at national and regional levels", Mr Aboutahir said.

He pointed out that the number of people living in extreme poverty is expected to decrease in all regions of the world except in Africa where the expected population increase will not help control the spread of poverty and therefore hinder the efforts towards the attainment of sustainable development.

The fight against poverty has also been slowed down by the devastating effect of the human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic on human development, and declining economic growth-- particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

"We should keep in mind the multidimensional nature of poverty to which special attention should be given within the context of overall action for the eradication of poverty. Eradicating poverty is the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development in developing countries," he noted.

The problem of poverty and hunger has more than economic and social dimensions. The deep fault line that divides human society between the rich and the poor and the ever-increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds pose a major threat to global prosperity, security and stability, he added.

The attainment of sustainable development, eradication of poverty and hunger is a process, which depends on a number of factors; particularly the reinforcement of financing for development (through, debt relief and ODA increase) as well as market access for products of export interest to developing countries.

The continuing debt and debt-servicing problems of the heavily indebted poor developing countries and of the low-income developing countries continue to constitute an element that adversely affects their sustainable development efforts and harm their social programmes and national poverty eradication strategies, he said.

The stagnation of the ODA flows, necessary to assist national efforts to eradicate poverty, is another source of concern.

"We noted the recent increase of ODA and hope that this trend will be confirmed in the near future," he said.

"The need for the empowerment of women and sectoral strategies-- in such areas as education, development of human resources, health, rural development, productive employment, access to water and sanitation and food-- are crucial if we are to achieve poverty eradication goal".

"We noted with great interest the draft programme of action for the observance of the international Year of Microcredit, 2005. We encourage the Secretariat to continue these ef-

forts towards the objectives set in the report of the Secretary General," he said.

The primary objective of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is the eradication of poverty and promotion of sustainable development.

"We call on the developed countries and the United Nations system to support the Partnership and complement the efforts undertaken by Africa to overcome the challenges it faces and reduce poverty".

The goal of halving the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day by 2015 will not be achieved without serious efforts to address the development needs of the least developed countries (LDCs) and to support their efforts to improve the lives of their people.

"The development partners should honor their commitments contained in the Brussels Declaration and the Programme of Action if we are to contribute to the eradication of poverty in this vulnerable group of countries", he concluded.

"The deep fault line that divides human society between the rich and the poor and the ever-increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds pose a major threat to global prosperity, security and stability."

MARINE RESOURCES CONTINUE TO BE OVEREXPLOITED

NEW YORK, Nov (G77/IPS) -- Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Mr. Karim Medrek of the Permanent Mission of Morocco, said the Group remains concerned about the growing deterioration of the marine environment and the overexploitation of living marine resources.

"With respect to protection of the marine environment, it is clearly urgent today to put an end to the degradation of the marine environment from land-based activities and from ships," he said.

This phenomenon is detrimental to human health, to combating poverty, to food security and to industry.

Speaking on the agenda item titled 'Oceans and the Law of the Sea', he told the General Assembly that the entry into force nine years ago of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea represented a decisive milestone in the establishment of a comprehensive international legal framework governing the oceans.

The Group of 77 has been involved from the beginning in the codification of the law of the sea, fully aware of the unique nature of the marine environment which lends itself to the global and integrated approach of the Convention.

"We note with satisfaction that the institutions established under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea are functioning well. I am referring to the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, the International seabed Authority and the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf".

The Group of 77 has expressed support for the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities.

With regard to pollution from ships, the accident of the Prestige focused attention on the important role played by the International Maritime Organization in elaborating international rules and regulations to prevent pollution of the marine environment from ships.

The Group of 77 associates itself to this normative effort to prevent that such disaster does not recur, he added.

He also warned that marine biological diversity is being threatened by a variety of human activities. The effective protection and sustainable exploitation of the marine and coastal biological diversity must henceforth be a matter of urgency for the States and international organizations concerned.

"In accordance with the Plan of Implementation of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, the Group of 77 urges the international community to adopt every measure necessary to maintain or restore stocks at the level needed to obtain a constant maximum yield by the year 2015 at the latest," he said.

The Group of 77 is of the opinion that international coordination and cooperation are still a prerequisite for the effective management of the oceans and seas.

"Within the context of the United Nations, we believe in the importance of establishing machinery for notification and evaluation of the state of the marine environment," he noted.

With the assistance of all organizations and agencies concerned, such machinery will provide a solid scientific basis for States and regional organizations to take decisions on questions concerning the oceans.

BENEFITS AND COSTS OF GLOBALISATION NOT EVENLY DISTRIBUTED

UNITED NATIONS, Nov (G77/IPS) -- Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, Mr. Hassan Aboutahir, Deputy Permanent Representative of Morocco, told the Second Committee that globalisation has added a new dimension to challenges facing developing countries.

The rapid integration of markets, mobility of capital and significant increases in investment flows around the world have opened new challenges and new opportunities, he added.

But he warned that the benefit and costs of globalisation are unevenly distributed, with developing countries facing social difficulties in meeting this challenge.

External factors have become critical in determining the success or failure of developing countries in their national efforts.

He also warned that the gap between developed and developing countries points to the continued need for a dynamic and enabling international economic environment supportive of development and effective participation of developing countries in global decision-making.

The continued weakness of many commodity-dependent developing countries will continue to impede development and growth in these countries and thwart them from meeting the Millennium Development Goals.

While fundamental aspects of globalisation are irreversible under information society revolution and increasing integration of markets, he argued, there is a growing recognition that trade liberalisation does not have yet auto-

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matically and universally beneficial social and economic effects.

The Deputy Permanent Representative also warned that the debt burden has not been yet resolved nor has Official Development Assistance (ODA) reached its internationally set objectives. Additionally, commodity problems have not been given international attention they deserve.

Moreover, commitments made at UN Conferences and Summits held in the economic and social fields have not been implemented yet.

"That is a sad reality that reveals a huge gap between what is promised and what is actually fulfilled in many areas".

"We note with concern that international economic environment, markedly characterised by cyclical financial crises, external debt problems, decrease in ODA, instability of commodity market and continued decrease in their prices, uncertainty of the MTS and disparities in FDI flows and

income distribution worldwide, could only be much less conducive to development than before," he added.

A better management of globalisation will contribute to mitigate the negative consequences of globalization and interdependence for all developing countries. The need to address those imbalances and asymmetries in international finance, trade, technology and investment patterns that have a negative impact on development prospects for developing countries, with a view to minimizing such impacts, he added.

A large number of developing countries have not yet been able to reap the full benefits of the existing multilateral trading system.

"In this regard, we reiterate the importance of promoting the integration of developing countries into the world economy so as to enable them to take the fullest possible advantage of the trading opportunities arising from globalization and liberalization," he said.

REFORM OF INFORMATION SECTOR CRUCIAL TO STRENGTHEN UN SYSTEM

UNITED NATIONS, Oct (G77/IPS)-- Addressing the Fourth Committee, Mrs. Souad El Alaoui of the Permanent Mission of Morocco, said the ongoing reform of the Department of Public Information (DPI) is a crucial and necessary step towards strengthening the UN system.

The DPI, as the public voice of the U.N., should ensure a wider communication of the UN activities, thus leading to the establishment of a real interactive dialogue with the different actors in the world society.

She said that the restructuring of the DPI and its new operating model should aim at making information a real stimulus of reactions on the part of the world populations to UN decisions.

This also helps ensure the active participation and involvement of every single actor in world society in carrying out these decisions.

The effectiveness of the new DPI should be evaluated on the basis of how much response to the UN decisions the information stimulus will generate.

Speaking on behalf of the G-77 and China, she said the challenge ahead for the new DPI is not only to ensure a wider outreach of the communication strategies but also their contribution in the concretization of UN goals and objectives.

The Secretary-General underlined in his report that "at the core of the renewed Department of Public Information is the new mission statement: "The Department of Public Information's mission is to help fulfill the substantive purposes of the United Nations by strategically communicating the activities and concerns of the Organization to achieve the greatest public impact".

The DPI's new mission statement should therefore be viewed as a new reinforced and action-oriented strategy of

communication, which should be guided by the priorities already fixed by the intergovernmental processes-- in particular the United Nations Millennium Declaration, she said.

"It should be recalled in this context that the latter has recognized that poverty eradication remains the greatest challenge facing the world community today."

Therefore, the contribution of the DPI in building an effective global strategy of partnership for a real and effective sustainable development is of paramount importance.

The African Continent remains the mostly affected by the scourge of poverty, famine, deadly diseases and armed conflicts.

While welcoming the range of activities undertaken by the DPI to enhance the UN activities in support of the sustainable development of Africa, she said, the DPI new strategy of communication should contribute to ensure a significant and concrete response on the part of all actors to the special needs of the African populations.

A long-term action-oriented strategy of communication is critically needed to ensure the DPI's involvement on a regular basis in the international community's joint efforts to alleviate the suffering of millions of people in this Continent.

The tragic evolution of the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories calls for a reinforced and permanent outreach strategy of communication with the aim to stimulate strong action on the part of the international community to put on track the peace process and to end the long lasting suffering of the Palestinian people.

Dialogue among civilizations is more than ever a theme, which necessitates special attention within the frame of the DPI's strategy of communication, she concluded.

POVERTY AND HUNGER CONTINUE TO AFFLICT MILLIONS OF PEOPLE

UNITED NATIONS, October (G77/IPS) -- Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, Mohammed Arrouchi of the Permanent Mission of Morocco, told the Second Committee that while the international community has at its disposal a solid and comprehensive repertoire of commitments for the attainment of sustainability, it is highly regrettable to witness nowadays that poverty and hunger still afflict more than a billion of people.

Despite these commitments, he said, there were several negative trends in the developing world.

Climate change is destabilizing many nations; millions of children continue to die due to lack access to clean drinking water and adequate sanitation; deadly diseases continue to take millions of lives; and the gap between the poor and the rich continues to widen while unsustainable patterns of production and consumption persist.

To confront this challenge, the General Assembly adopted resolution A/Res/57/253 singling out sustainable development as a key element to the overarching framework for U.N. activities, in particular for achieving the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the U.N. Millennium Declaration, and to give overall political direction to the implementation of Agenda 21.

But these objectives can only be translated into reality if accompanied with a real political will to engage enthusiastically in a durable and accountable process of implementation through the provision of adequate and reliable means of implementation, he said.

"We would like to reiterate that while the primary focus of implementation remains at the national level, it should be recalled that Johannesburg Declaration and the Plan of Implementation strongly emphasized commitments to multi-lateral action and the urgent need for a more focused practical approach for the implementation of Agenda 21 through the reinforcement of the international community support and the provision of the required means of implementation".

With regard to the follow-up actions taken at the inter-governmental level, he said, the Group of 77 would like to highlight the following:

- The international community has elaborated a comprehensive and solid repertoire of commitments with regard to sustainable development; therefore, it is highly expected that the intergovernmental processes focus on implementation and avoid embarking on normative and repetitive debates. The momentum generated by the Johannesburg Summit should be maintained and the launching of an implementation Plan with specific goals and time-bound targets should be translated into effective and measurable actions.

- We would like in this regard to welcome the major decisions taken at the intergovernmental level that have an immediate impact on the implementation of the outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit.

Additionally, sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) has been identified among the cross-cutting issues which should be dealt with along the consideration of the CSD multi-year program of work.

DEVELOPMENT HIGH ON THE AGENDA OF THE 2005 UN SUMMIT

UNITED NATIONS, Oct (G77/IPS) --Addressing the General Assembly, Abdellah Benmellouk of the Permanent Mission of Morocco said the prospect of a global summit in 2005 will provide an opportunity to put the issue of development on top of the UN agenda.

As everyone is aware, questions of security are global and necessarily include the fight against poverty and hunger. Only hope for a better future can lead to greater stability and security for all, he said.

"We must take advantage of this debate to follow up on this resolution and decide on the modalities for that summit and to begin an advance preparations for its success," he added.

The Group of 77, he said, believes that this important event will provide a genuine opportunity to review progress made in implementing commitments made by member countries, both developed and developing, and to assess progress made towards the achievement of development

goals agreed upon at the international level, including, obviously, those of the Millennium Declaration.

The Summit will also allow the international community to give thought to the proper ways and means to move forward the implementation process.

The Group of 77 considers that at a time when the developing countries are continuing to make huge efforts regarding economic and social reform-- despite various and enormous constraints-- developed countries should honour their own obligations towards development.

The real threats of marginalization and poverty resulting from the galloping pace of globalization for huge segments of populations of the south must further prompt the international community-- in particular, the developed countries-- to act immediately to realise global partnership for development which benefits all and which can achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

WOMEN STILL FACE HURDLES IN EXERCISING THEIR RIGHTS

UNITED NATIONS, October (G77/IPS) -- Addressing the Third Committee, Omar Kadiri of the Permanent Mission of Morocco, said that almost a decade after the Beijing Conference, women throughout the world are still facing many challenges and obstacles that prevent them from the full enjoyment of their rights.

He said that the Group of 77 calls upon the international community – individually and collectively – to spare no efforts to overcome these impediments.

Only the clearance of these hurdles will help achieve the commitments and goals agreed in Beijing and the decisions taken at the 23rd special session of the General Assembly.

A sustained and firm political will at all levels is indispensable in this regard, he added.

He pointed out that the Universal declaration of human rights proclaims that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and that everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth therein, without distinction of any kind-- including distinction based on gender.

The international community has committed itself to

protect these rights and to strive towards gender equality, empowerment of women and their advancement at all levels.

The commitments made in Beijing and its review process are not an end, but they are an important part of a global process aimed at alleviating all kinds of discrimination against women and ensuring that women, just like men, are an integral part and an equal partner in all spheres of life.

"It is a great source of satisfaction to the Group of 77 that recent UN conferences and Summits such as the Millennium Summit, the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the World Summit on Sustainable Development have integrated a gender perspective in their outcomes and have reaffirmed the necessity of gender equality and the imperative role of women in all developmental efforts", he said.

Such integration, however, should be translated into action in the policies and programmes at the national, regional and international levels.

A RISE IN NATURAL DISASTERS AFFECTING DEVELOPING NATIONS

GENEVA, July (G77/IPS)-- Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, Lotfi Bouchaara of the Permanent Mission of Morocco said that the last few years have witnessed an increase in the number of natural disasters, especially in developing countries.

But in order to face up to the situation, he said, it is urgent to reduce vulnerable situations through a global approach based on international cooperation, as is duly reflected in paragraphs 25 and 26 of the report of the Secretary-General.

Addressing a meeting of ECOSOC, he said it is of paramount importance to strengthen national and local capacities, to transfer the appropriate technologies and to develop a system of advance warning in order to avoid natural disasters.

The Group of 77, he said, welcomes the particular emphasis on the issue of financing and securing the efficiency of humanitarian aid.

This is a vital issue that requires a thorough and objective consideration in order to define ways and means of improving the performance of the United Nations in this field.

The issue of transition from relief to development was considered last year. "This year, we should particularly attempt to evaluate the achievements made in light of the experience referred to in the report of the Secretary-

General," he added.

He also told that the Group of 77 welcomes the ongoing efforts in the Inter-agency Standing Committee to develop a code of conduct for the staff involved in humanitarian aid in order to prevent exploitation and sexual abuse, and the misuse of humanitarian assistance.

Furthermore, it is urgent to reaffirm the necessity to systematically take into account a gender-specific approach in the development and implementation of humanitarian aid.

The issue of coordination among the various bodies and agencies providing humanitarian assistance within the United Nations system-- and in particular the transition from relief to development-- attracts a growing interest.

"It has been observed that aid has been abundantly provided in humanitarian emergency situations that benefited from wide media coverage. By contrast, as soon as the media lights fade away, the resources tend to be scarce particularly as the more difficult task of reconstruction begins," he added.

It is therefore of paramount importance to bridge the gap in terms of resource allocations between emergency assistance and aid to development.

Failure to do so would mean that the international community, despite all the efforts made, would only discuss problems rather than solve them, he warned.

DESERTIFICATION A SERIOUS CONCERN FOR DEVELOPING NATIONS

UNITED NATIONS, Oct (G77/IPS)-- Speaking before the Second Committee, Mohammed Arrouchi of the Permanent Mission of Morocco, expressed serious concern that the global phenomenon of desertification is increasing in scope and severity.

Desertification also continues to have serious adverse impact on a large portion of the world population, he added.

The continued problems of desertification are attributed primarily to the absence of long-term strategies and reliable means of implementation-- including adequate financial resources, transfer of sound technologies and capacity-building measures.

The process of desertification is one of the major obstacles hindering the attainment of sustainable development goals and targets, mainly poverty eradication.

The WSSD has recognized poverty eradication as "the greatest global challenge facing the world today and an indispensable requirement for sustainable development particularly for developing countries".

"This was the language we unanimously and enthusiastically agreed on in Johannesburg," he added.

"The challenge we are facing now is how to ensure that the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification-- particularly in Africa-- becomes an effective tool in halting the ongoing spread of this phenomenon and in reversing it to generate the environment, our common natural heritage," he added.

Consequently there is a critical need for immediate action to halt and reverse this phenomenon.

Among the measures to be taken are:

- the development at the national and local level of observational databases with the aim to establish a comprehensive approach towards completion of a new global assessment of the obscure process of desertification.

- the adoption of an ascending approach in the policy-making processes in order to ensure the participation of the local communities and populations.

- the establishment of durable and accountable partnerships between all actors (Governments, NGOs, local communities, etc.), particularly where the problem of desertification is mostly felt.

"But the key to success in the battle against desertification resides in the availability of adequate financing with total long-term commitment at the political level and at all levels of Government and societies," he concluded.

SMALL ISLAND DEVELOPING STATES STILL REMAIN VULNERABLE

UNITED NATIONS, October (G77/IPS) -- Pointing out the problems facing Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Group of 77 has declared that it has no intention of renegotiating the Barbados Programme of Action (BPOA) which remains faithful to the core sustainable development aspirations of these vulnerable nations.

Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, Mohammed Arrouchi of the Permanent Mission of Morocco, said the Group is convinced that the approach to review its implementation must embrace new and emerging socio-economic issues recognised as critical obstacles to the sustainable development of SIDS.

The Group of 77, he said, has welcomed the adoption of General Assembly resolution 57/262 and the SIDS decision at CSD-11, which agreed to convene an international meeting in Mauritius from August 30 to September 3, 2004.

"We consider the international meeting an event of

critical importance and we are confident that it will result in renewed political commitment and practical and pragmatic action to further implementation of the BPOA, particularly by the wider international community," he added.

To date, preparatory meetings have been held in the three major regions of SIDS (the Caribbean, Pacific and AIMS regions).

The Group looks forward to further support by the international community in the remaining preparatory activities, including the inter-regional meeting scheduled for the Bahamas, January 26-30, 2004, and the preparatory meeting at CSD-12 from April 14-16, 2004, and most importantly in the international meeting itself.

What has clearly emerged from the three regional meetings of SIDS, he said, is the continued resolve and commitment by SIDS to implement the actions and measures contained in the BPOA.

"However, support at the international level has been inconsistent and inadequate," he concluded.

CAPACITY TO PAY UN DUES UNDERMINED BY ECONOMIC CRISES

UNITED NATIONS, Oct (G77/IPS) -- Addressing the Fifth Committee, Mrs. Aicha Afifi of the Permanent Mission of Morocco, said that the Group of 77 would like to underline its concern that many developing countries have seen a huge increase in their assessments for the next triennium while their economies are currently going through many difficulties.

These countries, whose capacity to pay has been undermined by social and economic crises, are making extraordinary efforts to fulfill their obligations to the United Nations.

"We would like to emphasize the importance of the continuing work of the Committee, and reiterate that the multi-year payment plans should remain voluntary and should not be linked to other measures," she added.

She pointed out that the Group of 77 attaches great importance to agenda item 124, and therefore welcomes the opportunity to review it at the current 58th session of the General Assembly.

Since this year is a "scale year", she said, the General Assembly has to approve a new scale of assessments for the triennium 2004-2006. The discussions during the last session of the Committee, as reflected in the report, provide an extensive insight on the points of view of its members and on the technical aspects of the issues under consideration of the report.

The Group of 77, she said, wishes to reiterate what it has stated in its Ministerial Declaration of 25th September 2003:

"We reaffirm the legal obligation of all member states to bear the financial expenses of the UN, in accordance with the Charter, and urge all member states to pay assessed contributions on time, in full and without conditions".

"We further recognize the need to extend sympathetic understanding to those member states that temporarily may not be able to meet their financial obligations as a consequence of genuine economic difficulties."

"We also reiterate the importance of the forthcoming negotiations on the scale of assessment for the triennium 2004-2006, and their swift conclusion, while reaffirming the principle of capacity to pay as the fundamental criterion in the apportionment of the expenses of the United Nations".

The Group of 77 has agreed with the conclusions of the report of the Committee on Contributions, which was adopted by consensus.

The Group reaffirms the role of the Committee on Contributions as the sole expert body mandated to advise the General Assembly on this issue and commends the Committee on its work, Mrs Afifi said.

She also emphasised that discussions on this item should be conducted in a comprehensive and transparent manner in order to achieve a swift conclusion of the negotiations.

Regarding the item on pattern of conferences, the Group of 77 has expressed concern over a proposal by the Secretary-General to consider reducing the time frame of the number of

fully serviced meetings and allocated conference services.

The Group's position in this regard is that any decision to alter fully serviced meetings is the responsibility of intergovernmental bodies, not that of the Secretary-General.

Speaking on behalf of the G-77 and China, Mrs. Afifi told the Fifth Committee that providing interpretation services and conference facilities to regional groups contributes to the smooth functioning of the different deliberating bodies.

The Group welcomes the affirmation by the Committee on Conferences that the provision of conference services facilitates the work of the Main Committees of the General Assembly and other United Nations bodies.

The Group, therefore, calls upon the Secretary-General to continue providing those services to the regional groups, she said.

The Group of 77 has also expressed its concern that the rate of interpretation services and conference facilities to the regional and other major groups has declined from 98 percent to 92 percent.

"The Group expresses its concern over the apparent inadequacy of resources for conference services at Nairobi and Vienna and is looking forward to practical proposals from the Secretary-General to provide interpretation services to the regional and other major groups," she told the Committee.

The Group wishes to draw the attention of the Committee to paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 57/283B where the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the cost implications of providing more predictable and adequate conference services to the meetings of regional and other major groupings of member states.

While noting the proposals made in paragraph 36 of the report of the Secretary General (A/58/194) and while reserving the right to pronounce itself on the merit and viability of these proposals, she said, the Group considers that these proposals do not fulfill what the General Assembly has asked for in its resolution 57/283B.

"We therefore stress the importance of the report that has been sought and the necessity of its prompt issuance, which we view as distinct from providing costing estimates for the aforementioned options," she noted.

The Group also expressed its concern regarding the delay in the filling of vacancies in the interpretation section at the United Nations Office in Nairobi, especially those that have been vacant for more than three years despite repeated calls by the General Assembly.

In this regard, the Group wishes to emphasize the importance of ensuring the equal treatment of all duty stations and calls on the Secretary-General to take the necessary steps to bring services at UNON at par with those of other duty stations.

"We look forward to receiving the Secretary-General's report on improving and modernization of conference services at that duty station," she concluded.

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