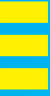

Economic & Social Affairs

The International Forum for Social Development

Social Justice in an Open World

The Role of the United Nations

United Nations

ST/ESA/305

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
Division for Social Policy and Development

The International Forum for Social Development

Social Justice in an Open World
The Role of the United Nations

United Nations
New York, 2006

DESA

The Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations Secretariat is a vital interface between global policies in the economic, social and environmental spheres and national action. The Department works in three main interlinked areas: (i) it compiles, generates and analyses a wide range of economic, social and environmental data and information on which States Members of the United Nations draw to review common problems and to take stock of policy options; (ii) it facilitates the negotiations of Member States in many intergovernmental bodies on joint course of action to address ongoing or emerging global challenges; and (iii) it advises interested Governments on the ways and means of translating policy frameworks developed in United Nations conferences and summits into programmes at the country level and, through technical assistance, helps build national capacities.

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Explanatory notes

The following abbreviations have been used:

AIDS	acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
CFC	chlorofluorocarbon
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DOTS	directly observed treatment short course
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GATS	General Agreement on Trade in Services
GDP	gross domestic product
GNI	gross national income
GNP	gross national product
HIPC	heavily indebted poor countries
HIV	human immunodeficiency virus
ICT	information and communication technologies
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LDC	least developed country
NGO	non-governmental organization
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WIDER	World Institute for Development Economics Research
WTO	World Trade Organization

Foreword

The International Forum for Social Development was a three-year project undertaken by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs between November 2001 and November 2004 for the purpose of promoting international cooperation for social development and supporting developing countries and social groups not benefiting from the globalization process. "Open Societies, Open Economies: Challenges and Opportunities" represented the overall theme of the project, which was financed through extrabudgetary contributions and carried out within the framework of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, and of subsequent major international gatherings, including the Millennium Summit and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, held in New York and Geneva, respectively, in 2000.

Four meetings of the Forum were held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, as follows:

- Financing Global Social Development, 7-8 February 2002
- Cooperation for Social Development: The International Dimension, 16-17 October 2002
- International Migrants and Development, 7-8 October 2003
- Equity, Inequalities and Interdependence, 5-6 October 2004

These meetings brought together invitees from different regions and different walks of life for seminars followed by open and informal debate with representatives from United Nations Member States and non-governmental organizations. Findings were presented orally at the annual sessions of the Commission for Social Development, and reports or summaries were issued.

The present publication seeks to provide an overview and interpretation of the discussions and debates that occurred at these four meetings from the broad perspective of distributive justice. During the year this work was under preparation, the United Nations reviewed the commitments made ten years ago in Copenhagen to promote social development and in Beijing to pursue equality between men and women. In the light of the evolution of the Organization's mandates and priorities, however, considerably greater attention was given to the review of the United Nations Millennium Declaration and to the assessment of the progress made towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The 2005 World Summit, which produced the largest gathering of world leaders in history, was held by the General Assembly in New York from 14 to 16 September and focused on development, security and human rights, as well as on United Nations reforms proposed

by the Secretary-General.[1] It is hoped that the analyses and observations presented here will contribute to the continuing debate on these important issues.

Jacques Baudot
Coordinator, International Forum for Social Development

Introduction

The rise in inequality in the distribution of income among people is well-documented and displays the characteristics of a trend, having affected large numbers of countries, from the poorest to the most affluent, during the past two decades. Up to the 1980s, at least since the Second World War and in some cases since the beginning of the twentieth century, there had been a general narrowing of differences in the income available to individuals and families.

Income-related inequalities, notably in the ownership of capital and other assets, in access to a variety of services and benefits, and in the personal security that money can buy, are growing. There is also greater inequality in the distribution of opportunities for remunerated employment, with worsening unemployment and underemployment in various parts of the world affecting a disproportionate number of people at the lower end of the socio-economic scale. The inequality gap between the richest and poorest countries, measured in terms of national per capita income, is growing as well.

The popular contention that the rich get richer and the poor get poorer appears to be largely based on fact, particularly within the present global context. Moreover, extreme or absolute poverty, experienced by those whose income is barely sufficient for survival, remains widespread. Indigence levels have risen in the most affluent countries, in countries once part of the Soviet bloc and in various parts of Africa, but have remained stable in Latin America and have declined in Asia. Extreme poverty and the suffering it entails affect a large proportion of humankind, and major efforts by Governments and international organizations to reduce or eradicate poverty have thus far failed to produce the desired results.

Do these facts and trends suggest a regression in social justice? The answer to this question, if considered within the framework of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,[2] is not unequivocal. The persistence, aggravation and very existence of extreme poverty constitute an injustice. Those experiencing dire poverty are deprived of a number of the fundamental rights invoked in the Charter and enumerated in the Universal Declaration. Individuals affected by internal conflicts and wars are also robbed of many of their basic freedoms and are thus victims of injustice as well. Hunger is but one face of poverty; discrimination, poor health, vulnerability, insecurity, and a lack of personal and professional development opportunities are among the many other challenges faced by the poor. The rise in poverty in all its manifestations, along with the increase in the numbers of refugees, displaced persons and other victims of circumstance and

abuse, represents sufficient evidence for a judgment of persistent, if not growing, injustice in the world.

Unlike justice in the broad sense, social justice is a relatively recent concept, born of the struggles surrounding the industrial revolution and the advent of socialist (and later, in some parts of the world, social democratic and Christian democratic) views on the organization of society. It is a concept rooted very tenuously in the Anglo-Saxon political culture. It does not appear in the Charter, or in the Universal Declaration or the two International Covenants on Human Rights. Frequently referred to in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, social justice was scarcely mentioned five years later in the United Nations Millennium Declaration.[3]

Some proponents of social justice—though significantly fewer since the collapse of State communism—dream of total income equality. Most, however, hold the view that when people engage in economic activity for survival, personal and professional growth, and the collective welfare of society, inequality is inevitable but should remain within acceptable limits that may vary according to the particular circumstances. In the modern context, those concerned with social justice see the general increase in income inequality as unjust, deplorable and alarming. It is argued that poverty reduction and overall improvements in the standard of living are attainable goals that would bring the world closer to social justice. However, there is little indication of any real ongoing commitment to address existing inequalities. In today's world, the enormous gap in the distribution of wealth, income and public benefits is growing ever wider, reflecting a general trend that is morally unfair, politically unwise and economically unsound. Injustices at the international level have produced a parallel increase in inequality between affluent and poor countries.

These are political judgments deriving from the application of political concepts. Inequalities in income and in living conditions within and between countries are not defined as just or unjust in international texts or national constitutions. Some economists argue that a more equal distribution of income facilitates economic growth, given the involvement of more people with energy and diverse skills in the economy and the increased demand for goods and services, while others retort that savings and capital accumulation are strengthened by the concentration of income at the top of the socio-economic scale. Similarly, the call for greater equality in the distribution of world income at the international level is weakened by the observation that technological and other innovations vital to the health of the world economy originate in the most affluent countries. Sociologists may contend that excessive income inequality restricts social mobility and leads to social segmentation and eventually social breakdown, but other social scientists counter this argument with examples of economically successful authoritarian or elitist societies. Arguments founded on moral fairness are easily disposed of in an atmosphere of moral relativism and cultural pluralism. Present-day

believers in an absolute truth identified with virtue and justice are neither willing nor desirable companions for the defenders of social justice.

Aware of the difficulties inherent in the defence of their support for greater equality in the distribution of income, the proponents of social justice are cognizant of the fact that trends relating to the fundamental question of equality of rights are not as clear as those associated with income and income-related inequalities. Extreme poverty persists and is even deepening in some parts of the world, which represents a violation of basic human rights according to current international standards. In many respects, however, equality of rights has improved dramatically. During the past several decades, people have achieved freedom from authoritarian and totalitarian regimes on a massive scale. Furthermore, despite various setbacks and some alarming signs of regression, the trend towards the treatment of all human beings as members of the same global family, set in motion after the Second World War, has continued virtually uninterrupted owing to concerted efforts to reduce and ultimately eliminate all forms of discrimination. Particularly noteworthy is the steady progress made in achieving equality between women and men in spite of numerous cultural and religious obstacles. Greater equality of rights is also apparent for specific groups such as indigenous peoples and disabled persons. The equality gap remains somewhat wider for migrant workers and refugees, though there is an increasing global awareness of their predicament.

The issue of equality of opportunities further complicates efforts to determine whether ground has been lost or gained in the realm of social justice. Apart from the issue of unemployment, an area in which social justice appears to have suffered setbacks in recent years, there is the crucial question of whether societies offer their people sufficient opportunities to engage in productive activities of their choice wherever they wish, whether at home or abroad, and to receive benefits and personal and social rewards commensurate with their initiative, talents and efforts. This might be termed economic justice; for many it represents justice or fairness in the broadest sense. It has traditionally been perceived as the basis for social justice in the United States of America, the economically dominant country today.

Within the context of the present analysis, economic justice is considered an element of social justice, a choice justified by the desire to convey the idea that all developments relating to justice occur in society, whether at the local, national, or global level, and by the related desire to restore the comprehensive, overarching concept of the term "social", which in recent times has been relegated to the status of an appendix of the economic sphere. Economic justice has unquestionably grown as the basic principles and practices of the market economy have become more prevalent and pervasive, as more people with valuable skills have been given greater freedom of movement regionally and internationally, and as barriers to cross-border economic and financial transactions have progressively been lowered.

The opening up of the world economy has given more opportunities to countries in a position to seize them. These global changes are generally seen to constitute progress. Many might wish to tame and regulate the forces making use of this openness, in part because freedom of movement for capital and other assets leads to a concentration of power and is one of the reasons for the widening of inequalities in income distribution. However, few dispute the fact that economic freedom represents a basic human right.

Even when painted with the large brush required for the present inquiry, a very mixed picture emerges with regard to the state of social justice—or of "justice" as defined in the past quarter of a century. A more precise analysis muddies the waters further. For example, while the income gap has widened within and between countries across the socio-economic scale, there are a number of countries, mostly affluent, in which the distribution of income among social groups has remained stable or even improved. Nonetheless, overall economic justice is hampered by the concentration of wealth and power that seems to accompany the dissemination of the capitalist ethos. In addition, while apparent progress has been made in achieving equality of rights, there have been notable setbacks in connection with the basic rights of individuals, who in some settings have been subjected to discrimination and even torture.

A composite picture is also apparent for the previous period, identified here as the years between the end of the Second World War and the collapse of the Soviet Union. State intervention and extensive redistribution policies led to improvements in the distribution of income and access to public services. In poor developing countries, the model of the welfare state and society, if not fully implemented, was generally accepted. Even in relatively affluent countries with a strong liberal tradition, the "deals" struck by Governments and societies to resolve the economic and social crisis of the 1930s were pursued with increasing vigour; most notably, public programmes were implemented to fight poverty, and universal social security schemes financed by extensive and progressive tax systems were adopted. However, the spirit of enterprise and entrepreneurship, or economic freedom and economic justice, was suppressed in totalitarian countries and not given the chance to flourish in newly independent developing countries compelled to devote much of their attention and resources to political development and stability. The spirit of free enterprise was also bridled in a few of the countries with socialist or social democratic regimes, but there is certainly no evidence that it suffered in liberal democracies with free markets and solid redistributive policies. This last point is important for the agendas of international organizations today.

The justice situation was also ambiguous from an international development perspective prior to the great global economic transformation that began to sweep the world in the 1980s. Financial and other forms of assistance to developing coun-

tries were seen to be in the best interest of both donors and recipients and to constitute a normal expression of solidarity meant to contribute to the building of a more prosperous and more secure world. International economic justice was elusive, however, as the world economy during this period was more a collection of controlled markets than an open field with negotiated common rules, universally accessible opportunities and extensive freedom for all players; a number of developing countries with the requisite capacity, will and dynamism were subjected to serious constraints when they sought to compete in this economy.

This recurrence, at least during the limited historical period reviewed, of ambivalent, sometimes contradictory and often ambiguous trends relating to the practical application of the concept of justice should represent a sufficient deterrent to those tempted to make strong, unequivocal statements regarding the status of social justice in the present and recent past. Particularly from the perspective shaped by the founding texts of the United Nations (the aforementioned Charter and Universal Declaration), it would be both imprudent and incorrect to assert that justice, whether defined in terms of its individual components or more broadly, has either improved or deteriorated globally during the past several decades. The multifaceted nature of the concept of justice and the ambiguousness of relevant trends should not be used as an excuse for moral laxity and political indifference, however. Progress in one part of the world does not offset regression in another. The enjoyment of rights by some people does not compensate for violations of the same rights among others. Morally, all injustices are unacceptable.

The risk of laxity and indifference is even higher when history is viewed as a succession of cycles. From this perspective, the current emphasis on economic freedom and economic justice would likely be interpreted as a corrective or compensatory trend counterbalancing the excessive past preoccupation with redistributive social justice, and the presumption is that "reverse" corrections would occur when the limits of present views and policies have been reached or surpassed. The validity of such cyclical movement might be confirmed in subsequent analysis, but institutions with public responsibilities cannot operate on the assumption that corrections occur automatically or providentially. Correctives occur as a result of changes in ideas, power structures, political processes and policies, and moral outrage and public protest certainly guide such changes in the direction of greater justice and fairness.

The great transformation that has shaken the world was set in motion a couple decades ago and shaped by the rise to preeminence of the United States, a nation embodying the political philosophy of liberalism and its economic and financial component, global capitalism. Liberalism has freedom and economic justice at its core. Global capitalism gives economic and financial forces the power to treat the world as a global market. As these ideas and forces swept the world, communist sys-

tems collapsed and socialism and social democracy retreated, as did the notion that there should be public institutions at both the national and international levels that defined the common good, pursued social justice, and had the power to take effective action. The promotion of social justice through public institutions is a deeply rooted tradition. Throughout history, the advances made by humankind have been conceived by great individuals—including philosophers, scientists, political leaders, prophets, and even ordinary inspired and courageous citizens—and implemented by institutions. However, positive trends and advances are reversible. Individuals, institutions and forces driven by power and greed can undo what are clearly political and social gains. Social justice and international justice, at least from the distributive or redistributive perspective, do not appear to constitute a high priority in this modern age.

The failure to actively pursue justice is not without consequences. From the comprehensive global perspective shaped by the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, neglect of the pursuit of social justice in all its dimensions translates into de facto acceptance of a future marred by violence, repression and chaos. A number of observations may be made with regard to this phenomenon.

Advancements in social justice, except in extraordinary situations and circumstances such as the gaining of political independence, the aftermath of a long war or the depths of an economic depression, require pressure from organized political forces. Brief and sporadic protests against injustices, even if vehement, usually have a limited effect. The problem is that few political regimes have institutions or processes to promote the orderly and effective expression of grievances and demands by those who are not benefiting or are hurt by existing economic and social arrangements. Political parties are often reduced to administrative machines focused on winning elections. Trade unions are declining in both number and influence. Democracy is seemingly gaining ground but is being vitiated by the "moneytization" of social relations and social institutions at many levels. The concept of reform, so often invoked in recent years to facilitate economic deregulation and privatization, could be constructively applied by liberal democracies and other regimes inspired by liberal principles to identify the requirements of social justice and implement appropriate policies. To an extent, the United Nations, with its efforts to strengthen the role and contribution of civil society, is taking the lead and paving the way for international and global democracy, a prerequisite for global social justice.

Social justice is not possible without strong and coherent redistributive policies conceived and implemented by public agencies. A fair, efficient and progressive taxation system, alluded to in Commitment 9 of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development,[4] allows a State to perform its duties, including providing national security, financing infrastructure and public services such as education, health care

and social security, and offering protection and support to those who are temporarily or permanently in need. While the scale of taxation and public obligations varies widely according to the wealth and capacity of each country, it is generally accepted that greater financial participation is required from those with more resources at their disposal. This constitutes a sacrifice that in well-functioning liberal and social democratic societies is accepted as part of the social contract binding citizens together. Official development assistance (ODA) to poor and developing countries is a manifestation of redistributive justice at the international level, and various proposals for taxes on global transactions derive from the same objective of promoting fairness and solidarity. Redistributive ideas and practices are currently under attack. Governments and international organizations vacillate between the adjustment, neglect and abandonment of redistributive policies, but there is no evidence yet of any socially, politically or economically viable alternative strategies.

Social justice requires strong and coherent policies in a multitude of areas. Fiscal, monetary and other economic policies, as well as social policies, incorporate specific objectives but must all be geared towards the overall social goal of promoting the welfare of a country's citizens and increasingly, in this age of global interdependence, the citizens of the world. The well-being of citizens requires broad-based and sustainable economic growth, economic justice, the provision of employment opportunities, and more generally the existence of conditions for the optimal development of people as individuals and social beings. Macroeconomic policies may be presented in all their complexity by experts or justified by politicians with self-serving arguments, but they can essentially be divided into two groups: those favouring a few and those offering a chance to the many. The same is true for trade policies. The difficulties encountered in elaborating and implementing such policies in a way that balances different interests and ensures progress towards social justice are enormous, especially for countries still in the process of establishing their economic, institutional and political foundations. What is critical in this context is the belief that the goal is worth pursuing and that shared efforts are necessary.

Social justice may be broadly understood as the fair and compassionate distribution of the fruits of economic growth; however, it is necessary to attach some important qualifiers to this statement. Currently, maximizing growth appears to be the primary objective, but it is also essential to ensure that growth is sustainable, that the integrity of the natural environment is respected, that the use of non-renewable resources is rationalized, and that future generations are able to enjoy a beautiful and hospitable earth. The conception of social justice must integrate these dimensions, starting with the right of all human beings to benefit from a safe and pleasant environment; this entails the fair distribution among countries and social groups of the cost of protecting the environment and of developing safe technologies for production and safe products for consumption. Two of the greatest indicators of

progress during the past century are the increased equality of men and women and the growing recognition that human beings are both guests and custodians of the planet earth. Unfortunately, little has been done to apply this enhanced environmental consciousness on the ground. Environmental concerns were largely ignored by communist regimes, and are not typically integrated into socialist approaches to the management of human affairs. Capitalist systems tend to "deify" production and consumption at the expense of balanced, long-term growth. Social justice will only flourish if environmental preservation and sustainable development constitute an integral part of growth strategies now and in the future.

When income and income-related inequalities reach a certain level, those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder are no longer in a position to enjoy many of their basic rights. Inequalities tend to intensify and accumulate. The human suffering in such circumstances is sufficient reason for public action—even without taking into consideration the real danger of social breakdown. The parallel in terms of international justice relates to the likelihood that efforts to build a global community will break down as the gap separating the poorest from the most affluent countries widens.

The use of wealth is arguably more important than its distribution. For reasons that are understandable in the light of the blatant exploitation associated with the industrial revolution, early proponents of the concept of social justice directed their anger and criticism more at wealth itself, at its concentration among a privileged few, than at the manner in which it was used. This attitude led to excessive reliance on public ownership and public intervention in the economy and was partly responsible for the neglect of economic justice by regimes focused on the pursuit of social justice. John Rawls wrote in *A Theory of Justice* that "there is no injustice in the greater benefits earned by a few provided that the situation of persons not so fortunate is thereby improved".[5] It is not yet clear whether the enormous resources and benefits in the hands of today's few—individuals, corporations and nations—are "trickling down" to benefit the rest of humanity.

There may be a link between the rise in various types of inequality; the division of individuals, communities and countries into two distinct groups comprising those who succeed and win and those who do not; and the excessively simplistic and vulgar modern interpretation of utilitarianism as it applies to life and society in modern times, whereby each looks only to his own advantage. A personal and social price is paid when success is defined in terms of defeating competitors and is seen to represent an opportunity for further expansion and the consolidation of power. It is perhaps the fault of certain misguided and overly sentimental proponents of social justice that generosity, compassion, solidarity, and ultimately justice itself have come to be perceived in the dominant world culture as "soft" (and therefore insignificant and dispensable) qualities or concepts. The idea of social justice has

too often been associated with an excessively benevolent perception of human nature and a naively optimistic belief in the capacity of good ideas and institutions to transform the world into a secure and agreeable place. The capacity to judge and sanction is an indispensable quality at all levels of society. However, exclusive reliance on simple, straightforward instincts will only lead to injustice and violence. It makes more sense to periodically revisit and "update" the concept of social justice than to act as if it is obsolete.

It is important to reflect more deeply on the nature and use of power within both the human and institutional contexts. Individuals who hold power must be willing to submit to certain laws and regulations that limit their freedom to use their authority as they see fit. Those who are privileged to hold political and administrative power must understand that their legitimacy derives entirely from their capacity to serve the community. Social justice is impossible unless it is fully understood that power comes with the obligation of service. In reflecting on the nature, legitimacy and use of power, consideration must be given to self-interest, enlightened self-interest, general interest and the common good. The essence of democracy resides in a shared understanding of these concepts. Along similar lines, there seems to be a need to revive the notion of a social contract both within communities and for the world as a whole. Neither positivism nor utilitarianism is likely to yield very promising fruit for the future of humankind. In the final analysis, with the opportunity having been taken to reflect upon the developments and concepts surrounding social justice and the plight of the innumerable victims of injustice, it appears that the key to the successful pursuit of justice may lie in moderation—in the use of power, in production and consumption, in the expression of one's interests, views and beliefs, and in the conception and manifestation of self-interest and national interest.

Even in the pursuit of equality, justice and freedom—often characterized by intense passion—moderation and reason should prevail. Justice and freedom share an uneasy relationship. In philosophy, political theory, individual experience and collective endeavours, these critical human objectives are often incompatible; in the pursuit and protection of justice and freedom there is more typically an occasional and fragile reconciliation than a natural harmony. Nonetheless, all through human history, those facing extreme political oppression have revolted in the name of both freedom and justice, and great strides have been made through innumerable acts of heroism. At the very least, the idea that all individuals share a common humanity and possess fundamental rights simply because they are human, and that oppression and misery are not necessarily part of the human condition, has started to permeate the collective consciousness. However, setbacks and regressions occur more regularly than advances; in this fast-moving world, the majority of societies and political regimes, including those founded on democratic principles and ideals, have problems achieving and maintaining a balance between individual freedom and

social justice. The myriad difficulties and uneven progress notwithstanding, continued pursuit of these ideals is essential; even if Sisyphus is unhappy, he must fulfil his duty.

Building upon this brief overview, the chapters below provide more detailed information and observations for further reflection and debate.

Chapter 1

Dimensions of international justice and social justice

1.1 International justice: legal and developmental aspects

The Charter of the United Nations makes no explicit distinction between international justice, or justice among nations, and social justice, or justice among people.

The Charter, of which the Statute of the International Court of Justice is an integral part, treats justice as a broad principle that ought to be applied in international relations. In the Preamble and Article 1 of the Charter, justice is associated with respect for international law. In Article 2, justice is linked to the sovereign equality of all Members and to the maintenance of peace and security. The references to peace and the equality of nations imply that each State should refrain from any use of force that may jeopardize or undermine the territorial integrity or political independence of another. Another implication is that the United Nations should not intervene in matters that are "essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State" (Article 2, para. 7), except to enforce measures adopted by the Security Council in line with the provisions set out in Chapter VII of the Charter.[6] The "one country, one vote" rule in the General Assembly is a visible manifestation of the Organization's recognition of sovereign equality.

The concept of justice as defined above will be referred to in the present text as *international justice*, with the principles of sovereign equality, non-intervention, and equal voting rights constituting the *legal aspects of international justice*. By the mid-1960s another dimension of international justice had taken shape with the decolonization of a number of countries. The United Nations assumed increasing responsibility for helping these newly independent Member States in their efforts to achieve economic and social progress. Gradually the concept of development was substituted for the early emphasis on progress and evolved into a core component of the Organization's mandate. International cooperation for development was placed next to the maintenance of peace and security as a second pillar upon which the activities of the United Nations were based, the main objective being to narrow and ultimately close the gap between developed and developing countries. Efforts relating to this goal of bridging the distance separating poor and affluent nations are identified here as representing the *developmental aspects of international justice*.

1.2 Social justice: a recent and politically charged concept

The concept of *social justice* and its relevance and application within the present context require a more detailed explanation. As mentioned previously, the notion of social justice is relatively new. None of history's great philosophers—not Plato

or Aristotle, or Confucius or Averroes, or even Rousseau or Kant—saw the need to consider justice or the redress of injustices from a social perspective. The concept first surfaced in Western thought and political language in the wake of the industrial revolution and the parallel development of the socialist doctrine. It emerged as an expression of protest against what was perceived as the capitalist exploitation of labour and as a focal point for the development of measures to improve the human condition. It was born as a revolutionary slogan embodying the ideals of progress and fraternity. Following the revolutions that shook Europe in the mid-1800s, social justice became a rallying cry for progressive thinkers and political activists. Proudhon, notably, identified justice with social justice, and social justice with respect for human dignity.

By the mid-twentieth century, the concept of social justice had become central to the ideologies and programmes of virtually all the leftist and centrist political parties around the world, and few dared to oppose it directly. Social justice represented the essence and the raison d'être of the social democrat doctrine and left its mark in the decades following the Second World War. Of particular importance in the present context is the link between the growing legitimization of the concept of social justice, on the one hand, and the emergence of the social sciences as distinct areas of activity and the creation of economics and sociology as disciplines separate from philosophy (notably moral philosophy), on the other hand. Social justice became more clearly defined when a distinction was drawn between the social sphere and the economic sphere, and grew into a mainstream preoccupation when a number of economists became convinced that it was their duty not only to describe phenomena but also to propose criteria for the distribution of the fruits of human activity.

The application of social justice requires a geographical, sociological, political and cultural framework within which relations between individuals and groups can be understood, assessed, and characterized as just or unjust. In modern times, this framework has been the nation-State. The country typically represents the context in which various aspects of social justice, such as the distribution of income in a population, are observed and measured; this benchmark is used not only by national Governments but also by international organizations and supranational entities such as the European Union. At the same time, there is clearly a universal dimension to social justice, with humanity as the common factor. Slaves, exploited workers and oppressed women are above all victimized human beings whose location matters less than their circumstances. This universality has taken on added depth and relevance as the physical and cultural distance between the world's peoples has effectively shrunk. In their discussions regarding the situation of migrant workers, for example, Forum participants readily acknowledged the national and global dimensions of social justice.

1.3 Social justice: the equivalent of distributive justice

In the contemporary context, social justice is typically taken to mean distributive justice. The terms are generally understood to be synonymous and interchangeable in both common parlance and the language of international relations. The concept of social/distributive justice is implied in various academic and theoretical works and in many international legal or quasi-legal texts (such as the Charter and Universal Declaration) that may only include broad references to "justice". In certain international instruments, including the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action adopted by the World Summit for Social Development in 1995, references to social justice are more explicit. In the tone-setting first chapter of *A Theory of Justice*, a masterpiece published in 1971, John Rawls refers on several occasions to the "principles of social justice" when formulating his two "principles of justice".[7]

Social justice is treated as synonymous with distributive justice, which again is often identified with unqualified references to justice, in the specific context of the activities of the United Nations, the precise reasons for which may only be conjectured. In its work, for reasons that will be examined in chapter 5, the United Nations has essentially from the beginning separated the human rights domain from the economic and social domains, with activities in the latter two having been almost exclusively focused on development. Issues relating to the distributive and redistributive effects of social and economic policies—issues of justice—have therefore been addressed separately from issues of rights, including those inscribed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The unfortunate consequences of this dissociation must be acknowledged. To support the concept of social justice is to argue for a reconciliation of these priorities within the context of a broader social perspective in which individuals endowed with rights and freedoms operate within the framework of the duties and responsibilities attached to living in society. Notwithstanding the implied associations between social justice, redistributive justice, and justice as a more general concept, the fact is that the explicit commitment to social justice has seriously deteriorated; over the past decade, the expression has practically disappeared from the international lexicon and likely from the official language of most countries. The position will be taken here that the United Nations must work to try to restore the integrity and appeal of social justice, interpreted in the contemporary context as distributive justice.

Returning to the Charter, it may be argued that while not explicitly stated, justice among people and for all the world's peoples is its fundamental rationale. As noted earlier, these priorities fall under the heading of international justice, whereby Governments are compelled to represent and serve their populations and act in their best interest, without discrimination, and the sovereign equality of all States is respected. In the Preamble to the Charter, the commitment to justice for people is expressed as a reaffirmation of "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth

of the human person, [and] in the equal rights of men and women". It requires the promotion of "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom" and of "the economic and social advancement of all peoples". It underlies the third stated purpose of the United Nations (after maintaining peace and friendly relations among nations), which is "to achieve international cooperation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion" (Article 1). This purpose is then reiterated in Article 13 as one of the functions of the General Assembly, and in Articles 60 and 62 in reference to the role of the Economic and Social Council in this regard. In short, justice derives from equality of rights for all peoples and the possibility for all human beings, without discrimination, to benefit from the economic and social progress disseminated and secured through international cooperation.

1.4 Economic justice: a component of social justice

Economic justice, defined as the existence of opportunities for meaningful work and employment and the dispensation of fair rewards for the productive activities of individuals, will be treated here as an aspect of social justice. The customary distinction between economic justice and social justice is intellectually unsatisfactory, as it serves to legitimize the dichotomization of the economic and social spheres. This tendency can seriously limit the potential for the advancement of justice, particularly within organizations that exercise a normative function with regard to matters of development. In recent years there has been a discernable trend in international discourse towards the attenuation not only of the concept of social justice, but also of the related concepts of social development and social policy. The social sphere has in many respects been marginalized. One reason for the decline in "social" orientations is the failure to adopt a comprehensive perspective on what the concept encompasses. As asserted later, support for the idea of social justice has gradually diminished because its advocates and practitioners have neglected one of its essential dimensions, which is for individuals to have the opportunity to exercise their initiative and use their talents and to be fairly rewarded for their efforts. To acknowledge the necessity of viewing economic justice as an element of social justice is, again, to argue for a social perspective on human affairs. Economic justice is one among many interrelated dimensions of life in society. It is suggested here that the distributive and redistributive aspects of justice do not have to be separated or perceived as antagonistic.

1.5 Universal grounds for the determination of what is just and what is unjust

Individuals, institutions, Governments and international organizations make judgments about what is just and what is unjust based on complex and generally unfor-

mulated frameworks of moral and political values. Such frameworks vary considerably across cultures and over time, but through the centuries prophets, philosophers and other intellectuals have repeatedly attempted to identify common ground that would allow all human beings in their own and in successive generations to agree on definitions of right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust. It is often said that all great religions and philosophies embody the same core principles and values, and beyond the different metaphysics and institutional settings, reflect the same belief in the capacity of human beings to make moral judgments and to seek perfection in some form. Progress was originally a spiritual concept and was only later applied to the fruits of human technical ingenuity, and the same is true for the notion of justice, which has retained much of the timeless immanence deriving from its religious roots. The United Nations is an outgrowth and an expression of this quest for the universal, of this purposeful search for a common humanity. Notions such as human nature and natural law have found expression in the more modern concepts of the "social contract" and "social compact". To give justice among individuals and nations a more tangible character and contemporary relevance, the United Nations has used the language of rights, and of equality, equity and inequality, in reference to both positive objectives to be pursued and negative situations to be corrected.

1.6 Three critical domains of equality and equity

There are three areas of priority with regard to equality and equity highlighted in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the International Covenants on Human Rights, and in subsequent texts adopted by the General Assembly, notably the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the United Nations Millennium Declaration. They include the following:

- *Equality of rights*, primarily implying the elimination of all forms of discrimination and respect for the fundamental freedoms and civil and political rights of all individuals. This represents the most fundamental form of equality. As stated in article 1 of the Universal Declaration, "all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights", and article 2 is even more specific: "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status."
- *Equality of opportunities*, which requires stable social, economic, cultural and political conditions that enable all individuals to fulfil their potential and contribute to the economy and to society. Interpreted restrictively, this form of equality is akin to equality of rights and means "simply" that societies and Governments refrain from discrimination and allow individuals to freely pursue their aspirations and develop and apply their talents within the moral and legal limits imposed by respect for the freedom of others. Thus defined, it is often identified

with justice and, in the sense described above, more precisely with economic justice. Support for this objective has been linked to the emergence of the laissez-faire doctrine, and from a philosophical perspective this aspect of equality is very close to liberalism and utilitarianism. Interpreted more broadly, equality of opportunities is linked to deliberate action, in particular the application of public policies, to correct and offset the many "unnatural" inequalities that separate individuals from different sociocultural backgrounds and milieus. With this levelling of the playing field, the financial and social success of individuals is largely determined by their natural talent, character, effort, and level of ambition, along with a certain measure of chance or fate. Meritocracy is the logical outcome. Policies focusing on health, education and housing are traditionally seen as particularly important for ensuring equality of opportunities, or *égalité des chances*. In political philosophy, this approach relates to the tradition of the social contract and is a critical aspect of social justice, as understood within socialist and social democratic conventions.

- *Equity in living conditions* for all individuals and households. This concept is understood to reflect a contextually determined "acceptable" range of inequalities in income, wealth and other aspects of life in society, with the presumption of general agreement with regard to what is just or fair (or "equitable") at any given time in any particular community, or in the world as a whole if universal norms are applied. This shift in terms, from equality to equity, derives from the fact that equality in living conditions has never been achieved in practice (except on a very limited scale by small religious or secular communities), has never been seriously envisaged by political theorists or moralists (except in the context of describing attractive—or more often repulsive—utopias), and is today commonly perceived as incompatible with freedom. The pre-Marxist ideal—"from each according to his ability, to each according to his works"—would need to be applied, and for a very long time, within post-revolutionary societies. The truly egalitarian Marxist principle—"from each according to his capacities, to each according to his needs" —would only prevail (with any success) in the distant and quasi-utopian "end of history" referred to in communist theory.[8] In short, equity is the most logical reference point in determining what is just and what is unjust with regard to living conditions and related matters within society. The lack of objective indicators makes this a daunting task, however. What constitutes the equitable distribution of income among social classes, occupations and age groups? From which perspective and on which basis are various manifestations of equity and inequity being assessed? What are the universal norms that allow the United Nations and other international organizations to make judgments and offer advice on the equitability of living conditions around the world? Equity is an inherently vague and controversial notion. Nonetheless, it is a pervasive preoccupation in

all societies, both affluent and poor. Every society, even the laissez-faire variety, has engaged in the distribution and redistribution of income and wealth in some form, with policies generally favouring the poorest but sometimes benefiting the richest, and it is for this reason that issues of equity in living conditions remain central to the dialogue and debate on social justice.

1.7 Six important areas of inequality in the distribution of goods, opportunities and rights

Going a step further in endeavouring to define the more concrete elements requiring consideration in relation to the idea of social justice, the Forum identified six areas of distributive inequality corresponding to situations that, from the perspective of those directly concerned and of the "impartial observer",[9] require correction. Listed roughly in descending order in terms of their relative importance and in ascending order in terms of how difficult they are to measure, the highlighted areas of inequality are as follows:

- *Inequalities in the distribution of income.* The distribution of income among individuals or households at the local or national level, based on classifications such as socio-economic status, profession, gender, location, and income percentiles, is the most widely used measure of the degree of equality or inequality existing in a society. Though the statistical difficulties, particularly with regard to cross-country comparisons, cannot be overemphasized, the distribution of income is relatively amenable to measurement, and if the resulting data are interpreted correctly and sufficient prudence is exercised, any problems that may arise are generally surmountable. With the availability of an income, individuals and households acquire the capacity to make choices and gain immediate access to a number of amenities. For most contemporary societies, income distribution remains the most legitimate indicator of the overall levels of equality and inequality.
- *Inequalities in the distribution of assets*, including not only capital but also physical assets such as land and buildings. There is normally a strong positive correlation between the distribution of income and the distribution of assets. Data from a variety of sources are generally available to Governments or independent statistical offices wishing to document what has traditionally been both a determinant of social status and political power and a source of political upheaval and revolution. As stated in article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone has the right to own property alone as well as in association with others", and "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his property".
- *Inequalities in the distribution of opportunities for work and remunerated employment.* In both developed and developing countries today, the distribution of work and employment opportunities is the main determinant of income distribution and a key to economic and social justice. The distinction between work

and employment is important; "work" encompasses all independent economic activities and what is called the spirit of entrepreneurship (an element of which is the creation of small and medium-sized enterprises), and more generally the economic opportunities offered by society to all those who wish to seize them. Statistics on the distribution of employment opportunities and unemployment are more readily available than data on, for instance, the proportions of young people from different socio-economic backgrounds who have managed to secure bank loans to start their own enterprises. As economies continue to diversify and become more and more service oriented, this sort of information will be increasingly useful. At the same time, the United Nations and its agencies, in particular the International Labour Organization (ILO), cannot ignore the fact that the vast majority of people in the world work in order to survive. Discrepancies in working conditions among those in different professions and social groups, including immigrants, constitute part of this item.

- *Inequalities in the distribution of access to knowledge*. Considered in this context are issues relating to levels of enrolment in schools and universities among children from different socio-economic groups, as well as issues linked to the quality of educational delivery in various institutions and regions. Education, including technical training and adult education, is critical for ensuring access to decent work and for social mobility, and in most societies is a strong determinant of social status and an important source of self-respect. Because schools and universities are no longer the only dispensers of knowledge, and in the light of the emergence of new learning modes and tools such as the Internet, access to various technologies is also considered in assessing education-related inequalities. Although the distinction between information and knowledge remains valid and relevant, a number of statistical publications now present certain types of data together, including, for example, gender-disaggregated statistics on the ownership of television sets, book acquisitions, and primary and secondary enrolment ratios.
- *Inequalities in the distribution of health services, social security and the provision of a safe environment*. Traditional indicators of well-being such as life expectancy and child mortality rates, broken down by gender, socio-economic status and area of residence, are typically used along with other data to identify and measure inequalities in the distribution of amenities all societies endeavour to provide for their members. As is the case with education, issues relating to the availability, quality and accessibility of health and social services and facilities are critical but are difficult to analyse and measure. As stated in article 22 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, "everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international cooperation … of the economic, social and cultural rights

indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality". Social security, now often limited to social protection and safety nets, was a core component of the welfare state model adopted by countries around the globe after the Second World War. The sources of financing for social security benefits and the distribution of such benefits within a community remain pressing issues. Moving on to the last item, the right to a healthy and pleasant environment, not polluted by uncontrolled or predatory human activities, is considered by its proponents to constitute part of the third generation of human rights (the first generation having comprised civil and political rights and the second generation economic, social and cultural rights). Pollution, generated continuously by unregulated commercial activities and more dramatically and catastrophically through incidents such as the Chernobyl and Bhopal disasters, does not choose its victims. It is nevertheless true that rich and poor people have an unequal capacity to ensure a safe environment. Differentials in personal security and safety could also logically be placed under the heading of inequalities in the provision of a safe environment. Crime, in its many forms, is growing in most societies, and groups at the lower end of the socio-economic scale continue to be disproportionately affected. The suffering and losses associated with internal conflicts and wars are also very unevenly distributed; it should be noted that the Forum hesitated on whether to place this increasingly critical issue here or in the next and last category.

- *Inequalities in the distribution of opportunities for civic and political participation*. This form of inequality is rarely discussed in international circles, perhaps because of its inherent complexity and sensitivity, and perhaps also because the practice of democracy is usually limited to the holding of elections; those who vote in presidential and parliamentary elections are implicitly considered participants in political life. Involvement in the electoral process notwithstanding, the Forum asserted that inequalities and inequities associated with political institutions and processes were key factors contributing to inequalities and inequities in society more generally. The way power is organized and distributed among society's various institutions and the manner in which political processes are carried out have a profound influence on how citizens see and find their place on the social ladder and within in the social fabric. This does not mean that the unequal distribution of political power is always the direct cause of other forms of inequality. Simple cause-effect relationships do not explain this highly complex phenomenon in which personal and social factors are intertwined. It is generally acknowledged, however, that the distribution of power and how it is exercised by those who have it are at the core of the different forms and manifestations of inequality and inequity.

1.8 The need for further distinction and greater precision

Before moving on to an assessment of recent trends in the realm of social justice and international justice, brief consideration should be given to two complementary factors relating to the conceptual framework for social justice sketched in this first chapter.

First, the six types or areas of inequality reviewed above may be referred to as "vertical" inequalities. They derive from the division of an entire population—usually the inhabitants of a country but in some cases the members of a region, a city or an age group—along the lines of income or degree of political participation or other variables theoretically applicable to all. The Forum concentrated on this approach because of the importance traditionally attached to the distribution of income as an overall measure of inequality in a country. However, there are other types of disparities that might be termed "horizontal" inequalities, reflecting comparisons made between the situations of identified segments of the population differentiated on the basis of sex, racial or ethnic origin, or area of residence, for example. Using the earlier delineation of vertical inequalities as a guide, it would be important to establish some sort of typology of the forms of horizontal inequality that are generally considered and are deemed important from the perspective of social justice. The Forum was in a position to make only a few comments in this context, notably with regard to the progress made in the critical domain of equality between women and men.

Second, further conceptual effort is required to examine the extent to which the three priority areas of equality/equity and the six areas of inequality that have been identified to lend operational content to the notion of social justice also apply to the developmental aspects of international justice. A number of the categories are clearly valid for both dimensions of justice, in particular the distribution of income, assets and access to knowledge, while others, such as the distribution of opportunities for political participation, would be applicable with some modifications in language—in this case a mention of the involvement of countries in the management of international organizations and other international arrangements such as the meetings of the Group of Eight industrialized countries. Other categories specifically relevant to issues of international justice in a fragmented and conflicted world also require consideration and could be addressed in the context of future discussion and debate. A relatively limited assessment of the current level of international justice is presented in chapter 2, while chapter 3 provides a more detailed examination of recent trends in social justice, considered within the framework established in chapter 1.

Chapter 2
Rising inequalities among countries

In its assessment of current trends in international justice, the Forum focused primarily on developmental considerations, though attention was also given to legal and political dimensions.

2.1 National sovereignty and the right of intervention

The Forum noted that on two recent occasions, force had been used against States Members of the United Nations without the formal approval of the Security Council and outside the provisions of chapter VII of the Charter.[10] Even prior to these events, the "right of intervention", legitimized by the overriding need to protect human rights and in particular to prevent genocide, had been openly and vigorously debated in international circles. Today, it is generally agreed that the principles of respect for national sovereignty and non-interference in the domestic affairs of a State can be legitimately suspended to address unchecked and unpunished violations of basic human rights and fundamental freedoms. Intolerance for such violations represents a heightening of the human consciousness and real progress, and is a necessary step in the building of a true world community. Vexing questions arise, however, with regard to the type of legal regime needed to govern this right of intervention. Assuming that satisfactory agreement could be reached on the nature and extent of the violations that would necessitate different degrees of condemnation and different modalities of intervention, and assuming that the role of a reformed Security Council in such matters was clearly defined, even-handedness and fairness would remain critical for the credibility and durability of such a system. Powerful countries would have to be subjected to the same rules as weak countries. The present state of affairs with regard to the use of the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court suggests that the world is not yet ready for an international legal regime subordinating national sovereignty to respect for fundamental human rights. Nonetheless, for all those who believe there are universal core values that define a common humanity and common standards of decency, the desirable direction of change in international law and international relations is clear.

2.2 Equality among Member States and inequalities in power

The sovereign equality of all countries is recognized within the United Nations, a fact perhaps best symbolized by the rule that each State—regardless of its size, population, economic and financial status, military power, and level of cultural and political prestige and standing in the international arena—has one vote in the General Assembly. This rule gives the Organization, with its near universal membership, its distinctiveness and legitimacy. However, international justice also requires

recognition of the differences in power among States. Power implies influence and responsibility. An international organization that ignored this fact and did not possess the characteristics of a world government would be reduced to impotence and irrelevance. Accordingly, the Charter established a balance between these two facets of international justice with the respective compositions and functions of the General Assembly and the Security Council.

This system is still in place 60 years later but is being subjected to increasing pressure and criticism. Concerns have prompted calls for reforming the composition of the Security Council, and questions have been raised regarding the role and effectiveness of the General Assembly. Voices urging the abandonment of the "one country, one vote" principle and its replacement (at least in some contexts) with a weighted voting system have so far been rather muted, but the recalcitrance shown by those Member States impatient with international democracy has effectively stripped the General Assembly of its powers. Particularly since the call for a new international economic order by developing and non-aligned countries in the mid-1970s gave rise to complaints of "a tyranny of the majority", the General Assembly has largely been reduced to an annual forum without much influence in world affairs. In the mid-1980s, the major contributors to the United Nations budget demanded substantial organizational reforms. The main elements of the reform effort, initiated by General Assembly resolution 41/213 of 19 December 1986 on the review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations, included a reduction in the number of international civil servants, a de facto freeze in the regular budget (financed by assessed contributions), and the understanding that the pursuit of consensus would replace recourse to voting in deliberative bodies, notably the General Assembly. These elements remain in place. In exchange for such major concessions by Member States interested in facilitating the growth and dynamic functioning of the United Nations, the main powers promised to ensure the provision of adequate, secure and predictable financing for the Organization's mandated activities.

Some 20 years later, the United Nations is facing serious financial and other difficulties, and the pursuit of consensus continues to prevail in the General Assembly as well as in the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. Reliance on consensus, as employed within this unique context, nullifies the "one country, one vote" principle and means that the decisions, resolutions and declarations of the United Nations, notably in matters relating to development and globalization, reflect the views and interests of a strong and influential minority. Obviously, powerful countries have a much greater capacity than weak countries to impose a consensus. In his report for the fifty-ninth session of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General states that "unfortunately, consensus (often interpreted as requiring unanimity) has become an end in itself. It is sought first within each regional group

and then at the level of the whole. This has not proved an effective way of reconciling the interests of Member States. Rather, it prompts the Assembly to retreat into generalities, abandoning any serious effort to take action."[11] One might assert that the previously alleged "tyranny of the majority" has been replaced by a "tyranny of the minority" in the age of globalization.

2.3 The developmental aspect of international justice: a legitimate concern?

The various arguments advanced to support the legitimacy of an inquiry into the developmental aspect of international justice may be summarized as follows:

- The State is no longer the main actor on the international scene, and its relevance will continue to diminish as the process of globalization gains momentum. Transnational actors—mainly corporations and banks but also international organizations and social and religious institutions and movements—are playing an increasingly important role. Modern information and communication technologies (ICT) ignore borders and national sovereignty. National policies, including those aimed at addressing inequalities that contribute to poverty and other social ills, are routinely bypassed and overridden by the decisions of global institutions regulating international finance and trade. The most powerful countries can still impose their views and exert their influence on others, but even they do not seem to be willing or able to control the transnational forces that have been unleashed on the world. Many States are economically, financially and politically weak and consequently have little or no say in international affairs affecting their development. As the Westphalian order is collapsing, there is no point in being concerned with the equality of its members. Those interested in the pursuit of international justice should work on developing processes and institutions that could regulate and balance the interplay of transnational forces rather than remaining preoccupied with inequalities among entities that are destined to be marginalized and ultimately disappear.
- Along similar lines, it may be argued that there is an inherent futility in working to achieve greater equality between States in terms of development when there is no authority able to enforce measures that would ensure the realization of such an objective. Demands for justice have traditionally been addressed to leaders, Governments and other entities with recognized authority and responsibility for the security and welfare of the groups concerned. The United Nations does not possess such authority. International organizations with greater power and influence in economic and financial matters, in particular the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), have different mandates. A world government with an enforceable mandate to ensure equality and justice between its constituents is not on the immediate horizon.

- The objective of achieving greater equality between countries in terms of development presupposes that "development" is a clear concept agreed upon by all concerned and accepted as being in the common interest of humanity, including future generations. This might have been the case in the 1960s and 1970s, but many believe today that the dominant pattern of economic development is physically, politically and morally unsustainable. It encourages and actually feeds on acquisitiveness, consumerism and a predatory attitude towards nature. Others are convinced that development is a superfluous notion, as what matters most is a freeing of economic initiative—the pursuit of economic justice—and participation in the world economy through trade and openness to foreign investment. For both those committed to the search for a different meaning of economic and social progress and proponents of the laissez-faire political philosophy, ranking countries on a scale defined by a few economic aggregates and then trying to bring them all to the top of this scale is an artificial exercise.
- Finally, even if inequality in development among countries is considered a legitimate issue, assigning it priority diverts attention from the pressing problem of growing inequalities among people and, within this context, the extreme poverty that persists in various parts of the world. The worst problems of inequality and inequity exist within societies. Notwithstanding the trend towards globalization and interdependence, States still have the capacity to alleviate or aggravate these problems. Inequality among countries, particularly inequality between developed and developing countries, is a long-term problem of growth and development. However, social injustice, inequalities and inequities within societies can be more immediately and effectively addressed by a wide range of policies and decisions at the local and national levels that might, for example, bring about changes in tax systems and in the institutions delivering public services. International organizations are in a position to at least influence these decisions.

Sensitive to these arguments, the Forum nonetheless agreed that international justice, and particularly its developmental component, should remain high on the agenda of the United Nations for two compelling reasons:

- First, States remain the indispensable building blocks of a viable international community. International organizations should be modified, expanded and created to address global problems and respond to global aspirations. In particular, global economic and financial powers need to be checked and balanced by global political institutions whose primary function is to represent the peoples of the world and endeavour to define and promote the common good. The viability and efficacy of such institutions, including the United Nations, hinges upon the active participation and informed consent of strong and responsible States genuinely seeking to act in the best interests of their citizens. A peaceful world community cannot emerge from the will of a few powerful countries or from the

interplay of private interests and forces. States must assume more responsibility for the pursuit of peace and justice. Greater equality in levels of development, measured traditionally or using indicators more sensitive to social and political conditions, would place more countries in a position to participate in the management of global affairs. This assertion is not based on naive optimism or the assumption of universal benevolence among peoples and their Governments. Simply put, countries and Governments less plagued by disorder and poverty and blessed with intangibles such as hope, respect from others, and a sense of their own worth and dignity have a greater capacity and are more likely to contribute to the building and maintenance of a harmonious world community. The various aspects of international justice are connected.

- Second, links exist not only between the reduction in inequalities in levels of development and increased respect for the territorial and political integrity of each nation, but also between international justice, so understood, and social justice. Issues of intracountry and intercountry inequality are related first through the prevailing ideas on economic organization and development. Policies and practices relating to market deregulation, free trade and domestic market protection, competition, labour costs and labour standards, systems of taxation, and tax exemptions and tax havens, for example, have a direct impact on various forms of equity and equality at both the national and international levels. Generally, the "rules of the game" established for international transactions strongly influence domestic conditions and the distribution of the fruits of economic activity. Currently, the freedom of action enjoyed by a few major public and corporate powers to set the rules of the game is paralleled by the relative impotence of a majority of lesser actors, including most of the Member States of the United Nations. This constituted a recurrent theme within the Forum. For a large number of countries, the reduction or prevention of inequalities and inequities at home would be greatly facilitated or even effected by a reduction in inequalities and inequities at the international and global levels. Certain features of the present world political economy, including those generally viewed as positive, such as the relatively free global movement of individuals with valued managerial or technical abilities, create or contribute to domestic imbalances and inequalities. In this example, the international-domestic link was established through the emergence of a transnational market for certain skills. This market affects national patterns of salary and income distribution owing not only to the cross-border movement of labour but also to the fact that there are talented individuals from developing countries who decide not to move abroad but are nevertheless in a better bargaining position because their skills are in demand elsewhere. This relatively new phenomenon of increased inequality among groups across national borders—characterized by a degree of homogeneity at both the top and

bottom of the income and status ladder (among those with highly valued and little valued skills, respectively)—is an important development. Growing regional inequalities inside countries are also a product of the “entanglement” of various types of inequality and inequity within and between countries and derive in part from the characteristics of the global economy. International justice and social justice have advanced or regressed in parallel.

2.4 Evidence of the decline in international justice from a developmental perspective

Overall, the income gap between rich and poor countries and regions has been widening since the beginning of the 1980s. Per capita income in various world regions, expressed as a proportion of the average per capita income of the wealthier country members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), evolved as follows between 1980 and the beginning of the twenty-first century: the relative share declined from 3.3 to 1.9 per cent in Africa, from 9.7 to 6.7 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa, and from 18 to 12.8 per cent in Latin America and the Caribbean, but rose from 1.2 to 1.6 per cent in South Asia and from 1.5 to 3.3 per cent in East Asia and the Pacific. Statistics on the world distribution of income indicate that in the 1990s a larger proportion of the African population moved into the lowest income quintile. The 2004 *World Bank Atlas* reveals that the 2.3 billion people living in low-income countries earn an average of US$ 450 per year, though in some economies the figure is as low as US$ 90; for the 3 billion people in middle-income countries, the average is US$ 1,920, while the 971 million in high-income countries receive an average of US$ 28,550. In other words, the 1 billion people living in wealthier countries account for 80 per cent of the world’s gross domestic product (GDP), while the 5 billion people in developing countries share the remaining 20 per cent. Within regions, income inequality among countries has also grown.[12]

The rise in income inequality between countries has been accompanied by growing disparities in the ability of various countries and regions to reduce the extreme poverty affecting portions of their population. Statistics indicate that the share of people living on less than US$ 1 a day fell from 40 per cent in 1981 to 21 per cent in 2001, but this overall decline masks widely divergent regional trends. East Asia and the Pacific, led by China, reported the largest decline in extreme poverty, with the rate dropping from 58 to 16 per cent. Absolute poverty also declined in South Asia (from 52 to 31 per cent), but remained steady in Latin America (at around 20 per cent) and rose dramatically in the former Soviet Union and in Central Europe. In Africa, the number of people living in dire poverty nearly doubled.

In political terms, inequality between countries has certainly not declined in recent years. One country has gained hegemony, the Security Council has retained the same permanent members, and developing countries appear to have less leve-

rage in world affairs than they did 20 years ago. Developing countries have made no significant progress in their quest for a greater say in the management of the world economy and for control over global private economic and financial forces. Financial and trade practices still favour the most powerful, and exceptions to general rules are granted more rarely and reluctantly than ever before. There are strong inequalities and imbalances in the global decision-making processes affecting all countries. The processes and operations associated with the formulation, implementation and evaluation of the rules and regulations governing the functioning of the world economy are still largely controlled by rich countries. Financial dependency may be an important contributing factor; a number of Governments continue to rely on ODA for their daily operations. Personal security is another area of concern; countries at different levels of development remain extremely unequal in their degree of exposure to various risks and in their capacity to deal with the consequences of natural catastrophes or man-made conflicts and violence. Developing countries with low to moderate levels of power and influence have no more political autonomy now than they did several decades ago. For the countries of the world, the distance between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the weak, and the self-sufficient and the dependent is now often characterized as an abyss.

Chapter 3

Rising inequalities among people

Inequalities in income distribution widened perceptibly during the last quarter of the twentieth century, following what had been a steady reduction in income disparities since the Second World War. This worsening of income inequality, which has persisted and now affects most countries, received considerable attention from the Forum. However, the Forum also focused on some notable gains in the realm of distributive justice, highlighting the progress made with regard to equality of rights, particularly in relation to the situation of women, and with regard to economic justice.

3.1 Issues relating to the reliability and diversity of sources of information

It is necessary to outline the difficulties and considerations associated with conducting an analytical appraisal of the immensely complicated issue of equality and justice from a distributional perspective. First, there is the vastness of the issue, which in itself challenges the research capacity and analytical ability of an institution or group of people meeting periodically to share their knowledge and views, and a second important limiting factor is the paucity and poor quality of data. Justice, equity and equality can legitimately be explored from a philosophical, moral or political perspective, even by those who can only aspire to the breadth and depth of perspicacity shown by a John Rawls, John Stuart Mill or Jean-Jacques Rousseau. One could argue that in the United Nations itself more discussion and debate should be devoted to the philosophical, moral and religious foundations of the idea of justice and to the current understanding of the notion of universal human rights. In a limited exercise such as that undertaken by this Forum, however, theoretical reflections had to be supported by facts and data.[13]

There are some significant problems relating to the availability, consistency and quality of data. For many developing countries, basic demographic, social and economic statistics do not come from national sources but are compiled by international organizations, with relevant data obtained through sample surveys, at best, but more often through comparisons, projections and extrapolations. These statistics often convey a partial and very superficial picture of living conditions among the people concerned. One unfortunate aspect of the bureaucratic or technocratic culture of international organizations is the general reluctance to complement and enrich limited statistical data with direct impressions, personal testimonies, anecdotal material, travelogues or works of fiction. A better balance will have to be sought at some point in the United Nations between different sources and forms of knowledge. In particular, empirical data will have to be complemented by the less measurable but richer knowledge of the human condition gained through real-world experience.

Even when reliable statistics are available from national sources and the much-used (and indeed indispensable) aggregates and averages for indicators such as per capita income and enrolment ratios are provided, data are generally not broken down enough to capture critical details relating the situation of specific population groups. In the present context, data on individuals in the top 5 per cent or 1 per cent in terms of income or assets could be further disaggregated in some countries to allow an examination of the situation of the very rich. Those at the other end of the socio-economic scale would also benefit from a closer look; the extremely poor are rarely the focus of regular detailed analysis.

Data on social and economic conditions are often expressed in absolute numbers, percentages or ratios; indicators relying on other forms of measurement offer an added dimension to the analytical process. The use of the Gini coefficient, on which most analyses and comparisons of trends in income distribution are based, is a case in point.[14] For example, an observed increase in income inequality in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland since the beginning of the 1980s may be interpreted differently from a similar increase observed in the United States during the same period based on the countries' respective Gini scores; the United Kingdom currently has a Gini index of 32.5, which roughly corresponds to the levels in developing countries, whereas the index for the United States, at 41.4, is closer to the levels of most Latin American countries.

It should be noted that the qualitative aspects of inequality are often extremely difficult to measure; current statistics and indicators are glaringly inadequate in this respect. Only very specific and detailed enquiries could, for instance, reveal the extent of open and covert discrimination that in most societies affects people who are in any way different from the majority.

3.2 Trends in six major areas of inequality among people

In spite of the complexity and scope of the subject of inequality, and in spite of the difficulties in measuring or simply assessing its dimensions, the Forum was able to state with a reasonable degree of certainty that the overall level of inequality in the world had risen since the beginning of the 1980s. The trend towards greater equality, evident in most regions following the Second World War, has to a significant extent been reversed during the past few decades, and all signs point to a continuation of this tendency. In reaching this conclusion the Forum relied on its own observations and on the results of regional studies it had commissioned. Immense intellectual satisfaction was undoubtedly gained from the fact that the Forum's findings were in agreement with those obtained by the World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER) through its comprehensive investigative efforts, the results of which were published at the beginning of 2004.[15] The subsections below offer evidence of the overall aggravation of inequality in different

societies during the past several decades, incorporating regional distinctions and other details where possible.

3.2.1 Rising inequality in the distribution of income

Inequalities in income distribution have worsened in most countries during the past 20 to 30 years. Typically, the share of total national income accruing to households in the top income decile has increased, while the share of the bottom 10 per cent has decreased. Between those at each end of the scale—the richest 1 per cent and the poorest 1 per cent—the gaps have grown even wider. In a number of countries, particularly in Asia, the rise in income inequality has been accompanied by a reduction in extreme poverty as measured by the threshold of US$ 1 per day or by national poverty lines. However, it appears that in the majority of countries around the world, both income inequality and extreme poverty have increased, affecting larger numbers and proportions of the population. The current situation in various regions and country groupings may be summarized as follows:

- In *Africa*, poverty in the context of inadequate economic development is a dominant problem. Though data are scarce, income inequality appears to be significant and is becoming an issue of growing concern. Estimates put the Gini index at 44 per cent; the shares of total income for those in the highest and lowest income quintiles are 50 and 5 per cent respectively. Statistics indicate that about a quarter of Africa's residents are experiencing long-term poverty and that up to 60 per cent are extremely vulnerable and move in and out of extreme poverty. It should be noted that the incidence of poverty and levels of inequality vary widely among countries, and there are indications that negative trends are being reversed in some parts of the continent.
- In *Asia*, income inequality has grown very rapidly and dramatically in some countries, including China (whose Gini index is believed to have risen from 25 to 37.2 per cent between 1984 and 2000), and more slowly and steadily in other countries, notably Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Thailand. At the same time, overall standards of living have improved as a result of fast economic growth, and extreme poverty affects a smaller proportion of the region's population today than it did 10 or 20 years ago. The trend towards a reduction in extreme poverty, initiated several decades ago, was interrupted by the financial crisis of 1996/97 but has resumed in recent years.
- *Latin America* has traditionally experienced high levels of income inequality, as evidenced by the region's current Gini index of around 44 per cent. Inequalities have increased during the past several decades, particularly in Bra-

zil, Chile and Venezuela. The combined results of national household surveys indicate that 211 million people in the region were experiencing absolute poverty at the end of the 1990s, compared with 136 million in 1980 and 200 million in 1990.

- In *Eurasia*, the region encompassing the former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, dramatic increases in both income inequality and extreme poverty occurred in the wake of the enormous political and social upheaval accompanying the shift from a planned economy to a market economy. In the Russian Federation, for example, the income share of the poorest 20 per cent of the population fell from 11.9 per cent in 1991 to 5.9 per cent in 2001, while the share of the richest 20 per cent rose from 30.7 to 48.3 per cent. During this period, 80 per cent of the country's households experienced a drop in income. Absolute poverty affected 50 per cent of the population in the Russian Federation and around 80 per cent in most of the Central Asian republics at the end of the twentieth century. Over the past few years, with the resumption of a certain level of economic growth, levels of extreme poverty in the region have improved somewhat.
- Income inequality has increased markedly in a number of *OECD countries*; towards the end of the 1990s, Gini indexes were 41.7 per cent for Australia, 41.4 per cent for the United States, 40.2 per cent for New Zealand, and 32.5 per cent for the United Kingdom. Levels of income inequality have remained stable in other OECD countries, including France, Germany, Japan, the Republic of Korea and Sweden, and have actually declined in Canada, Italy, Norway and Spain. A few other exceptions to the general trend of worsening income distribution are also worth noting; in Latin America, income inequality has improved in Honduras and Uruguay and has apparently remained relatively stable in Mexico. For the Forum, these exceptions seemed to suggest that those Governments that wished to do so somehow found it possible to resist the wave of liberalism that has arguably been responsible for the deepening of income inequalities in the world. However, it would be imprudent to attach too much meaning (and for those involved in activities aimed at reducing income inequalities, too much hope) to these deviations from the general trend; countries that have not experienced increased income inequality may yet do so at some point in the future. In all of the OECD countries, absolute poverty, measured according to national poverty lines, has become more prevalent during the past 20 to 25 years. There is no compelling evidence indicating that those countries that have experienced stable or improved income distribution have managed to avoid worsening inequalities in the other domains listed below.

3.2.2 Rising inequality in the distribution of assets

Although asset distribution is not as well documented as income distribution, there is no question that both have been characterized by the same negative trend. During the past quarter of a century, the distribution of assets, especially capital, has become more skewed in favour of those at the top of the socio-economic ladder. As labour has lost ground in relation to capital for the remuneration of the factors of production, the share of capital income in total income has increased, and this capital has been more heavily concentrated in fewer hands rather than more evenly distributed. The almost universal trend towards privatization that swept the world during the last part of the twentieth century rarely, if ever, resulted in the spread of "popular capitalism". The main beneficiaries of the shift from a State-controlled, State-dominated, or even State-influenced economy to a more liberalized economy in various parts of the world have been those privileged few in positions of power or influence. Nowhere have employees and small entrepreneurs succeeded in modifying the national distribution of assets to their advantage; few have been given the chance to try. The much freer circulation of capital and the opening up of investment opportunities across national borders, combined with the privatization movement, have led to a global redistribution of assets characterized by the transfer of significant amounts of capital from national to foreign hands. In the mid-1990s, transnational corporations controlled half of the 100 largest companies in Latin America and accounted for 43 per cent of the sales of the region's top 500 companies. Another factor contributing to the uneven distribution of assets is capital flight, which seriously hinders development in many countries. The highest incidence of capital flight occurs in Africa, Latin America and the Middle East; capital flight from severely indebted sub-Saharan African countries was recently estimated to have reached US$ 22 billion. The disappearance of land reform and land redistribution from the development agendas of most countries has further skewed the distribution of assets in the world. Almost everywhere, the position of the "haves" in society has been strengthened by the evolution of tax systems that benefit the owners of capital.

3.2.3 More work opportunities for a few and increased unemployment and underemployment for the majority

Maintaining the distinction between opportunities for work—an important element of which is the capacity for initiative and entrepreneurship—and opportunities for employment, it is likely that the former have improved in a number of countries, particularly those that have abandoned or liberalized their rigid communist or socialist economic systems. While the Forum was not apprised of any studies offering relevant estimates, it is believed that an impressive number of young adults in China have been given the opportunity to employ their entre-

preneurial talents either independently or as members of domestic or foreign companies. Notwithstanding the well-publicized role of oligarchs and plutocrats in the Russian Federation, the opening of the country's economy is believed to have given many young men and women a chance to prove their worth and be rewarded accordingly. The same appears to be true for the former socialist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. In India, already a democracy, economic reforms and an overall policy more favourable to capitalist and free market ideals have led to more and better opportunities for young graduates and professionals both at home and abroad. Even in a number of well-established economies in which market-oriented reforms have been instituted in a very gradual and controlled manner, there are more economic opportunities available now than 20 years ago; the United Kingdom is a case in point. Overall, these developments suggest that some progress has been made towards achieving economic justice. At the same time, however, the commitment made at the World Summit for Social Development to pursue the goal of full employment has largely been neglected. Globally, unemployment and underemployment have increased and now affect a much larger proportion of individuals on the lower rungs of the socio-economic ladder—the poor, the uneducated, and those with skills not valued in the economy—than those with an education, social connections, and more highly valued skills. In both developed and developing countries, women and youth are disproportionately affected by unemployment and underemployment. Work and employment opportunities are generally more scarce in rural areas than in urban areas, even though rural residents make up the majority of the population in many developing countries, and the situation does not appear to be improving. In India, for instance, growth in rural employment stood at only 0.67 per cent at the end of the 1990s, the lowest rate registered in the country's post-independence history. In a significant number of countries, the gap between rural and urban salaries appears to have widened. Around the world, new job opportunities have emerged predominantly in the services sector, and in developing countries in particular, most of these opportunities have been within the informal economy, where workers are poorly compensated and not provided with any kind of social security, and where labour laws and standards are seldom observed. Precarious working conditions are now the rule rather than the exception in many contexts, pointing to the treatment of labour as a "commodity", a practice denounced more than a century ago by Karl Marx and others. Seemingly everywhere, wages and other forms of remuneration have become increasingly unequal within and between sectors, communities, countries and regions, and between nationals and immigrants, the skilled and the less skilled, and urban and rural residents. Even within the public services sector, which has generally been "downsized", differences in remuneration have widened as attempts have been made to reward initiative and competence rather than dedication and se-

niority. These trends suggest that while progress has been made in the realm of economic justice, with the rewarding of initiative and talent, levels of inequality have continued to increase. Employment and work opportunities have improved for a minority but have deteriorated, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, for the majority of people in the world.

3.2.4 A better distribution of information and perhaps of knowledge, but a more uneven distribution of opportunities for quality education

This complex and somewhat ambiguous title effectively represents an invitation to those interested in pursuing this line of inquiry rather than a set of informed conclusions reached by the Forum. Clearly, segments of the population that previously had little or no access to information now find it far more readily available. Radio, television and newspapers have touched the lives of people all along the socio-economic spectrum in virtually every corner of every nation. Wired and wireless technologies have revolutionized the exchange and dissemination of information; Internet use has been characterized by exponential growth in every region of the world. The ICT revolution is often considered one of the defining features of globalization; its social, economic, cultural and political implications are enormous but have yet to be fully understood. Knowledge is also transferred through these new technologies; distance learning and other non-traditional options have made education more accessible to many. In a more traditional context, there has been consistent improvement in school and university enrolment ratios. Even in Africa, which continues to face serious challenges in many areas of development, estimates indicate that between the early 1980s and 2000, primary enrolment ratios increased from 78 to 89 per cent for girls and from 85 to 95 per cent for boys, and rates of illiteracy declined from 61 to 46 per cent for women and from 40 to 29 per cent for men. In China, primary enrolment reached 98.6 per cent in 2000, and 97 per cent of those completing primary school were continuing on to the secondary level. Latin America is believed to have achieved full primary enrolment. In India, overall literacy rose from 52 per cent in 1991 to 65 per cent in 2000.

Globally, a higher proportion of young people from poor and modest households now have the opportunity to acquire knowledge. The quality and depth of educational provision has been the subject of intense controversy, however. Mention is often made of the poor quality of education provided in primary schools in both developed and developing countries, and at the tertiary level gaps in educational quality appear to be widening. Children of wealthy and well-connected families have a much better chance of attending prestigious (or simply good) universities either at home or abroad than do children of families with limited means. The intergenerational transfer of inequalities in education re-

mains a persistent problem. In Latin America, for example, around 75 per cent of young people in urban areas are from households in which the parents received less than 10 years of education, and on average, more than 45 per cent of them fail to complete the 12 years of schooling considered necessary to secure a decent and stable job and income. Just over 30 per cent of young people whose parents did not complete their primary education manage to finish the secondary cycle, compared with 75 per cent of those whose parents had at least 10 years of schooling.

There appears to be a strong link between rising inequalities in the distribution of opportunities for a quality education and the recent tendency to commercialize education and treat it as a commodity subject to the rules of an open and competitive market economy. For years, international financial institutions overseeing the implementation of structural adjustment programmes encouraged the Governments of developing countries to charge fees for the delivery of primary education. This reform component was discarded following widespread protests, but there are many other indications that, within the general context of the weakened commitment to public service and reduced support for universal social programmes, education is increasingly being treated as merchandise and pupils as customers. If nothing is done to address this issue, schools and universities of quality will be accessible only to the privileged classes, while the masses will have to be satisfied with lower-priced and often mediocre institutions.

3.2.5 Growing inequalities in health care and social security and the apparent emergence of environmental inequalities

In health, as in education, traditional indicators suggest overall progress. In Latin America, life expectancy at birth has increased from 67 to 70 years, which reflects overall health gains for the majority of the population and not only for the 5 or 10 per cent at the top of the income ladder. Similarly, the decline in infant mortality in Africa, from 96 to 85 deaths per 1,000 live births, has not benefited the small, affluent urban elite exclusively. The optimism generated by such data must be tempered, however, as a number of critical health challenges and inequalities remain. Perhaps most serious is the HIV/AIDS pandemic, a tragedy of immense magnitude that is in many ways comparable to the great plagues of the past in that it has caused enormous suffering and has seriously undermined social, economic, cultural and political stability and development in a number of settings. Poor people living in developing countries have been especially hard hit, as they tend to be more vulnerable to HIV infection, generally receive less assistance and support from society and the medical establishment, and often lack access to lifesaving medications. It should be recalled that one of the Mil-

lennium Development Goals is to ensure that, through cooperation with the pharmaceutical industry, individuals in developing countries are provided with access to affordable essential medications.

Some countries and regions have experienced a regression during the past few decades, even in terms of broad indicators such as life expectancy and infant mortality. This has been especially true in Eurasia. At least until recently—and the evidence of a reversal is far from overwhelming—health conditions were deteriorating dramatically in much of the region, particularly in the Russian Federation in the context of general neglect, the under-financing of public services, and the breakdown of a wide range of social institutions. An actual decline in life expectancy was registered—a rather exceptional development in these modern times. This overall decline in health conditions was accompanied by increased inequalities, as the affluent minority had access to higher-quality private health care and facilities at home or abroad. The health sector, perhaps to an even greater degree than the education sector, is becoming highly commercialized in many parts of the world. It is fast becoming an industry driven by supply and demand, with producers and consumers, and those with means have a distinct advantage over the poor in terms of their ability to secure a wide array of quality services. Social security systems are under severe stress, as the demand for services far exceeds available resources in many settings, and private insurance is increasingly seen as an alternative to publicly financed systems of protection. Those living in more affluent countries typically have greater access to health information and are theoretically in a better position to understand their health and nutritional needs and the workings of the health-care system. Nonetheless, the residents of richer countries tend to be prone to obesity, while poor people in developing countries are undernourished, and many are starving. Those higher on the social ladder, particularly in developed countries, are also more aware of environmental challenges and are better able to protect themselves from pollution and other hazards. Affluent countries and social groups consume more energy and are therefore the biggest polluters, but they are also the ones with the greatest capacity to mobilize resources to ensure a clean environment.

3.2.6 Ambiguous trends in the distribution of opportunities for participation in civic and political life

The Forum was not in a position to address this vast and complex subject beyond offering a few general observations. Judgments on progress or regression in the realm of political participation are heavily dependent on the perspective and criteria adopted by the observer; this is true with regard to all the aspects of inequality examined thus far but is particularly the case here. Apart from the

intense focus on issues of violence and security in recent years, the international discourse has concentrated on the progress of democracy. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a great many countries have shifted from dictatorial or authoritarian regimes to political systems or structures that incorporate at least some aspects of democracy, including the holding of elections. In and around the Russian Federation, in Latin America, in Africa, and to some extent in Asia, the practice of democracy—even in limited form—is now the rule rather than the exception. The remaining authoritarian and single-party regimes seem to be increasingly on the defensive, as the isolation and strict control of more informed citizens are allegedly more difficult to achieve and sustain.

Political participation is presumably less hampered now than in the past by inequalities in social status, as privileges and opportunities for advancement are no longer reserved exclusively for those in the more elevated social classes, positions and professions, and the subservience and passivity of the masses, once resigned to their unalterable circumstances, are largely a thing of the past. In rigid, hierarchical social systems in which roles, duties and responsibilities are clearly defined, those in the lower and larger part of the pyramid must either accept or revolt against the status quo. During the time of Adam Smith and Voltaire this stratification was called social inequality and was considered the main obstacle to political and social progress. When money becomes the main determinant of social status and stratification, social mobility increases significantly, which theoretically makes political participation easier as it is more directly linked to individual choice. In such circumstances, individuals and communities tend to become more aware of their rights and options; logically, they should have a better understanding of the legitimate and illegitimate use of power, of what constitutes an abuse of their human rights, and of how they can seek protection from and redress for such abuse.

Opportunities for political participation have unquestionably increased on the whole, but for very many people around the globe involvement in the political process remains an impossibility. Oppressive political regimes, structures and institutions still exist in all parts of the world. In many countries, democratic principles and practices constitute a façade that does little to conceal authoritarian, plutocratic or, at best, elitist and technocratic political structures, institutions and processes. Those experiencing poverty or other forms of extreme hardship are engaged in a constant struggle for survival and do not have the time, energy or resources to participate in a res publica that is often distant and abstract, sometimes personalized and revered, and sometimes hated, but rarely understandable or accessible—even for citizens that are economically and socially integrated.

The old debate centring around the Marxist and liberal perspectives on society—between those arguing for the primacy of "real" rights and freedoms and those

committed to the protection of "formal" liberties—has not lost its relevance, as the official doctrine of the United Nations founded on the inseparability of the two "sets" of human rights (civil/political and economic/social/cultural) has yet to find general acceptance and to be translated into effective policies. Few political regimes seriously attempt to reach the poor and disenfranchised. Periodic opportunities to vote in presidential or parliamentary elections are often enough to maintain the veneer of democracy and generally allow political elites to reinforce their positions of power and influence; at times constituents are treated to alternate political views in the exercise of power. Such scenarios reflect very little actual political participation; good citizenship involves the exercise of other privileges, duties and responsibilities. During much of the last century, political parties and unions often served as vehicles for political participation and the expression of views on the organization of society; however, their role has weakened considerably over the past several decades.

Many members of the national and international political and financial elite assert that it is important to reach a consensus on how societies should be organized and on which objectives they should pursue, and contend that resistance to such consensus could only be attributable to a lack of information, ignorance or obscurantism. The majority of established political parties seem to share this view, or to be unable to challenge it effectively; however, there are other organizations and movements that are questioning the wisdom of such an approach. The emergence of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society institutions as a collective political force represents a concrete manifestation of political participation on the part of responsible citizens. However, for these organizations to operate effectively as political entities, similar to political parties and unions in recent history, new forms of political representation must be developed that incorporate structures and processes conducive to the expression of views and concerns and meaningful political activity. At present, there are a number of factors discouraging or even preventing organized and effective political participation, including the weakening of the public sphere (whose primary function appears to be maintaining law and order), the increasing power and influence of the corporate sector, and the escalating violence in many areas of the world.

With violence comes the overt or insidious militarization of societies; mobilization should not be confused with participation. The latter is an expression of an individual's informed free will. It implies choice and the use of critical thinking and judgment. It requires a peaceful environment and cannot be motivated by fear. A great many people in today's world have experienced the traumas of war, ethnic conflict, terrorism or torture, or the devastating effects of natural disasters. Like the HIV/AIDS epidemic, these phenomena are intrinsically nega-

tive and ought to be prevented by all possible means. They affect mainly those who are economically, socially and politically weak. Individuals and families with money, social connections, and an elevated social position are usually better able to protect themselves from the effects of man-made and natural threats and disasters than are poor people.

3.3. Progress in critical aspects of "horizontal" equality

Although the subject of horizontal equality was not on its agenda, the Forum acknowledged the need to highlight certain relevant facts. Above all, the Forum recognized that while progress is often slow and uneven and subject to local reversals, the equality of rights, opportunities and conditions for women and men constitutes a fundamental dimension of justice that is steadily improving. In terms of gender equality, particularly as it relates to the status and treatment of girls and women in society, significant advances have been made with regard to the adoption and enforcement of legislation (and particularly in the application of corrective measures addressing long-standing male biases and outright discrimination against women), the provision of educational opportunities, access to participation in political processes and institutions, and the availability of work and employment opportunities; respect for the principle of equal pay for equal work is growing but has not yet been fully achieved. Biases, prejudice and discrimination still exist in many contexts, often to an extreme degree; very few societies can be said to have achieved true equality between women and men. One disturbing development has been the recent surge in various forms of religious fundamentalism and secular obscurantism, which threaten the idea that all human beings have equal rights and fundamental freedoms. On the whole, however, it seems reasonable to assert that the trend towards greater equality between men and women has not been halted or reversed during the current period of social, political and intellectual upheaval.

The Forum noted that various other forms of horizontal inequality, particularly as experienced by ethnic and other minority groups, were being given a certain amount of priority on national and international agendas. Within the United Nations, for example, a forum for indigenous peoples has recently been created. In a number of countries and regions, the political debate on poverty and inequality has increasingly focused on the relative wealth and social position of groups defined by their ethnicity or race rather than on the growing income gap between the rich and the poor. In another domain, greater overall equality is currently being sought, and to some extent achieved, for persons with disabilities; the United Nations has been at the forefront of developments in this area. These trends suggest that in today's world, inequalities associated with various forms of discrimination have a much better chance of being addressed, if not redressed, than do inequalities deriving from the functioning of the economy.

3.4 Economic justice and social injustice: the current state of affairs

Growing disparities in the distribution of income and assets, the direct link between socio-economic class and access to quality health care and education, and the decline in the participation of average citizens in public affairs are only a few of the many indications that social justice is receding, both as an objective of Governments and as a feature of societies. If one also takes into account the worsening of absolute poverty, particularly in affluent countries, it becomes readily apparent that the world is experiencing overall social regression, at least as measured by the traditional yardsticks of the founding texts of the United Nations. The spread of a global culture of consumption, competition and greed, the weakening of traditional forms of social inequality deriving from the uneven distribution of privileges based on birth and status, and the right of citizens to vote in elections give many societies the appearance of being more democratic when it truth they remain plutocratic and elitist.

Nonetheless, it is undeniable that most societies have become more open to the expression and exercise of individual freedoms and private initiative. The increasing conviction among peoples from different cultures that individuals should receive what they deserve from society in proportion to their talents and efforts is extremely important. Economic activity should not be hindered and should be fairly rewarded; within this broad context, justice, fairness and freedom are closely related and mutually reinforcing. While inequalities have worsened over the past several decades, the widespread adoption and application of market-based economic principles have made it possible for more people to exercise their initiative and reap financial and social rewards for their efforts. Is there a connection between this trend and the aggravation of income inequalities? Is economic justice more a "phagocyte" than a "component" of social justice? Is progress in the realm of economic justice more perceived than real? Does the average small entrepreneur have better access to the necessary operational tools and facilities and greater opportunities for success now than 20 years ago? Is there, in today's world, a concentration of economic and financial power that undermines or nullifies the economic justice brought about by increased reliance on the market economy? At which level and under which conditions are economic justice and fairness and redistributive solidarity harmoniously integrated? Some of these questions will be addressed in chapter 6, following a detour through the evolution of the notions of international justice and social justice as interpreted and applied by the United Nations.

Chapter 4

International justice and the United Nations: from the new international economic order to the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals

4.1 Auspicious beginnings for development and international cooperation

By the end of the 1960s, international cooperation for development had become the most visible endeavour of the United Nations. As the cold war was effectively "freezing" the Security Council and its peace-making and peace-keeping activities and seriously constraining the potentially immense role of the Organization with regard to human rights and fundamental freedoms, development, seen as the progressive reduction and eventual closing of the gap between developed and underdeveloped countries, rose to the top of the international agenda. Close to half of the regular budget and an equivalent proportion of the staff of the United Nations were mobilized in support of economic and social development. In contrast, "political" matters (including Security Council activities), legal issues, and the development of international law and human rights together were allocated less than 10 per cent of the Organization's human and financial resources. New programmes and funds were created, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). Extrabudgetary resources, obtained through voluntary contributions provided by affluent countries in addition to their assessed contributions to the regular budget and to the then-small peace-keeping budget, gave the Organization more flexibility in its development-oriented activities.

These additional resources were used to address major issues of international concern, including refugees and later the environment and human habitat, but they were also earmarked for research, analyses and publications by the Secretariat on conceptual and political problems of development and economic and social progress. Governments providing these voluntary contributions clearly had a political agenda, which is just as true today, but this agenda included a number of items of benefit to the Organization, such as strengthening the capacity of the Secretariat to devise or further elaborate economic models and forecasts and to assess social and environmental indicators that could complement economic indicators and provide a comprehensive measure of the progress or regression of societies. In a context of steady growth in the Organization's regular budget, such loosely "tied" financial aid—representing about 35 per cent of the total annual expenditure of the United Nations by the beginning of the 1980s—gave the Secretary-General and the

Secretariat the capacity to establish a strong and respected voice in the debate on development and to play a significant role in concrete development activities. Third world development constituted the most dynamic part of the United Nations and its most recognized face in rich and poor countries alike.

At the beginning, the growth model offered by the regimes of the countries that emerged victorious from the Second World War and, very soon after, the example offered by the rapid reconstruction and economic recovery of defeated countries, particularly Germany and Japan, were accepted without question. Economic growth, through judicious investments, the establishment of a modern infrastructure, employment creation, education and training, and a mix of public and private initiatives, constituted the key to development. Outside the Soviet Union and its sphere of domination in Central and Eastern Europe, the influence of communism on development theory and practice was relatively limited. After all, the concept of organizing investments and other public activities for economic development within the framework of an annual or medium-term plan had been conceived by France and the United Kingdom and applied in some of their colonies since the end of the nineteenth century. Communism and the power of the Soviet Union were, for the countries of the third world, more a source of political leverage in their efforts to gain independence from colonial and neocolonial powers than an inspiration for their development strategies.

The non-aligned movement was, as its name suggests, a political effort to avoid dependence on either of the superpowers of the time. It proposed ideas and strategies for establishing effective relations with these superpowers, for defining the global position and status of formerly colonized countries, and for combating neocolonialism. It did not, however, furnish a new theory of economic growth or a new vision of social progress. Western countries were all more or less applying Keynesian principles and implementing policies that represented a rather happy mix of liberalism and socialism. Ideological controversies essentially reflected an East-West divide. It was in this context that Western countries were able to agree, in 1969, to earmark between 0.7 and 1 per cent of their gross national income for ODA to help the developing countries of the world. A series of 10-year International Development Strategies were adopted by the General Assembly, and monitoring results showed that they not only shaped international cooperation for development but also influenced the national policies of both developing and developed countries. The United Nations, it seemed, was on track for promoting development and greater international justice.

4.2 Questioning the development model and seeking a new distribution of power in the world

The pursuit of international cooperation for development through the United Nations was characterized by enormous difficulties and controversies. In progressive

quarters, the development model itself was seen as flawed. Widespread reliance on exports of primary commodities and imports of manufactured goods within the developing world meant that countries along the "periphery" were largely dependent on those at the "centre". Strategies were devised for import substitution and, more ambitiously, for economic and political self-reliance. Rural development programmes were adopted to address the rural-urban migration associated with traditional industrial development and the consequent spread of urban slums. Different approaches to development were formulated by social scientists, particularly in Latin America. The almost exclusive reliance on economic development among experts and politicians was seen as excessive and gave rise to calls for institutional, social and cultural development.

The articulation of social and economic priorities and policies entailed extensive debate. A unified approach to economic and social development was devised; social and economic analyses and indicators would be given equal consideration in assessing societal well-being and formulating comprehensive development plans. Social planning found a niche in the institutional structure of the United Nations. The development of trade relations prompted the Secretariat to sponsor a number of initiatives. The adoption of the Generalized System of Preferences allowed developing countries to participate in world trade without full exposure to the competition of advanced economic powers, and the rise of transnational corporations to global prominence led to the establishment of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations and the United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development; intergovernmental commissions focusing on these areas were also set up. These and other such initiatives were not welcomed by the most powerful Western countries, but on the whole, through successes and failures, international cooperation for development through the United Nations and its specialized agencies continued along its established course. It was generally acknowledged that the United Nations system deserved some credit not only for the decolonization process but also for contributing significantly to the betterment of the human condition in a number of developing countries.

The "oil crisis" at the beginning of the 1970s and the adoption by the General Assembly of resolutions incorporating the Declaration and the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order[16] and of another resolution that included the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States[17] collectively marked a turning point in the brief history of the United Nations as a global forum and an agent for development and international justice. These events brought about a shift in the attitude of the major industrialized countries, in particular the United States, vis-à-vis the treatment of the question of development in the United Nations. The oil crisis served to underline the dependence of many countries and regions, particularly Europe and Japan, on oil-producing developing countries that,

through the establishment of cartels, had acquired the capacity to control the prices of their products. Ultimately the crisis led to an extended slowdown in economic growth—again, chiefly in Europe and Japan. Perhaps most importantly, there was evidence that developing countries were using this opportunity to try to modify the balance of economic power in the world in their favour and to practice a form of economic nationalism that could seriously hinder the development of global capitalism.

The above-mentioned documents on the establishment of a new world economic order emphasize the right of every State to regulate and control foreign investment and the activities of transnational corporations within its borders. Recognition is also given to the right of each State to choose its political, social and economic systems; nationalizations and expropriations are considered permissible within this context. Other controversial provisions of these texts relate to science and technology transfer and research cooperation. Full disarmament is also envisaged, as is cooperation in environmental protection. The Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States was adopted by the General Assembly in December 1974 by 120 votes to 6, with 10 abstentions. In March 1975, the Second General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization adopted the Lima Declaration and Plan of Action on Industrial Development and Cooperation. In this Declaration, it was stated that the share of developing countries in total world industrial production "should be increased to the maximum possible extent and as far as possible to at least 25 per cent of total world industrial production by the year 2000, while making every endeavor to ensure that the industrial growth so achieved is distributed among developing countries as evenly as possible."[18] Irrespective of its substantive merits, this target was immediately taken by commentators of the Western world as clear evidence of the irresponsibility of activist developing countries and of their supporters in the secretariats of international organizations. It was both ridiculed as an unattainable objective and denounced as an attempt to place the world economy and its market forces within the straightjacket of world planners and technocrats.

4.3 A new consensus: the Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals

It was arguably at this point that the most powerful developed countries decided to effectively neutralize the role of the United Nations and its specialized agencies as forums for debate and for important decisions regarding the functioning of the world economy. From the mid-1970s onward, these countries relied increasingly on the better-controlled Bretton Woods institutions, strengthening their role and influence in global economic development, and pressed for the reform of the United Nations, which was formally initiated at the end of 1986 and is still very much on the international agenda. With the collapse of the Soviet bloc at the end of the 1980s,

the United States and its allies no longer had any major obstacles to the dissemination of their views on the organization of the world economy and on the meaning of international justice.

Developing countries, partly out of conviction and partly because they sense the probable futility of resistance and understand the need to adapt to the new global political configuration, have abandoned their demands for revolutionary changes in the world economic and political order and are now pursuing an incremental approach in defence of their interests. Rather than controlling the activities of transnational corporations in their territories, they are offering fiscal and other incentives to attract private foreign investment. Nationalization and expropriation have disappeared from their political vocabulary. They pursue arrangements and agreements through the WTO to promote their exports and gain access to the markets of affluent countries. Global trade and participation in the world economy are the order of the day; self-reliance and self-sufficiency are perceived as antiquated concepts. Developing countries continue to press for concessions in traditional areas of negotiation between the North and the South, requesting further debt reduction or increased ODA, but their efforts are essentially focused on gaining a foothold in the dynamic sectors of the world economy. Justice is sought through efforts to ensure the elimination of measures and practices (such as domestic agricultural subsidies) that allow some countries to maintain an unfair advantage over others. The leaders of developing countries contend that if the guiding principle of the world market economy is competition on an open and even playing field, obstacles to fair competition should be removed.

The most important text adopted by the United Nations in recent decades is the Millennium Declaration,[19] which reflects a consensus on what constitutes just relations between countries with unequal power and affluence. First, it is a text centred on people rather than nations. In section I of the Declaration, entitled "Values and principles", mention is made of "the sovereign equality of all States, respect for their territorial integrity and political independence, [and the] resolution of disputes by peaceful means and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law" (para. 4). However, among the six fundamental values considered "essential to international relations in the twenty-first century" (para. 6)—namely, freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature, and shared responsibility—the first three clearly apply to people rather than countries. Tolerance may also be included in this group, as it implies acceptance of the differences and richness within and between societies and "a culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations" (para. 6). Respect for nature is a value that transcends national boundaries. The last of these values, shared responsibility, necessitates the multilateral management of "worldwide economic and social development" (para. 6), in which the United Nations has played and will continue to play a central role.

Second, consistent with the emphasis on people, section III of the Declaration focuses on development and poverty eradication. The right to development is mentioned, but its application for "everyone" and to "the entire human race" suggests that it is regarded more as an individual and collective right than a right of nations. Reference is made to the "abject and dehumanizing conditions" endured by billions of "our fellow men, women and children" in extreme poverty. There is no mention of the distribution of income and wealth among countries or of the various gaps that separate developed from developing countries. It is stressed that development will depend first on "good governance within each country" but also on "good governance at the international level and on transparency in the financial, monetary and trading systems". The multilateral trading and financial system must be "open, equitable, rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory". The special needs of least developed countries are addressed in this section, and industrialized developed countries are called upon to undertake various measures for their benefit, including (a) the cancellation of bilateral debt "in return for their making demonstrable commitments to poverty reduction" and (b) the granting of "more generous development assistance", again, "especially to countries that are genuinely making an effort to apply their resources to poverty reduction".[20]

Third, and most importantly, the eighth Millennium Development Goal[21]—to "develop a global partnership for development"—is perfectly representative of the "new deal" or "new global contract" between developed and developing countries. Within the framework of this Goal, which is the only one directly pertaining to international development cooperation, specific attention is to be given to the creation of an open, rule-based, predictable, and non-discriminatory trading and financial system; the special needs of least developed, landlocked and small island developing States; the debt issue; and cooperation with the private sector to provide access to affordable essential drugs and information and communication technologies. In addition, strategies aimed at providing youth with opportunities for decent and productive work are to be developed and implemented in cooperation with developing countries. Associated with the various dimensions of Goal 8 are 16 indicators for monitoring progress that relate to ODA provision, market access, debt sustainability, youth unemployment, and access to essential drugs, telephone lines, personal computers and the Internet.

These texts, especially the Millennium Development Goals, have become very much a part of the international discourse and have even found their way into the national political debates of both developed and developing countries, and into the board discussions and policies of the World Bank, the regional development banks and the IMF. Even the WTO, notorious for its lack of interest in the development activities and pronouncements of the United Nations, has expressed its commitment to the realization of the Goals. This interest and approval has not been limited to official circles and the political establishment; civil society organizations have

expressed their strong support and are working in the field to achieve the objectives and targets established at the beginning of the new millennium. This is truly exceptional for an initiative of the United Nations.

A resolution of the General Assembly rarely enjoys such wide exposure or what amounts to virtually universal acceptance; clearly, the Millennium Declaration and the associated Millennium Development Goals reflect the spirit of these times and are consistent with popular sensibilities.

4.4 International justice through cooperation and partnership

The conception of international justice embodied in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals is in tune with the dominant political culture of the modern era. Countries are cognizant of the need to engage in a global partnership for development. True partnership derives from mature, pragmatic and effective interaction. Partners are not necessarily equal but must respect each other and draw comparable benefits from their relationship. Trade constitutes the basis of this relationship and is theoretically beneficial for everyone, at least in the long run. All societies participate in the exchange of goods and services, and as globalization is extended to all parts of the world, it will be trade that unites all countries and all peoples. The old functionalist idea that trade brings development and prosperity and that prosperity brings peace—one of the intellectual and political pillars of the United Nations—still has wide appeal. Countries forming partnerships in the quest for material prosperity are no longer identified as being from the "North" or the "South".

The division of the world into poles, with the accompanying connotations of superiority and obligation and the established cycle of demands and concessions, is avoided in the Millennium texts; all countries meet in the global market. If the rules prevailing in this market are transparent, predictable and fair, the rich will get richer and the poor will get rich, and one of those much-heralded win-win situations will occur. It is not envisaged, in this culture of partnership for development, that the rich and powerful countries will have to sacrifice part of their wealth to help the less affluent. The words "distribution", "redistribution", "taxation" and "transfer" are carefully avoided, and the notion of solidarity—one of the six values listed at the beginning of the Millennium Declaration—is absent from the body of the Declaration and from the Goals. While least developed countries are to be treated with some sort of positive discrimination with regard to trade, debt and development assistance, this does not represent a moral obligation or the pursuit of global justice but rather an exchange that entails fair compensation for their dedication to poverty reduction.

Under the terms of this global partnership, developed countries and international organizations, notably the WTO, are to promote the development of a world economy with open, rule-based and predictable arrangements in trade and finance, ensuring an even terrain for competition. Affluent countries and international agen-

cies are also to provide development assistance, but an increasing proportion of this support is to be given to least developed countries. Developing countries, for their part, have to improve levels of organization and efficiency in their domestic affairs. Good governance is an essential condition for development. It is normally associated with the practice of democracy and with respect for human rights. Unless otherwise indicated, good governance is understood as the authority exercised by institutions that operate according to the rule of law, that are not corrupt, and that facilitate the free exercise of private initiative by both domestic and foreign sources. The central role of private initiative and of the private sector is emphasized in the eighth Millennium Development Goal. The private sector is a partner in development on par with States.

This conception of international justice, which essentially amounts to fair competition and an element of solidarity with, or even charity for, the poorest and weakest countries, not only reflects the dominant political culture, but is also consistent with a deeply ingrained current of thought among the intellectual and political elites of developing countries. This current of thought reflects long-standing concerns that centre around the issue of national pride. Countries compelled to accept aid may experience humiliation and a sense of obligation to donors. Moreover, assistance always comes with conditions. It does not really matter that these conditions have changed from requiring that the financial aid be used for importing material and goods from the donor to stipulating that recipients must hold elections or guarantee human rights. In some respects, the latter are even more intolerable than the former. They represent an interference in domestic affairs that is more intrusive than the traditional mercantile arrangements of former colonizers. Frequently, they reflect a double standard and a certain amount of hypocrisy. From a pragmatic perspective, external aid in all its forms is ultimately ineffective and detrimental to the fabric of society. It prevents the emergence of responsibility, initiative, entrepreneurship, and other values and practices that are indispensable to the development of any society. What developing countries really need is access to international markets for their products and global freedom of movement for their people. It would be difficult to attribute even part of the success of those countries that are making great economic strides and gaining respect in the international arena to the provision of traditional bilateral or multilateral aid and assistance. From this perspective, the eighth Millennium Development Goal represents a step in the right direction, which is expunging all traces of paternalistic assistance from the notions of international justice and international cooperation.

4.5 Critical views on the prevalent conception of international justice

From another perspective, it may be argued that while the United Nations, in conceiving this "global partnership for development", is indeed in step with the domi-

nant political culture of the time, it is a culture that essentially reflects the interests and views of the most powerful actors on the international scene. It represents a regression in the conception and practice of international cooperation that has been gaining momentum since the creation of the United Nations. The following points were made during the course of the Forum meetings:

- Goal 8, with its pragmatic dryness and absence of ambition, bears no resemblance to the values and principles highlighted at the beginning of the Millennium Declaration. Equality, solidarity and shared responsibility cannot be reduced, when it comes to relations between developed and developing countries, to open trade, partnerships with the private sector, and traditional aid for the least developed countries. When there is such a disconnection between values and policies, one is forced to conclude that the values represent little more than empty rhetoric and that policies are made in accordance with the traditional requirements of political realism.
- Goal 8 reflects a remarkable degree of faith in the benevolence of the private sector and in its capacity to bring development to all nations of the world. When private economic and financial forces, with the support of powerful Governments, dominate the world economy so completely, which entities will be able to "cooperate" with these forces from a position of strength or simply on equal terms? The United Nations? A developing country? A group of them? The history of capitalism shows that an economic system serves a nation or region well when it is regulated, controlled and balanced by political forces and legitimate political powers. A fortiori, global capitalism requires global political control and the development of international laws and regulations to steer it towards the common good and ensure that it benefits the maximum number of people and nations. The United Nations should pave the way, intellectually and politically, for such an enlightened and democratic management of globalization.
- Another management concern is that Goal 8 does not address the financing of development and global public goods or the global threats that are part of the process of achieving and sustaining openness, interdependence and globalization. Questions of national and global taxation are ignored. If the Monterrey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development, which was adopted after the Millennium Declaration, has the value that is commonly attributed to it, its provisions should at some point have been incorporated in the Millennium Development Goals. Might the occasion of the 2005 review of the Millennium commitments and goals have been the time to do this? To earmark an increasing proportion of (and eventually all) official development assistance for least developed countries is to give it a connotation of temporary charity. It might be more expedient, in the light of emerging global problems and threats and the requirements of international justice, for the United Nations to consider such assistance a point of departure for a world redistribution system.

- What sort of "development" is this global partnership supposed to bring to developing countries and to the world? Is it sustainable development? If so, why is the crucial point made in the Declaration with regard the value "respect for nature"—that "the current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption must be changed in the interest of our future welfare and that of our descendants" (para. 6)—not reflected in Goal 8, or in Goal 7, which relates to environmental sustainability? Is it a development respectful of cultural diversity, pluralism, and national responsibilities and choices? Such notions are totally absent from the Millennium Development Goals. It seems, then, that it is the traditional model, in which development is identified with growth and the latter with an increase in gross national product, that is proposed for developing countries. Developed countries, unconcerned with the Goals, presumably represent this model. Does this mean that developed countries are facing no problems in their efforts to achieve economic and social progress? Are the voices claiming that today's dominant civilization is physically, politically, morally and spiritually unsustainable to be totally ignored?
- In any event, Goal 8, with all its limitations, *is* largely ignored. When it comes to the Millennium texts, all attention is focused on poverty reduction. It is as if the eighth Goal and the issue of development has been included in the Millennium Development Goals *pour memoire*—as if poverty must first be reduced, then development will be achieved. Meanwhile, the formal and informal rules governing trade, finance and other aspects of the world economy are still heavily biased in favour of the affluent and powerful countries. Greater participation by developing countries in the management of world affairs in general and of the world economy in particular—an objective conspicuously absent from the Millennium Development Goals—is not being achieved.

Those offering such criticisms maintain that the pursuit of international justice, understood as the quest for equality for all members of the international community, is disappearing from the international scene, and the United Nations is failing to halt this trend. In fact, the very notion of an international community is endangered, not only as a working reality but as a project and an ideal.

Chapter 5
Social justice and the United Nations: the divide between human rights and economic and social development

The evolution of views on international justice in the United Nations and the changing perception of the relevance of social justice within the Organization are two stories with many links. The Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly have different agendas and are to an extent the domains of delegates, NGO representatives and members of the Secretariat with different sensibilities and habits of the mind. A person transferring from one committee to the other will typically refer to the move as a "change of hats". Economic matters, including inequalities between countries, are perceived by virtually all as serious and centred around hard facts, whereas social issues carry political or, worse, philosophical connotations and are associated with "soft" values. Nonetheless, the paths of international justice and social justice, at both the conceptual and practical levels, have often crossed owing to changes in the spirit of the times and the culture of the Organization that reflect evolving political configurations and intellectual currents. In fact, there is a coherence in the evolution of the treatment of the various issues that come under the mandate of the United Nations that is surprising only to those who underestimate the power of ideas in the life of an institution. In the present context, the telling of the "story" of social justice in the United Nations, distinct from an evocation of the avatars of international justice in the same organization, is justified by the need to explain the divorce between human rights and development.[22]

5.1 Auspicious beginnings for the promotion of human rights and justice

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in its preamble, states that "the highest aspiration of the common people" is "the advent of a world in which human beings shall enjoy freedom of speech and belief and freedom from fear and want", and associates "recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family" with "freedom, justice and peace in the world". The Declaration, in its 30 articles, essentially provides a catalogue of human rights, and in article 29 and elsewhere, various duties, the respect and fulfilment of which shall bring justice to the peoples of the world. Whether stated in the positive ("everyone is entitled to" or "has the right to" or "has duties to") or in the negative ("no one shall be held in slavery" or "be subjected to torture" or "arbitrary arrest"), these rights and duties are addressed to all members of the human family and are inalienable. In the two international human rights covenants that were adopted and became enforceable some two decades later, the principles of the Declaration are

reaffirmed, with the same conception of justice for peoples, and a number of its provisions are elaborated.

The Charter and the Universal Declaration provided the United Nations and its Secretariat with a solid foundation for contributing to the propagation of justice in the world. Early efforts focusing on decolonization, self-determination, the recognition of human rights for all without discrimination (including equal rights for men and women), the creation of equal opportunities for education and work, improvements and greater equality in living conditions, and the provision of adequate social security were all linked, as these were objectives that together constituted a new beginning for humankind. Intellectually, and even politically, the promotion of justice seemed a legitimate undertaking. There were enormous problems, but the path to progress seemed reasonably well marked. The ideals of justice, equality and equity were shared; the ideological competition and then confrontation between liberalism and communism/socialism were much more about freedom and the meaning of democracy than about the need for equality and equity in society.

5.2 Social justice seen as a substitute for the protection of human rights

"Social justice" first appeared in United Nations texts during the second half of the 1960s. At the initiative of the Soviet Union, and with the support of developing countries, the term was used in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development, adopted in 1969.[23] Five years later, it appeared in the Charter of the Economic Rights and Duties of States. Chapter 1 of this Charter includes a list of 15 principles that should govern relations between States, and a few of these are particularly relevant in the present context; the thirteenth principle is the "promotion of international social justice", the first is "sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States", and the eleventh is "respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms". By the time the latter text came out, social justice was a familiar concept in those parts of the Secretariat involved in social affairs. The Social Commission, one of the first subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, had become the Commission for Social Development. Social justice, equality and equity were sometimes defined as distinct concepts but were more often used loosely and interchangeably.

Why was it that social justice appeared on the agenda of the United Nations by the end of the 1960s? Why was it felt necessary to add this qualifier to the venerable word "justice"? A little history and some explanations are provided below in the hopes of contributing to a better understanding of the present situation.

The separation in the United Nations between human rights activities and the work being carried out to promote economic and social advancement was completed in the 1960s. Linked in the United Nations Charter, as they are in human experience, these two domains became identified with different disciplines (law for human rights,

and economics for what the Charter refers to as "social progress and better standards of life", which came to be called "development"), and also with different political philosophies (liberalism for human rights, and various degrees and forms of dirigisme and socialism for development), and with different clients and constituencies (lawyers and Western States for human rights, and developing countries with the help of NGOs and the occasional tactical support of the Soviet Union for development). The promotion of economic and social advancement, or development, became a global cause, strengthened by the provision of substantial resources and the creation of a number of funds and programmes. Human rights activities, associated with the political units of the Secretariat in Geneva, drew the open hostility or suspicion of a majority of the membership of the United Nations and barely survived.

With development occupying centre stage as an apanage of economics, those who were preoccupied with the distribution of the benefits of economic growth, including Member States with social democrat or socialist leanings, NGOs often of Christian origin, and members of the Secretariat with similar inclinations, worked to develop or identify relevant concepts, rallying political mottos and other ways to place "people" at the centre of the debate and of the International Development Strategies that were being drawn up. Social development, with its two main components of social participation and social justice, was one of these concepts. In connection with developing countries, in particular, social justice became identified with questions of the distribution of income and wealth, the distribution of opportunities for work and employment, and the distribution of opportunities for access to social services, especially education and health. With the identification of specific issues of distribution, the notion of equity gained substance and relevance, and the pursuit of growth with equity became a widely accepted objective of development.

The work undertaken to promote development, growth and equity, both at Headquarters and in the field (through technical assistance and other forms of development cooperation in the latter case), proceeded as if the Universal Declaration and its covenants did not address the same issues in the form of rights, an example being the right of everyone to enjoy "a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family" (article 25, para. 1). In another example, studies were undertaken on the respective merits of general education and technical training, and relevant resolutions were adopted by the Economic and Social Council, with no acknowledgement of article 26, para. 2, of the Declaration, which states that "education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality". Similarly, the work on human rights proceeded as if the work on development did not exist. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, established by the Economic and Social Council in 1985[24] to monitor the implementation by States parties of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which entered into force in 1976,[25] produced an abundance of reports with a wealth of

information on conditions and policies in developed and developing countries, but these reports had, and still have, a limited audience, even within the Secretariat and its different departments. Furthermore, the General Assembly regularly adopted resolutions on economic and social development and resolutions on the economic, social and cultural rights of people as if the two subjects had nothing in common.

Human rights efforts focused on the individual, while the work on development and social justice concentrated on society and international cooperation for development. The pursuit of social justice, which involved efforts to achieve greater equality in the living conditions of different social groups and classes, required the active participation of public authorities. Distributive and redistributive policies were necessary for societies, and eventually for the entire international community, to progress towards social justice. In contrast, human rights—or at least the most traditional and for many the most important human rights, including the right to life, liberty and security; the right not to be held in slavery or servitude; the right not to be subjected to torture or to cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and various other fundamental civil and political rights—were historically secured through conflict and aggression against the powers of oppression and persecution. Respect for human rights implies restraint on the part of public authorities and the possibility for citizens to protect themselves from these authorities if the need arises. Traditional moral prescriptions such as "thou shall not kill" and "neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour" are human rights principles stated in the negative; social justice calls for positive and deliberate action.

It is important to call attention to the fact that this disconnection in the United Nations between work on human rights and work on development has largely been avoided in activities aimed at addressing the critical issue of the rights and situation of women. In a publication entitled *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, it is stated that "the Organization has played a leading role in the global struggle for the promotion and protection of women's human rights, and in efforts to ensure that women have equal access to public life and to opportunities in all aspects of economic and social development".[26] This is a legitimate claim. The legislative work in this domain, which covers both human rights and development issues, is carried out by the Commission on the Status of Women, and monitoring to ensure that States parties to relevant legal instruments fulfil their obligations is done by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. These two bodies, one intergovernmental and the other composed of experts, are served by the same unit of the Secretariat in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. If it remains true that two committees of the General Assembly, the Second and the Third, each retain competence and authority with regard to this issue, it is nevertheless clear that the Secretariat and the United Nations in general have actively sought and achieved coherence in addressing the various dimensions of the issue of justice for women.

A similar trend prevails with regard to efforts focused on the rights and situation of children, at least within the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and an integrated approach is increasingly being applied in activities undertaken on behalf of indigenous peoples and persons with disabilities. The Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, a subsidiary of the Economic and Social Council, has a comprehensive mandate and an integrated secretariat. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, working in close cooperation with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, has assisted the General Assembly in the preparation of the Draft Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities. There is some political support for the idea of allowing the United Nations do meaningful work along these same lines with regard to the issue of migrant workers. At present, there is a relative lack of momentum in this area; the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families,[27] which entered into force in 2003, has been ratified by only a limited number of countries, and the Commission on Population and Development has a mandate to act upon relevant provisions adopted by the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994, but there have been few debates within the Commission on the subject of migration.

In spite of the various challenges faced over the years, the fundamental commitment to achieving global equality and justice has not wavered. The United Nations contributed significantly to the general lessening of inequalities during the decades following the Second World War, up until the great ideological shift of the mid-1980s. As already noted, growth with equity was more than a slogan. The Organization's International Development Strategies reflected a number of intracountry and intercountry distributional objectives. For example, developing countries were to be offered technical assistance in setting up taxation and social security systems. All the world conferences that attempted, in the wake of the landmark United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, to shape the international agenda and create a global consciousness had at their core the objectives of equity and equality within and between countries. The contribution of the United Nations to social justice has been hindered but not rendered totally ineffective by the split between human rights activities and development activities. The Organization remains in a position to act effectively in the pursuit of justice when it comes to issues of great magnitude, such as the situation of women in the world.

5.3 The World Summit for Social Development: an attempt to reconcile social justice and the protection of human rights

The World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in March 1995, represented an attempt to create a coherent vision of the world and its future through the integration and reconciliation of all the aspirations, interests and ideological cur-

rents that were criss-crossing through the United Nations at the end of the twentieth century. In the words of former United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development represented "a new social contract at the global level" reflecting "a sense of solidarity within nations and between nations".[28] The Secretary-General observed that "social problems, which once could be confined within borders, now spread across the world; once considered to be the exclusive responsibility of national Governments, these problems are now of global scale and require global attention". However, he also noted that "the potential for cooperation has never been greater. The East-West divide has disappeared and the North-South confrontation is gradually giving way to a more global approach. … Not even the strongest economies today can escape the problems of social development, of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. … True and lasting success in putting the Copenhagen agreements into action will require a coalition of all societal actors, working together towards the same objectives. Governments will need to act in partnership with experts, parliamentarians, grass-roots and religious organizations … harnessing their talent and enthusiasm. Together we must continue our collective efforts to help shape a better common future for all nations, communities and people."[29]

The Copenhagen Declaration is replete with references to social justice and justice (unqualified in the latter case but generally reflecting the concept of just societies), to equity and equality, and to inequities and inequalities that must be redressed. Social development and social justice often appear together, in that order, as if to impress upon the reader that the second is an intrinsic component of the first. The idea is that in order for justice to prevail, societies must not be oriented simply towards the production and consumption of goods to achieve a better standard of living. They must eliminate extreme poverty and reduce relative poverty, and they must also pursue the goals of full employment, social integration (including all dimensions of equality between women and men), and health and education for all. Essentially, they "must respond more effectively to the material and spiritual needs of individuals, their families and the communities in which they live" (para. 3).

An "ethical and spiritual vision for social development" emerges from the Copenhagen Declaration (para. 25); ethics and morality constitute an underlying theme. The notion of responsibility, for both Governments and citizens, appears frequently in the text. The need for creativity is mentioned, particularly in the context of the functions and approaches of education systems. Creativity is seen as relevant not only to artistic and academic pursuits, but also to entrepreneurship, to the functioning of a strong and efficient market economy, and to the development and implementation of appropriate public policies. In sum, as stated in the Programme of Action of

the World Summit for Social Development, "economic activities, through which individuals express their initiative and creativity and which enhance the wealth of communities, are a fundamental basis for social progress. But social progress will not be realized simply through the free interaction of market forces. Public policies are necessary to correct market failures, to complement market mechanisms, to maintain social stability and to create a national and international economic environment that promotes sustainable growth on a global scale. Such growth should promote equity and social justice" (para. 6).

In the Copenhagen Declaration, the pursuit of social justice and development is not separated from the recognition and promotion of human rights. Since the East-West divide had disappeared by the time the Summit was held, Western countries were in a position to convince developing countries that, although they still retained "primary responsibility" for their development, they had to conform to international norms, first and foremost the International Bill of Human Rights. At the beginning of the Copenhagen Declaration, it is stated that "social development and social justice cannot be attained in the absence of peace and security or in the absence of respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms" (para. 5). The principles and goals that precede the commitments in the Declaration emphasize the need to respect all human rights and to ensure "the equitable distribution of income and greater access to resources through equity and equality of opportunity for all" (para. 26 (g)). Other principles and goals focus on achieving "equity among generations and protecting "the integrity and sustainable use of our environment", and recognizing "the interdependence of public and private spheres of activity" and "the importance of transparent and accountable governance and administration in all public and private national and international institutions" (para. 26 (b), (d) and (n)).

For developing countries, and for a number of developed countries (particularly those with a socialist or social democratic tradition), human rights are all-inclusive and indivisible and encompass social and economic rights as well as civil and political rights. The references to human rights in the Copenhagen Declaration and in other documents of that nature represent a commitment by the international community to act positively to fulfil the most fundamental requirements for survival and well-being, including the right to adequate nutrition, the right to education, and the right to social security. This is in addition to the commitments made with regard to international development cooperation. Developing countries are aware of the controversy still swirling around the notion of the indivisibility of rights and therefore take the precaution of insisting on the mention of the right to development; often, as in paragraph 26 (j) of the Copenhagen Declaration, there will be a reference to human rights and fundamental freedoms, followed by the coda "including the right to development".

Among other countries, in particular affluent countries with a liberal tradition, human rights are typically identified with civil and political rights. In such contexts,

economic and, a fortiori, social and cultural rights are perceived as nothing more than objectives that have been unduly presented as rights under pressure from Marxist intellectuals or in response to the failure of regimes to respect their obligations to their citizens as defined in the Magna Carta, the American Declaration of Independence, and the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen. It is argued that many of these so-called economic and social rights, such as the right to strike or the right to form a trade union, are transitory and inseparable from particular sets of economic, social and political conditions. Economic globalization and the emergence of a knowledge-based and service-oriented economy have, it is asserted, rendered such "rights" obsolete. In this school of thought, human rights represents an umbrella term for civil and political rights, including equality between women and men. To ensure that this concept is clearly understood, these same countries insist on explicit references to democracy, good governance, and various forms of transparency and accountability among public institutions. This essentially adds up to a type of regime, roughly a liberal capitalist democracy, presented as a model to the world. The notion of good governance, often associated with the existence of a political regime whose main function is to facilitate the interplay of market forces, appeared in the United Nations towards the end of the 1980s and found its way into the Copenhagen Declaration before becoming a commonplace term in international parlance. Mention of the right to development is tolerated by these same countries on the grounds that it is so vague a notion as to be completely harmless; it represents a costless concession to developing countries.

The pursuit of international justice, or the narrowing of the various gaps between developed and developing countries, is a central part of the Copenhagen Declaration, incorporated to ensure political syncretism or comprehensiveness. Social development, in particular the elimination of poverty and the achievement of full employment and social integration, requires international cooperation and an international environment favourable to national efforts. Commitment 1 of the Declaration, relating to the creation of an environment that will "enable people to achieve social development", emphasizes that increased cooperation, a supportive economic environment established and maintained through appropriate macroeconomic policies, trade liberalization, and the "mobilization and/or provision of new and additional financial resources" (para. (j)) are needed at the international level. Commitment 9, which focuses on these financial resources, includes all the traditional provisions on finance, official development assistance, debt, and technology (though the word "flow" is used instead of "transfer"), as well as some new provisions relating to activities such as the monitoring and assessment of "the impact of trade liberalization on the progress made in developing countries to meet basic human needs" (para. (q)).

5.4 The short life of the commitments made in Copenhagen

The commitment just mentioned was never acted upon. Actually, all but one of the commitments made at the World Summit were rapidly forgotten by the most powerful Governments and international organizations, including the United Nations. The Forum was not in a position to provide a detailed analysis of the disappointing outcome of a conference that by all accounts had been a great success. Among the explanations that would need to be sorted out and weighed would be the difficulty of the subject, its comprehensiveness, and its lack of appeal for the media; the typical short life expectancy of international pronouncements; the failure to achieve, in the important follow-up stage, the conjunction of personalities that made the Summit possible in spite of formidable obstacles; changes in the leadership of various Governments and institutions; and perhaps above all, the evolution of the ideological and political context. The Forum was able, however, to offer a number of observations.

For some participants and perhaps even the organizers, the successful conclusion of the World Summit for Social Development was an end in itself, as evidenced by the weakness of the provisions for its follow-up. With previous United Nations conferences of this magnitude, the meeting and outcome texts had incorporated explicit provisions relating to the reinforcement or reorganization of the Secretariat to ensure that the necessary preparatory and follow-up work could be undertaken, but that was not the case in this instance. Commitment 9 of the Copenhagen Declaration includes vague references to supporting an increase in resources for operational activities and strengthening the capacity of the United Nations and the specialized agencies to fulfil their responsibilities in the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, but these provisions have had no effect whatsoever, at least in the United Nations. The relevant unit within the Secretariat was actually weaker after the Summit than before. There was a tacit prior understanding between the Secretariat and the Member States that this particular conference would have no implications for the regular budget of the Organization. On the intergovernmental side, difficult negotiations were required for interested countries to convince the major contributors that a special session of the General Assembly should be held five years later to review the implementation of the World Summit decisions and "consider further actions and initiatives".[30]

At that special session, held in Geneva in June 2000, a report of the Secretariat providing a rather candid analysis of the lack of implementation of the major commitments and recommendations of the Summit was discussed and debated, and the General Assembly adopted a resolution with a comprehensive annex incorporating extensive commentary on each of the commitments made five years earlier. This document includes a political declaration in which the following is stated: "Social development requires not only economic activity but also reduction in the

inequality in the distribution of wealth and more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth within and among nations" (para. 5).[31] Incorporated in the commentary on further actions and initiatives under Commitment 9 are a number of recommendations on the mobilization of resources for development at the national and international levels that amplify those adopted in Copenhagen. It is suggested, for instance, that action be taken to explore "ways to combat the use of tax shelters and tax havens that undermine national tax systems" (para. 142 (c)) and "ways and means of promoting the micro- and small enterprise sector whereby it becomes a possible vehicle for a new development model" (para. 142 (h)). Alluding to the Tobin tax and other proposals for levying taxes at the international or global level, one of the recommendations advocates "conducting a rigorous analysis of advantages, disadvantages and other implications of proposals for developing new and innovative sources of funding, both public and private, for dedication to social development and poverty eradication programmes" (para. 142 (g)). However, in terms of monitoring these renewed commitments and recommendations, the Assembly could only agree to "request the Economic and Social Council to assess regularly, through the Commission for Social Development, the further implementation of the Copenhagen commitments and the outcome of the special session, not excluding the possibility of bringing together, at the appropriate time, all parties involved to evaluate progress and to consider new initiatives" (para. 156).

Every year since the World Summit for Social Development was held, the Commission for Social Development has examined a particular issue and submitted its conclusions to the Economic and Social Council. There, the specific priorities and overall message that emerged from the Copenhagen Summit and from the special session in Geneva have tended to disappear into the integrated treatment of all world conferences. The General Assembly also includes an item on the World Summit in its agenda and adopts routine resolutions every year. In 2005, ten years after the World Summit, the Commission for Social Development struggled to produce and was able to ensure the adoption, by consensus, of a short declaration[32] essentially reaffirming that the Copenhagen and Geneva texts "constitute the basic framework for the promotion of social development for all at the national and international levels" (para. 1). There has been no real initiative to "bring together … all parties involved"; if, in the ten years since Copenhagen, an "appropriate time" for action has not yet presented itself, the obvious conclusion would be that for the membership of the United Nations, the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development no longer constitute a source of inspiration and decision—if indeed they ever did.

5.5 The focus on poverty eradication

Those representing what might be called the mainstream thinking in the United Nations would contend that the above is not entirely true, arguing that the commitment

to eradicate poverty has become the centrepiece of international cooperation. In the introductory paragraph of Commitment 2 of the Copenhagen Declaration, poverty eradication is referred to as "an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind". The Millennium Declaration emphasizes the need to "free our fellow men, women and children from the abject and dehumanizing conditions of extreme poverty" (para. 11), and both the Declaration and the associated Millennium Development Goals incorporate concrete targets for achieving this objective. Specifically, as stated in the Declaration, efforts are to be made "to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water" (para. 19); these and a number of related and equally precise objectives pertaining to education, health, and urban conditions make up the targets for the first six Millennium Development Goals. As mentioned previously, Goal 7 relates to environmental protection and Goal 8 to building a partnership for development.

The argument is put forward that the World Summit for Social Development laid the groundwork and defined the core objectives for what would become the Millennium Development Goals. From this perspective, it has fulfilled its role, which was to pave the way for the formulation of an essential component of the strategy of the United Nations, and of the world community as a whole, for the first part of the twenty-first century. To assert that the tenth anniversary of the Copenhagen Summit marks a decade of neglect, and to draw negative political conclusions therefrom, is to ignore the essential fact that issues that are directly relevant and matter most to people have assumed a prominent place on the international agenda. The reduction and elimination of poverty is a goal that encompasses all the dreams and aspirations of the world's people, Governments, and international bodies; ultimately, it represents the raison d'être of public institutions and policies. Is there a better way to put people at the centre of national and international policies, as recommended by the Summit, than to fight poverty? The Forum was made aware of additional arguments in support of this position, including the following:

- The Millennium Development Goals, in particular the target of reducing poverty by half before 2015, have prompted the unprecedented mobilization and co-operation of international organizations, Governments, and civil society. In all countries, from the strongest to the poorest and weakest, the Goals are known, debated and acted upon. There is no better proof of the validity of a policy than such widespread support from public and private agencies around the world and across national and institutional traditions, ideologies and political orientations.
- The Millennium Development Goals come from the United Nations, an organization that enjoys virtually universal membership and represents the closest approximation of an international democracy. In this case, the United Nations has

managed to convince powerful Governments and powerful international organizations, notably the Bretton Woods institutions, to accept and follow its leadership. This fact should cause all internationalists and multilateralists to rejoice. With its commitment to eliminating poverty, the United Nations has launched a goal commensurate with the ambitions of its Charter.

- The commitment to fight extreme poverty and hunger represents a concrete response to the Copenhagen Declaration's insistent call for social justice. Furthermore, it is consistent with the principle of solidarity evoked in the Millennium Declaration: "Global challenges must be managed in a way that distributes the costs and burdens fairly in accordance with basic principles of equity and social justice. Those who suffer or who benefit least deserve help from those who benefit most" (para. 6).
- Poverty reduction is the ultimate goal of all development efforts. It is an objective that cuts across economic and social policies, putting the different approaches to economic development, social development, and human development into perspective and exposing the limits of the debates and quarrels surrounding these approaches and disciplines. An economist, a political philosopher, an international lawyer and a sociologist can all agree on the usefulness of lifting people out of material poverty. Furthermore, it is difficult to conceive of a better bridge between the human rights perspective and the development perspective than the shared determination to fight poverty in the world.
- For the United Nations and other international agencies, concentrating development efforts on poverty reduction is not only the best and most direct way to help people improve their actual living conditions, but also the least intrusive and most respectful assistance strategy from the perspective of the people and Governments of the developing countries themselves. Reducing poverty strengthens a country's economic base, giving residents more choices and greater control over their future. Notions such as individual autonomy and respect for cultural diversity and for the traditions and social mores of communities and nations have more direct relevance and can flourish only when survival is no longer a constant challenge and preoccupation. Again, this is true for individuals, for families, and for nations. True freedom is impossible without a solid, stable economic foundation. To reduce poverty is to promote both social justice and international justice.

The above notwithstanding, most of the Forum participants had a somewhat different view on the affiliation between the Copenhagen Declaration and the Millennium texts and on the merits of the Millennium Development Goals and their focus on poverty reduction. There are important differences in the manner in which the goal of eradicating poverty is approached in the texts of the World Summit for Social Development and in the Millennium texts. The Copenhagen Declaration

makes reference to world poverty, whereas the Millennium Development Goals are clearly focused on developing (and especially least developed) countries. The World Summit text calls for the formulation or strengthening of national strategies to reduce "overall poverty in the shortest possible time … by a target date to be specified by each country in its national context" (Commitment 2, para. (a)). By contrast, the Millennium Development Goals incorporate a specific target (understood to be limited to the developing world), which is to halve the proportion of poor people by 2015. The Copenhagen Declaration does not provide a precise definition of the poor; the text includes references to overall, absolute, extreme and relative poverty, but leaves it to each country to interpret these concepts. In the Millennium texts, extreme poverty is defined as the condition experienced by those "whose income is less than one dollar a day" (para. 19), and reference is made to the more than 1 billion people currently living in such dire circumstances. No estimate of the number of the world's poor is ventured in the Copenhagen Declaration; however, quite illogically, the Programme of Action refers to the same "over 1 billion" figure estimated by the World Bank at the beginning of the 1990s.

Leaving aside the controversy surrounding the merits of the dollar-per-day income poverty benchmark and the accuracy and significance of the now universally quoted "over 1 billion poor", the approaches adopted by the World Summit and the Millennium Summit to address extreme poverty have little in common. The decision to establish a specific global target for poverty reduction, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report to the Millennium Summit,[33] was probably taken to ensure its widespread appeal and visibility in this media-dominated age. The world's imagination and enthusiasm were indeed stimulated by this target that appeared to be both ambitious and realistic; the reference to "halving" gave the impression that calculations had been made to distinguish the achievable from the ideal. The simplicity, visibility and appeal of the Millennium approach were counterbalanced by its lack of depth, comprehensiveness and rigour. Furthermore, the Forum could not help noting that what was presented as an innovation and a decision requiring political courage—the agreement on an apparently precise objective—actually reflected a long-standing practice in the United Nations and other international organizations that had produced consistently disappointing results.

During the last few decades of the twentieth century, various world conferences established a multitude of targets relating to most aspects of human welfare, including nutrition, education, health and housing, with satisfaction generally promised to all by the year 2000. These commitments were rapidly forgotten. The World Summit for Social Development resisted the temptation to establish poverty reduction targets, but its Programme of Action included no less than 14 targets relating to education, health and the provision of shelter; most of these objectives were to be met by 2000 or 2015, and several were incorporated in the Millennium

Development Goals. However, no follow-up action was taken, either in Geneva in 2000 or at the meeting of the Commission for Social Development in 2005, to determine what kind of progress had been made towards meeting the World Summit targets. There is widespread scepticism surrounding target-setting, which experience would suggest is completely justified. Nonetheless, the Forum was willing to suspend judgment with regard to the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals. Perhaps the exceptional political atmosphere of enthusiastic consensus that has guided and sustained this process from the outset and the demonstrated willingness to undertake the necessary monitoring and follow-up will prove sufficient to ensure the realization of the targeted objectives. It is the political impact of targets that matters most, as little can be achieved without a strong political will.

The Forum had two more fundamental criticisms of the approach to poverty reflected in the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals. First, these texts offer no real indication of the kinds of national and international policies that would be required to reduce extreme poverty by half by 2015. The Millennium Declaration emphasizes the need create an environment at all levels that is "conducive to development and to the elimination of poverty" (para. 12); no specifics are provided, though it is noted that the meeting of these objectives "depends, inter alia, on good governance within each country" (para. 13). No mention is made of social policies or of fiscal, monetary or other economic policies that might stimulate growth.

This approach stands in sharp contrast to that reflected in the texts of the World Summit for Social Development. In the Copenhagen Declaration, reference is made (in Commitment 2, paras. (b)-(e)) to policies that would "address the root causes of poverty"; policies to ensure that those living in poverty "have access to productive resources, including credit, land, education and training, technology, knowledge and information, as well as to public services, and participation in decision-making"; policies for the creation of "a regulatory environment that would enable [the poor] to benefit from expanding employment and economic opportunities"; policies aimed at ensuring that "all people have adequate economic and social protection during unemployment, ill health, maternity, child-rearing, widowhood, disability and old age"; and policies to ensure that "national budgets are oriented, as necessary, to meeting basic needs, reducing inequalities and targeting poverty, as a strategic objective". Paragraph (e) of Commitment 9 emphasizes the crucial importance of ensuring that "in accordance with national priorities and policies, taxation systems are fair, progressive and economically efficient [and are] cognizant of sustainable development concerns".[34] The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, which "outlines policies, actions and measures to implement the principles and fulfil the Commitments enunciated in the Copenhagen Declaration" (para. 1), includes a number of important observations, including

the following: "Poverty has various causes, including structural ones. [It] is a complex multidimensional problem with origins in both the national and international domains. No uniform solution can be found for global application. … Poverty is inseparably linked to lack of control over resources, including land, skills, knowledge, capital and social connections" (para. 23).

The absence of such policy orientations in the Millennium texts cannot really be explained by the preference for brevity that constitutes a characteristic of the current diplomatic culture in the United Nations. Developing countries are apparently expected to rely on existing policies, including those recommended or imposed by the Bretton Woods institutions and other international entities, to achieve poverty reduction. The implication is that economic growth alone is sufficient to reduce poverty and that distributive and redistributive policies are therefore unnecessary. Further, it is implicitly understood that economic growth will derive from the liberalization of economic forces and the progressive or "brutal" integration of national markets into the global economy.

The Millennium texts, which include few national policy recommendations, do focus somewhat on the creation of an international environment to facilitate development and poverty eradication, but the approach is more general and less commitment-oriented than that reflected in the texts of the World Summit for Social Development. Ensuring that globalization "becomes a positive force for the world's people" is identified in the Millennium Declaration as the "central challenge" in these modern times (para. 5). As in the Copenhagen and Geneva texts, and as is now customary in international circles, globalization is presented as offering both "great opportunities" and great challenges, as its "benefits are very unevenly shared while its costs are unevenly distributed" (para. 5). The Millennium Declaration emphasizes that "only through broad and sustained efforts to create a shared future, based upon our common humanity in all its diversity, can globalization be made fully inclusive and equitable" (para. 5).

This is admirable language, but the efforts required "to create a shared future" are not further defined, and the Millennium Development Goals incorporate nothing even remotely related to the management of the globalization process for the general benefit of humankind. Similarly, "good governance at the international level" is not elaborated. The measures that industrialized nations are to take for the benefit of the least developed countries, including the provision of "duty- and quota-free access" for their exports and the "granting of more generous development assistance" (para. 15), are indeed aimed at creating a favourable economic environment for these poorer countries, but in a somewhat circular fashion, as the support is dependent on "demonstrable commitments" by these countries to poverty reduction. The recommendations relating to increased cooperation between the public sector and the private sector and to the strengthening of the latter are potentially useful

for development and poverty eradication, but only if a way can be found to reconcile capitalist interests with the needs of the poor. The Copenhagen and Geneva texts are far more demanding towards the rich countries of the world and far more open to the creation of new institutions, new developments in international law, and new global arrangements to facilitate the achievement of social justice.

Second, poverty reduction and eradication, while critical, do not constitute the defining characteristic of social justice. Policies to reduce poverty are not synonymous or even necessarily compatible with policies to promote equity and equality. In fact, focusing exclusively on poverty and the poor can perpetuate and even aggravate inequalities. Singling out part of a population as “poor” effectively segregates certain individuals and families, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of society. Being designated as poor and seeing oneself as different from others is disempowering, particularly nowadays, as the old clichés linking individual poverty to laziness and other character defects have reappeared and are increasingly accepted as fact. Furthermore, public assistance remains a form of charity, though without the empathy that often accompanies private charity. It would appear that organized and targeted assistance provided for the purpose of lifting individuals and groups out of poverty is effective only when it constitutes part of an overall economic and social policy aimed at achieving growth and equity. Another important consideration is that the poor/non-poor dichotomy is somewhat artificial, as it does not correspond to the reality of poverty. The “poor” are not a homogeneous and unchanging group. There are, in both developed and developing countries, people who stay poor all their lives and families that remain destitute through successive generations, but there are also those who move in and out of poverty, those who have been so marginalized that they are beyond the reach of the public welfare system, and those who are just above the contextually defined poverty threshold but essentially face the same challenges as those officially identified as poor (or even greater challenges if their economic status makes them ineligible for public assistance). The intense focus on poverty and the poor is particularly difficult to justify when the members of these latter categories make up the majority of a country’s population.

In the Copenhagen Declaration, the goal of eradicating poverty is placed within the context of addressing inequalities. Again, the text calls for the adoption of national policies and strategies to reduce inequalities and eradicate absolute poverty “by a target date to be specified by each country in its national context”. In paragraph (f) of Commitment 2, Governments pledge “to reduce inequalities, increase opportunities and access to resources and income, and remove any political, legal, economic and social factors and constraints that foster and sustain inequality”. In keeping with the spirit of the World Summit, and as reflected in its texts, the commitment on eradicating poverty is inseparable from the commitments on full employment, social integration, access to education and health care, equality be-

tween women and men, and the creation of a favourable international environment. Particular emphasis is placed on the link between full employment and poverty reduction. The Millennium Declaration makes no specific mention of employment, unemployment or underemployment, though there is a reference in the "second-tier" commitments of section III to the development and implementation of "strategies that give young people everywhere a real chance to find decent and productive work" (para. 20); this constitutes a specific target under the eighth Millennium Development Goal and has not been neglected. The United Nations, the ILO and the World Bank are collaborating on a project to address this issue. While this is a start, the critical issue of productive work and employment requires far more attention, particularly in this age of global markets.

Much of the present analysis has focused on the content of the conference texts under review; it is also essential to undertake a critical examination of the choices made with regard to language and expression in these texts. The Millennium texts take the reader from a rather elevated evocation of the principles of equity and social justice to a sequence of "dry" targets. The introductory section of the Millennium Declaration not only lists six "fundamental values" but is also rich in concepts and expressions such as "shared future", "common humanity", "culture of peace and dialogue among all civilizations", "prudence", "responsibility", and "equity and social justice", evoking the language of the Summit and proceeding from the same political philosophy that inspired the authors of the Charter of the United Nations and of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The Millennium Declaration is actually more readable and more consistently elegant and inspiring than the Copenhagen Declaration, as it was subjected to much less negotiation. The section on development and poverty eradication, for example, includes only one reference to equity (within the trading system), one reference to equality (between men and women), and no reference to social justice, but in its first paragraph, the simple, straightforward commitment to "freeing the entire human race from want" essentially encapsulates all the dimensions of justice for humanity. Conversely, the Millennium Development Goals and the accompanying targets and indicators are articulated in the sober, non-philosophical language of economists and statisticians.

For advocates of the Millennium Declaration and Goals, this deductive progression from values and principles to precise targets is precisely how international agreements, which are not treaties but are nonetheless more than a catalogue of good intentions, should be structured. Is there a better way to express the commitment to equity and social justice than to pledge to reduce poverty in the world by half? Why is it necessary to produce a long text characterized by the endless repetition of values and principles that are very general and on which there is, in any case, universal agreement? If there is no consensus on the understanding and practical implications of some of these values and principles, what purpose is served

by their evocation? Is it not preferable to focus on a more tangible objective, such as strengthening cooperation with pharmaceutical companies to ensure access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries, and to make concrete progress in this direction, than to insist on, for instance, a legislated code of conduct for multinational companies, which is both unrealistic and a bad idea? The establishment of a cooperative, mutually beneficial relationship with the private sector requires practical, results-oriented strategies; is such cooperation not eminently useful for facilitating ICT dissemination in developing countries, for example? Is this type of activity not a visible manifestation of the pursuit of global social justice and more likely to be appreciated by those it is meant to help?

Those espousing an egalitarian ideology would like to see in these texts a denunciation of the expanding gap between rich and poor countries and of the growing inequalities between rich and poor people in most national settings. Whatever one thinks of such disparities and differentials, broad generalities should be avoided and the valuable text space used instead for specific provisions on, for example, the development of a rule-based and non-discriminatory trading system or the building of new schools to ensure universal access to primary education. It was possible to achieve a consensus on targets such as these in the Millennium Declaration and Goals precisely because care was taken to avoid divisive and ideologically charged pronouncements. This is no "ordinary" consensus but rather an instance of sincere agreement and true accord—a committed consensus. There are many difficulties associated with the realization of the Millennium Development Goals, but the commitment of all, notably the main economic and financial powers, cannot be doubted. This commitment has remained strong, even in the context of the growing preoccupation with security in the wake of increased terrorist activity.

This apologia of the Millennium approach could go on, but the definitive argument of its proponents is that it constituted not only the best but ultimately the only possible approach, given the prevailing power relations and global political configuration. This is a strong argument—and one that was certainly in the minds of some of the key players in the World Summit for Social Development when they decided to focus on the commitment to eradicate poverty and, for all practical and political purposes, to allow the other commitments to sink into oblivion. This was clear in a number of the concluding statements made in Copenhagen in March 2005, notably by delegations of Western countries and of international agencies and funds, in particular UNDP and the World Bank. The Summit took place when the great ideological and political transformation that had begun in the mid-1980s was in full swing. For some idealists and the politically naive, this marked the beginning of a new era of international cooperation focused on the building of a just, prosperous and peaceful world community. It was seen as significant that the Copenhagen Declaration, accepted by so many Heads of State and Government, appeared to reflect a happy

mix of the "old" and the "new": social justice and economic freedom, active State intervention in society and a vibrant market economy, social democracy and tamed and regulated global capitalism, solidarity and competition, and international cooperation for development and regulated economic and financial globalization. These idealists—members of the Secretariat, of NGOs and of some delegations—knew that such syncretism represented a utopia, but they believed it was a mobilizing utopia that would guide the efforts of all actors in the building of a viable world community.

Other players, however, including the most powerful and influential, knew that the eradication of poverty constituted the only objective that was fully acceptable within the context of the now-dominant view of the world and its future. The reasoning of the committed neoliberal is that removing the constraints imposed by Governments and archaic social structures will allow the release of long-suppressed initiative, ambition and productive energies, leading to increased opportunities for work and employment and, ipso facto, a reduction in poverty. Those who for one reason or another are unable to seize these economic opportunities will be rescued by safety nets. At the international level, developing countries will have the opportunity to advance both economically and socially if they open their borders to trade and investment and participate more actively in the world economy. Aid and assistance will be provided to low-income or least developed countries that are temporarily unable to pursue global economic integration. Justice, from this perspective, essentially derives from ensuring that all individuals and countries have equal opportunities to exercise their initiative and talents and to be fairly compensated and rewarded for their efforts. Social justice, with its redistributive connotations and the implied precedence of society over the individual, is suspect; it is a concept that has no contemporary relevance and should be avoided. Equality is achieved by ensuring equal opportunities and equal rights, particularly for women; equality of conditions is not a factor. Equity is a vague but convenient concept and a good substitute for the word "justice", which is a bit grandiloquent when applied to anything other than the judiciary. The reduction of poverty constitutes an acceptable goal because it represents the natural outcome of free market activity and a well-functioning economy at both the national and global levels.

A variant of this perspective, very influential at the time of the Copenhagen Summit, is the human development approach, which essentially focuses on all aspects of human welfare and achieving growth with equity. The performance of Governments and countries is assessed on the basis of an index that is less crude and far more comprehensive than the traditional per-capita-GNP indicator. Centred on the individual and on the belief that, with good intentions and sufficient political will, a "human face" can be put on most aspects of development and modernization (including globalization), this approach was advocated in opposition to the concept of

social development, which was seen as interventionist, old-fashioned, and vaguely socialist in its orientations. Perhaps because of its novelty and also because of its paternalistic and somewhat intrusive overtones, the human development concept did not find its way into the Copenhagen Declaration or the Programme of Action of the World Summit. Its proponents, however, played an important role in limiting or reducing the focus on poverty eradication in these texts and in undermining support for the concepts of social development and social policy, as both were associated with redistributive social justice and State intervention.

Two years after the World Summit for Social Development, the Agenda for Development was published by the United Nations. Conceived as a pendant of the Agenda for Peace, its preparation in the Secretariat had proceeded concomitant with preparations for the World Summit, but several years of further negotiation were required, and the Agenda was finally adopted by the General Assembly in June 1997. Comprehensive and ambitious, the Agenda for Development has a policy framework in which economic development, social development and environmental protection comprise three essential components of sustainable development. Social development is presented as agreed at the World Summit, with equal emphasis on the three major objectives of eradicating poverty and hunger, promoting employment, and achieving social integration. For many of those involved, the adoption of the Agenda represented a welcome conclusion to a long and arduous process rather than a constructive step towards fruitful international cooperation. It was becoming increasingly difficult to effect a reconciliation, or even some form of cohabitation, between the aggressive new orthodoxy and the familiar conceptions of development and international cooperation.

If it proved possible to do just that in Geneva in 2000, it was because the Secretariat and a few delegations worked hard to keep the message of the World Summit for Social Development alive, and because the main powers decided to allow this celebration to proceed knowing full well there would be no further follow-up. At the same time, with the issuance of the report of the Secretary-General in preparation for the Millennium Summit,[35] the stage was set for the presentation of the Millennium Declaration and the Millennium Development Goals both as a synthesis of past efforts, notably the results of the conferences held by the United Nations in the 1990s, and as a blueprint for cooperation and for the role of the United Nations in the twenty-first century. As alluded to earlier, the ten-year review of the World Summit was reduced to a few days of debate at the forty-third session of the Commission for Social Development, and the short statement issued by the Commission had no real impact on the deliberations of the General Assembly in September 2005. The report of the Secretary-General[36] issued in preparation for this meeting focused on the relationship between development, security and human rights, with development understood as presented in the Millennium Declaration and Goals. No

reference was made to social development or social justice in this document. Presumably, the goal of reducing poverty was seen to represent the essence of past concepts and efforts.

Chapter 6
Are international justice and social justice politically obsolete concepts?

There have been increases in various types of inequality, changes in the orientations of United Nations pronouncements on matters of justice and development, and a shift in the international language. Words such as "equity", "equality" and "redistribution" have largely disappeared from mainstream United Nations documents, as have the words "compassion" and "solidarity". The term "social justice" appears only once in the Millennium Declaration. Further, the closing of the development gap between developed and developing countries is no longer a mobilizing objective. What are the reasons for the weakening of these once powerful ideas? Is it a temporary decline linked to the current global political configuration, or is it a manifestation of profound societal changes? Have the people of various regions, in particular the poor and the middle class, lost interest in equity and justice, or does the apparent change in the spirit of the times simply reflect the domination of a new international upper class?

6.1 Less redistribution because of lack of resources?

At the global level, rates of economic growth in the 1980s and 1990s were lower than those registered in the 1960s and 1970s, though trends for individual countries and regions varied widely during the later period. In the former Soviet Union and in Central and Eastern Europe national income actually declined for a number of years, and there was no growth in most of Africa and Latin America (per capita income essentially remained the same in the latter region between 1998 and 2003), while extremely rapid growth was recorded in many parts of Asia. The earlier period had been characterized by greater evenness in terms of economic performance; much of the developing world, including Africa and Latin America, had experienced steady growth and an overall improvement in living standards, at least when demographic pressures were not too extreme. The downward trend during the past couple of decades has meant that a number of countries in both the developed and developing world have had fewer resources than before to distribute among competing sectors and social groups.

This last observation must be qualified in several respects. The world as a whole has been wealthier during the past quarter of a century than it was in the 1970s. There has been no real financial justification for curbing public expenditures or reducing social transfers, as advised or even demanded by international organizations, in particular the major international financial institutions. Moreover, it has not always been the Governments of countries with lower rates of economic growth that have decreased their involvement in matters of distribution and redistribution and allowed

inequalities and inequities to follow their course. Countries with the highest and steadiest rates of economic growth, notably the United States, have experienced some of the greatest increases in inequalities in areas such as income distribution; a number of countries with very low rates of economic growth have actually managed to reduce or at least maintain inequalities in the distribution of income.

It might be argued that one of the reasons why certain countries have experienced high rates of economic growth is precisely because their Governments have been determined not to meddle with the "natural" distribution of income and assets deriving from the "normal" interplay of market forces. From this perspective, economic justice (ensuring opportunities for meaningful work and employment on a level playing field and fair remuneration or compensation for productive activity) promotes economic growth, whereas social justice constitutes an impediment to such growth. This point is far from irrelevant. Suffice it to note here that there are counter-examples of countries with both dynamic economies and high levels of social justice. Trade-offs are rarely as straightforward as those anxious to prove their point or promote their interests would like to suggest.

It cannot be denied that most countries, including developing countries, were relatively wealthier in the 1990s than they were in the 1970s and, a fortiori, in the 1950s and 1960s, when comprehensive welfare schemes were implemented or at least seen as an immediate objective. Decisions on the proportion of the national income allocated for public use and on the relative priority of various items of public expenditure and public transfers reflect political choices. Any modifications deriving from these choices are generally incremental, as few Governments are ever able to start with a tabula rasa. However, even incremental changes, such as a 0.5 per cent increase in defence spending repeated over several budget cycles or modifications in the tax system that reduce levels of taxation for high-income groups, result in very significant resource shifts. Once these decisions are made, their effects are presented as the results of constraints nobody has the capacity to overcome. In recent years there has been a global shift in resource distribution in favour of the private sector, and a number of Governments have started to earmark a higher proportion of their resources for military and security purposes. Such choices might be analysed, and the ease with which they have been accepted, notably in affluent countries, is certainly intriguing, but the point to made here is that the decline in international justice and social justice cannot be attributed to an overall dwindling of resources during these recent decades.

6.2 The effect of different policies on patterns of distribution

Policies do matter. It is useful to state this truism because it is sometimes forgotten that laissez-faire is a policy. Provided it is not the unintended result of governmental and administrative incapacity, the non-intervention of a Government in the economy

is as much a deliberate policy as is a policy to orient investments towards certain sectors or to protect the domestic agricultural sector through price supports and import controls. Using the concepts of distribution and redistribution as a point of reference, the Forum identified three broad types of policies that have been pursued during the past few decades: policies that have disregarded distributional issues or deliberately created greater inequalities in pursuit of other objectives; policies aimed at maintaining or improving distributional patterns; and policies too weak to counter the various forces generating inequalities.

6.2.1 Policies directly responsible for increased inequalities

Those countries, the most prominent of which was the United States, that gave the global political agenda its shape and orientations during the last quarter of the twentieth century pursued domestic policies that were essentially aimed at allowing economic forces free rein. The main components of such policies, varying from one country to another in terms of degree and emphasis, included the following:

- *Tax restructuring*. Tax systems became less progressive; there was a shift in emphasis from direct to indirect taxation, average income tax rates declined owing to cuts in the higher-income tax brackets, and corporate taxes and taxes on unearned income were reduced.
- *Shifts in public expenditure*. Particularly important in the present context was the reduction in the share of public funds allocated to social programmes such as unemployment compensation and old-age pensions, resulting in diminished public transfers to low-income households.
- *Financial liberalization*. Deregulation provoked a shift in the distribution of national income in favour of profits, revenues and rents derived from financial transactions, including speculative transactions.
- *Shifts in the power and influence of different socio-economic groups and classes and targeted efforts to reduce the power and influence of trade unions*. Action taken with regard to the latter had a number of consequences: workers were less able to challenge the decline in employment security linked to the growing tendency of employers to maintain a "flexible" labour force and thereby ensure market competitiveness; the right of workers to strike was effectively abolished; labour and minimum wage standards were disregarded in many contexts; and because it had become politically feasible, Governments and employers were able to substantially reduce the proportion of national income going to labour.

Entrepreneurial and capitalist forces were unleashed in a number of regions with very different economic, social and political contexts; the countries of the

former Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe opened up their economies, and a similar policy was pursued in the major countries of Asia, especially in China and to some extent in India and Pakistan, though the approaches taken to economic liberalization and market development varied from one country to another. In these countries, as in the developed world, increased inequalities in income, assets and access to essential services constituted the accepted, if not the intended, outcome of policies oriented towards the views and interests of the economic and financial elite.

6.2.2 Policies aimed at avoiding increased inequalities

The majority of Western European countries, the Republic of Korea, and a few countries in Latin America managed to either maintain or improve the distribution of income at the domestic level during the period under review. The Governments of these countries did not pursue economic and financial policies radically different from those of Governments employing a decidedly neoliberal approach to the management of human affairs. They did not seek economic independence and certainly did not apply a new model of economic development. To the dismay of their critics on the left of the political spectrum, they opened their economies further to foreign and transnational capital and influence, privatized many public assets and public services, and more or less abandoned the idea that State authorities should maintain control over industrial, investment, income, and even research policies.

Perhaps because they have managed to retain some of their most essential political values and traditions, ranging from conservative liberalism to liberal and social democracy, these countries have succeeded in maintaining a rough balance between the interests of big corporations and the interests of the majority of the population. They have refrained from further destabilizing or undermining the social and political influence of their unions, already weakened by the shrinking of the traditional industrial base; space has been maintained for various forms of collective bargaining on the distribution of the fruits of economic growth between labour and capital. The basic features of their tax and welfare systems have also been preserved. Government actions have consistently reflected the conviction that the interests of the general public supersede private interests. These countries have tried, with varying degrees of success, to harmonize the requirements of social cohesion with the needs of economic initiative and entrepreneurship.

6.2.3 Policies of countries with a limited range of options

Most developing countries, regardless of their size or economic, social and political situation, still have a limited say in world affairs and a limited capacity to

formulate and implement their own policies. This statement must be understood in relative terms, as no country possesses full autonomy in an interdependent world, but it is nonetheless true that the political demarcation between the "developing" and the "developed" world remains firmly in place. When, to use the words attributed to the leader of a large Latin American country at the beginning of the 1990s, neoliberalism became "the only game in town", developing countries had little choice but to open their economies and societies to the dominant ideas and forces. Governments in the South were pressed to allow the free interplay of domestic and foreign economic and financial forces. Without the checks and balances provided by distributive and redistributive public policies—distribution and redistribution being interpreted in the broad sense as relating not only to income but also to power and influence—levels of economic and social differentiation and inequality increased.

A couple of observations may provide a somewhat more nuanced picture of the apparent passivity and quasi-victimization of the developing world by external forces playing the role of the colonial powers of the past. First, a number of the Governments of developing countries were keenly interested in strategies that promised growth and development while allowing domestic power structures to remain firmly in place. That equality is an idea universally comprehensible and cherished is an illusion sometimes entertained by intellectuals of Western background. Respect for social rank and economic and political power is actually a more "natural" and certainly more widespread tendency. Justice, and social justice in particular, represents a conquest. This idea is further explored below, but the point here is that the power elites in the South were extremely receptive to the message of international advisers and consultants that increases in income differentials and social disparities were normal consequences, and even necessary conditions, of the process of capital accumulation and development. Second, a few Governments in the developing world—some with and some without socialist orientations—continued to pursue their own development strategies while also liberalizing their economies, endeavouring to strike a balance between growth with equity and economic openness and independence. Their efforts certainly deserve attention and support.

In the analysis of the three types of policy stances, the focus remained on inequalities within countries. However, the ideas and approaches that aggravated domestic inequalities in the majority of developing countries were also primarily responsible for exacerbating inequalities between rich and poor nations. Integration into a global economy governed by liberal principles inevitably brings about a deepening of inequalities between the strong and the weak, at least in the short and medium run. When players of very uneven strength compete, even on an open, level and neutral playing field, the strongest will prevail. Rules ap-

plicable to all have replaced various preferential systems, which means that at the international level, as well, economic justice (whereby equal opportunities are provided and benefits accrue "to each country according to its capacities and strength") is supplanting social justice as the primary development objective. The pursuit of social justice continues at the international level, primarily through official development assistance, technical assistance, and debt relief, but with limited support from the main players. Furthermore, the emphasis on least developed countries, as logical as it may seem in the context of the new global compact between developed and developing countries, has connotations of charity that parallel the emphasis on humanitarian action seen as a substitute for social development.

6.3 A great political and ideological transformation with strong implications for the idea of distributive justice

The national and international policy orientations outlined above were all, in their own way, responses to a set of ideas with revolutionary power; some countries willingly embraced these ideas, some tried to temper their impact, and others were simply compelled to go along for the ride. During the past quarter of a century, the world has undergone an enormous political and ideological transformation. Primed and instigated by various intellectual currents, including the rise of the monetarist school among economists, fed by the power, prestige and accomplishments of the United States during the course of the twentieth century, made possible by the coming to power in the United States and in the United Kingdom of charismatic political leaders with a conservative and in many respects both reactionary and revolutionary agenda, greatly facilitated in its dissemination throughout the world by the collapse of the Soviet Union and, perhaps as importantly, by the tremendous advances in information and communication technologies, this transformation marked the beginning of a new era. Some were even convinced it represented the "end of history", but events in recent years have tragically exposed the fallacy of this assertion. The ideas that guided this revolution were certainly not new. It has been argued that the world has "simply" been brought back onto the course set by the Enlightenment and the American and French revolutions; interrupted by two world wars and by the aberrations of fascism and communism, progress along this course has now been resumed. This is probably, again, too linear a vision of history, but what matters most in the context of this review is that, old or new, these ideas have retained a remarkable appeal and politically transforming power.

If one word had to be selected to characterize this transformation and its appeal, it would have to be "freedom"—the freedom of the individual to operate in a society with no obstacles to suppress initiative, or more specifically, the freedom to produce, exchange and consume to the extent of one's innate or acquired, but not

imposed, capacity. From the perspective of political economy, this translates into the freedom of market forces to influence the organization of society. Within this type of framework, perceived obstacles to the exercise of such freedom, including the control of capital movement across borders, the excessive taxation of profits and capital, and more generally the public regulation of the activities of private corporations, are combated and largely eliminated.

One of the most important reasons for the depth and extent of this transformation is that people around the world perceive freedom, very simply and tangibly, as that which makes it possible to secure work and a decent income, to attend a good university, to see the world and its wonders, and to escape the constraints of an often narrow social milieu. That such aspirations and dreams often turn out to be illusory—a fact to which the countless numbers of migrant workers who look for El Dorado and find a nightmare may attest—is, from the perspective of the people concerned, a moot point. Freedom includes opportunities and risks.

Social justice has a relatively insignificant place in this perspective and discourse, and the same is true for international justice, at least in the redistributive context. Individuals and nations do their best, compete, and succeed or fail. A charitable hand, and sometimes a second chance—but certainly not permanent support—might be extended to those who fail. Historical precedent suggests that the popularity of this vision or ideology has been nourished by the shortcomings of the previous ideology, which was in place for much of the twentieth century and, for quite some time after the Second World War, represented the dominant view in the organization of societies and the world. An essential element of this ideology was the idea, dominant in national and international political and intellectual circles since the great economic depression of the 1930s, that the State had specific responsibilities in the economic and social domains that might involve the public appropriation of certain means of production and the implementation of interventionist economic policies and extensive redistributive policies financed by progressive taxation. For want of a more precise term, this earlier set of ideals might be said to represent the social democratic ideology. At the final meeting of the Forum, it was regretfully asserted that social democracy, as an idea and as a project, was dead. There are still a number of successful social democratic regimes in the world, but social democratic parties are short of new ideas and are on the defensive everywhere. This pronouncement regarding the death of social democracy may prove as imprudent as the statements linking the current ideology to the end of history; it is possible that social democracy will, and many believe it should, experience a rebirth, possibly with a different name and a renewed doctrine.

In any event, it was quite easy for the proponents of the victorious ideology of neoliberalism—and this, again, is a term chosen for lack of a more concise alternative that might capture the truly liberal, the often conservative and even resolutely

reactionary, and the sometimes revolutionary characteristics of the regimes that embody the dominant ideology—to capitalize on the real or perceived failures and shortcomings of the social democratic approach to government. One of the major problems was high unemployment, which still gravely affects a number of affluent countries that are otherwise reluctant to espouse all the tenets of the neoliberal doctrine. These same countries, and social democratic and socialist regimes in general (and certainly communist regimes), were accused, often rightly, of suppressing or failing to facilitate the freedom of opportunity and initiative—with the attendant rewards—that comprise economic justice. A victim of neglect, social justice took on a soft image. It became associated with the protection of the weak and the rewarding of personal failure; it was often perceived, owing in part to the propaganda of the opposite camp, as encouraging laziness and social dependency. Courage, dynamism, enthusiasm, optimism, responsibility, and faith in the capacity of human beings to overcome adversity and lead successful lives were all virtues once attributed to the quest for social justice but later attached to liberalism and to the regimes and societies perceived as incarnating its values. Even youth, whose attitudes and values traditionally reflected the most fervent idealism, were largely abandoning the old-fashioned dream of social justice.

The idea of international justice and the dream of closing the gap between developed and developing countries suffered much the same fate. The normal difficulties confronted in the process of development were interpreted as failures requiring a complete change of strategy, the most recent of which has centred around the rapid and complete integration of all economies, regardless of their size or strength, into the world economy. Occurrences of misuse of financial and technical aid by recipients and by donors were construed as indicative of a basic flaw in the very idea of international cooperation for development. Instances of corruption were publicized in a way that implied the overall incompetence and malevolence of Governments and public institutions in general. Deficiencies in public services were used as an excuse to weaken them further and replace them with private institutions. The reluctance of transnational corporations to be subjected to an international code of conduct was seen as sufficient reason to allow them to undertake only voluntary and non-binding commitments.

Each of these developments is partially attributable to weaknesses in the previously dominant ideology and its application. For instance, the once widely accepted, public-oriented, plan-inclined and interventionist approach to development grossly neglected the role of the private sector of the economy. Large corporations and the multiplicity of small and medium-sized enterprises that constitute an essential component of a well-functioning society were subjected to the same degree of suspicion and State control. The reluctance of Governments to risk the potential social upheaval linked to liberalized, profit-seeking market activity translated into a

misunderstanding and neglect of the basic desire of every human being for productive work and the opportunity to express creativity and initiative. Similarly, those individuals, experts, non-governmental groups and international institutions that were sincerely committed to the development of what was then referred to as the third world often allowed their thoughts and actions to be shaped and guided by an excessive idealism and faith in the a priori "dedication to the public good" of the ruling classes of countries that had suffered great injustices in the distant and recent past and were still in a position of political inferiority. In contexts such as these, realism and sometimes cynicism tend to flourish, and the conception of international justice as fair competition on an open field is likely to prevail.

6.4 The dangers of a world indifferent to justice

A common response to the suggestion that justice is no longer a concern for the dominant political elite is that history is made up of cycles, with each period correcting the excesses and imbalances of the previous period. This type of statement, usually made by persons who are not excessively interested in or knowledgeable about political doctrines and issues, implies a fatalistic or providential view of history. It suggests a kind of detachment from the evolution of society, a justification for inaction. It is a fundamentally conservative view. It seems more appropriate, especially in these times, to consider trends as modifiable and problems as solvable. There is no guarantee that the world will alter its course and evolve towards less violence and less injustice, but positive changes will not occur without considered thought and political action.

Another common belief is that a change in the political majority in a few leading countries would set things right. The election of left-leaning parliaments and Governments would restore the focus on justice. This hope is not without foundation, but meaningful political action requires a coherent and internally consistent view of the state of the nation (and of the world, in this age of interdependence) and of what is desirable. The neglect of social and international justice is not entirely due to the domination of countries and social classes whose interests are well served (in their own estimation, if not in that of the objective or impartial observer) by the present state of affairs; there are a great many conceptual and political problems that must be addressed, and many questions that must be properly formulated, before alternative or corrective measures can be developed to restore the commitment to justice as a global priority.

The Forum identified a number of problems that have emerged in connection with the dramatic developments of the past several decades, as well as the likely consequences of a continuation of present trends. When inequalities between the various groups or classes in society reach a certain level, social mobility is hampered. It is generally agreed that for the effective functioning of society, and perhaps for its survival under conditions of freedom and individual initiative, a degree of social

mobility is required within a given generation and, even more importantly, from one generation to the next. Education and the greater geographical mobility that often comes with it have been the traditional means of improving one's station in life. The increased inequality in access to a decent education, noted in chapter 3, constitutes an obstacle to such mobility in poor and affluent countries alike. It appears that in some of the latter, with the combined increases in both extreme poverty and various forms of inequality, the average individual now has fewer opportunities to move upward on the social ladder than he or she did 25 years ago.

Lack of social mobility, combined with a high level of income inequality and low political participation, leads to the segmentation of societies. A de facto separation occurs between social groups identified on the basis of their income and wealth, their geographical location, the common ethnic origins of their members, or a combination of these and/or other factors. These groups coexist more or less peacefully within the borders of a country but have less and less in common as time goes by and do not communicate with each other. Such segmentation is a prelude to social disintegration, placing society on one of the surest paths to authoritarian rule. At the international level, the marginalization of various countries leads to the segmentation of the world, to violence, and to attempts to impose order through domination, creating a global environment that is antithetical to the notion of an international community.

It is also true that when levels of poverty and income inequality reach a certain point, combined, again, with a lack of political involvement among the groups lowest on the social ladder, the concept of equal rights that is fundamental to democratic societies tends to become meaningless. Marginalized individuals and groups are no longer in a position to exercise, or even to understand, their basic rights and fundamental freedoms. Any progress that has been made towards achieving horizontal equality, including equality between women and men, is seriously threatened, and a reversal may even occur. The actual threshold at which inequalities in society affect social mobility and the capacity of individuals to enjoy their basic rights varies over time and space. However, it is clear that inequalities, and the attendant risks of marginalization and alienation, are growing in a number of countries.

Excessive inequality is even an obstacle to economic growth, or more precisely to the broad-based and sustained growth that the United Nations and other international and regional organizations see as a requirement for sustainable, inclusive and people-centred development. It is possible to achieve high rates of growth by engaging in activities that are socially and morally questionable and by employing organizational and management practices that are prohibited by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. However, growth in free and democratic societies is oriented towards the needs and aspirations of all and is facilitated by maximum and voluntary participation in economic activity. Such participation is incompatible with extreme poverty and hindered by excessive inequality.

There are elements other than social mobility, social cohesion and economic growth that might also be counted among the basic principles underlying the organization of society; these principles have a close, if complicated, relationship with justice, which is itself an important (and perhaps even the most important) principle. In *A Theory of Justice*, John Rawls offers the following observations with regard to the relationship between the principles of stability, efficiency, coordination and justice: "In the absence of a certain measure of agreement on what is just and unjust, it is clearly more difficult for individuals to coordinate their plans efficiently in order to insure that mutually beneficial arrangements are maintained. Distrust and resentment corrode the ties of civility, and suspicion and hostility tempt men to act in ways they would otherwise avoid. So while the distinctive role of conceptions of justice is to specify rights and duties and to determine the appropriate distributive shares, the way in which a conception does this is bound to affect the problems of efficiency, coordination and stability."[37]

It is true, as frequently noted by those reasonably satisfied with their place in society and with the position of their countries in the international pecking order, that intellectuals throughout history and from all cultures have always detected and deplored signs of distrust, resentment, corrosion of the ties of civility, and other societal weaknesses and failures. It is also true, however, that the price paid for not heeding Cassandra's call can be extremely high. The intention of Rawls was above all to establish a solid philosophical foundation for the pursuit of social justice. Can such a need be seriously denied in today's world?

In the same work, Rawls identifies two "principles of justice" that should "apply to the basic structure of society and govern the assignments of rights and duties and regulate the distribution of social and economic advantages". First, "each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive total system of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar system of liberty for all"; second, "social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) to the greatest benefit of the least advantaged, consistent with the just savings principle, and (b) attached to offices and positions open to all under conditions of fair equality of opportunity".[38]

Liberal and social democracies are built upon such principles, though the relative emphasis placed on the second principle varies widely, and the nature of the critical link between the two principles is perceived differently in individual contexts. Principles of justice are the theoretical foundations of society; they are ideals that are never completely or everlastingly achieved but must nonetheless be pursued by Governments and citizens. Over the past couple of decades there has been a regression in the application of various aspects of these two principles; in particular, little has been done to ensure the proper "arrangement" of social and economic inequalities.

The "just savings principle"[39] Rawls refers to deserves to be highlighted here because of its importance and because one of the signs of the indifference towards social justice is the silence on the concentration and utilization of wealth. For example, international texts on poverty eradication tend to provide surprisingly little information on developments at the other end of the income and wealth spectrum. Attitudes towards wealth and its uses are critical at all times and for all societies. There are moral issues relating to the obligations and responsibilities that most traditional philosophies and religions assign to those that have more than others. There are political issues relating to the difficulties that democratic States—even those that have an egalitarian view of the public interest—encounter in establishing or maintaining progressive tax systems and redistributive policies. Finally, there are economic issues pertaining to the use of wealth for consumption and investment; capital formation remains key to sustained economic prosperity and development, including the prevention and reduction of poverty.

The reasons why some countries invest more or less than others and why investment levels vary over a country's history are difficult to comprehend fully, but the behaviour of the richest 10, 5 or 2 per cent of the population is one important factor. There is no automatic link between an increase in profits and the propensity to save and invest productively. Further, it not necessarily true that if a minority of people get rich (or richer), society will inevitably grow richer; in fact, it appears that if a small proportion of the population holds too large a share of the national income, capital formation declines. It was noted within the Forum that, in the Keynesian tradition, investment should be seen as a social tax on profit. In recent years, in the most affluent countries, the income and wealth of the leaders of the private sector have, if judged by the standards informally developed since the industrial revolution, reached extraordinary levels, and it might be appropriate for Governments and international organizations concerned with equity to look again at the "just savings principle".

The principles of justice that have traditionally guided the establishment and development of societies are not only being transgressed; in many contexts their essential relevance and validity appear to be in question. Other organizing principles of society and the world, such as the reign of force, are finding their way back into the political discourse. Retributive justice involves the legally authorized and codified use of force. Neither social justice nor international justice can be brought about by force.

Chapter 7

Concluding notes on the role of the United Nations

Informed and guided by the principles and spirit of the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Forum offered the following conclusions and observations with regard to the pursuit of justice in the world today, identifying six critical areas of priority for "positive development" from among the current doctrinal orientations of the United Nations:

- The increased emphasis on the close link between civil and political rights and economic and social development is welcome and important. Even if there are still some reservations about the concept of good governance, notably because its relationship to good government has not been clarified, and even if the word "democracy" is used somewhat loosely, reuniting the pursuit of fundamental freedoms and efforts to improve living standards is critical. Peace, development and human rights are indeed indivisible, and it is essential for the future of humankind that the United Nations proclaim this message urbi et o*rbi*.
- A related and equally critical message is that the principles of national sovereignty and non-interference by outside parties in a country's domestic affairs can no longer be invoked by Governments to escape the consequences of abuses perpetrated against citizens. Some form of what is referred to as the "right of intervention", applicable to all, must be established within the framework of international law under the aegis of the United Nations. The development of humanitarian law is a sign of progress reflecting the emergence of a global awareness that respect for human rights and human dignity should ignore borders. The establishment of the International Criminal Court is a step towards achieving international justice.
- The notion of equal rights, a foundation of social justice, is an important part of the international discourse and is probably gaining ground overall, at least in the global consciousness. Many groups that have traditionally suffered discrimination now have some hope of enjoying equal rights. The considerable progress made towards achieving gender equality has been mentioned repeatedly. For quite some time, global efforts have been under way to ensure recognition of equal rights for indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities, and other vulnerable groups; migrant workers are receiving an increasing amount of attention in this context. The idea that all members of the human family have equal and inalienable rights—irrespective of their socio-economic status, gender, origins, or group affiliation—seems to be slowly penetrating different societies around the globe. Inherited rank and privilege are probably being used less frequently to claim the right to special treatment before the law, or at least such a claim is made less often with the sincere belief that birth or acquired social position ipso

facto confers special rights. Those at the bottom of the socio-economic ladder are becoming increasingly convinced that they should enjoy equality before the law, benefiting from the same rights as their wealthier and more fortunate compatriots. Around the world, a growing number of individuals and societies are embracing the view that it is only differences in income and wealth that constitute a legitimate justification for a social hierarchy and social classes and for differential access to various goods and amenities. At least in principle, this social stratification on the basis of income and wealth is not only consonant with, but in fact necessitates, equality of rights.

- Recent United Nations texts, including the Millennium Declaration, emphasize the importance of ensuring equality of opportunities. For countries, this requires the provision of a level playing field for trade, financial dealings, intellectual property transactions and other aspects of international relations so that all those participating in the world economy may enjoy a reasonable chance of success. If this enabling environment existed everywhere, countries that faced difficulty integrating into the global economy would theoretically have only their defective national policies to blame. It can be argued that international justice is more likely to be achieved through this approach, based on responsibility and partnership in a context of openness, than through the perpetuation of the traditional North-South relationship—particularly since the latter is characterized by paternalistic attitudes inherited from colonialism and a system of domination and dependence that increases the likelihood of confrontation. It is more dignified for developing countries to play by a set of fair international rules governing trade and finance, even if they must struggle at first, than to beg for assistance. In any case, aid is still being provided and has even grown in recent years, though it is increasingly being directed towards the poorer countries, otherwise referred to as low-income or least developed countries. This is in line with the concept of international justice, which incorporates an element of charity for those seriously disadvantaged. Such charity is seen as temporary, however, for the objective of international organizations is to bring all nations into the mainstream of the global economy. Ultimately, the distinction between developed, developing and least developed countries should disappear as all nations and regional groupings compete and cooperate within an evolving global milieu.
- For individuals and groups, equality of opportunities essentially means the absence of discrimination and the existence of a climate of social freedom in which each person can follow his or her calling, engaging in productive work and being fairly compensated for such activity on the basis talent, effort and other personal attributes. This notion is not incorporated in the Charter of the United Nations or the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, but it does appear in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in two articles

pertaining to work and conditions of work. In article 6, recognition is given to the "right to work, which includes the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his living by work which he freely chooses or accepts". Paragraph (c) of article 7 emphasizes the need to ensure "equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence". In recent United Nations texts, this concept of equality of opportunity is not limited to issues of work and employment but is being increasingly identified as a general organizing principle of society. It is a modern and somewhat technical manifestation of the notion of economic justice, which is itself a traditional dimension of distributive or social justice as a basic aspiration of human beings. It centres around the principle of "to each according to his talents and deeds" rather than "to each according to his needs". It is also a key aspect of the issue of equality between women and men and a key dimension of democracy as understood in the Anglo-Saxon political culture. By emphasizing and basing its action on the idea that equality is best understood as equality of opportunity within the broader context of economic justice, the United Nations is meeting a profound and probably universal human need and aspiration. In simple terms, those who exercise their initiative and talent should be fairly compensated, and entrepreneurship should be adequately supported and rewarded.

- Finally, in the new doctrinal orientation of the United Nations with regard to development and social justice, recognition is given to the vital role of non-State and non-public actors in the economic and social evolution of societies and of the world as a whole. Initiated during the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro and further reinforced within the framework of the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the World Conference on Women and Development in Beijing, the participation of civil society organizations in the normative and operational work of the United Nations is now firmly established. The modalities of this participation require clarification and improvement, but at present, few Governments would use the argument that the United Nations is an intergovernmental body to deny NGOs the right to articulate their views on world affairs and contribute to various development activities. If there is any hope of one day achieving an international and global democracy, its seeds are certainly to be found in the United Nations. Strengthening this assertion is the fact that important efforts have been made over the past few years to build a relationship between the Organization and the private sector. Currently, this relationship is characterized by a number of imbalances. Transnational corporations, with their enormous power and close links to some Governments, are in a position to reject any attempts to regulate their activities. Their respect for international law, in particular the International Bill

of Human Rights and ILO conventions, is a function of their good will. They are outside the bounds of national laws, practically speaking, and at the global level are subject only to the rules of behaviour they establish themselves. The United Nations has been compelled to assume a rather unusual position with regard to international corporations, as evidenced by the language used in the Millennium Development Goals; "cooperation" is sought with these large companies and conglomerates as if they were public entities with attributes of sovereignty. Nonetheless, this emerging dialogue between the diplomatic culture and the corporate culture within the United Nations context is a positive development; perhaps it will encourage deeper reflection on the very notions of "public" and "private" sectors. The public sector can no longer pretend that it has the exclusive right to define and protect the public interest or the common good. The private sector can no longer pretend that it has a monopoly on freedom, creativity and efficiency. Justice, including social justice, can no longer be the sole responsibility of public institutions; it requires the active involvement of all segments of society.

Problems deriving from contemporary trends and public policies have been amply evoked in this work summarizing and interpreting the debates of the International Forum for Social Development. Rather than reiterating them here, it seems more appropriate to identify the domains, additional or complementary to those listed above, in which the United Nations might consider engaging in deeper reflection and expanded debate.

- Universalism, in its secular sense, needs to be revisited and openly debated. This notion, central to the normative role of the Organization, has been battered by a number of currents including moral and cultural relativism and, at the other extreme, unilateralism. Respect for pluralism, so critical for preserving and enhancing the richness of the world, must be harmonized with respect for universal principles and norms. If there is a plurality of conceptions of justice, the identification of universal rights, freedoms and duties is all the more necessary, and it becomes all the more important to allow broad participation in the forums and processes through which this determination ought to be made.
- The question of the foundations of the concept and conceptions of justice, in particular distributive or social justice, is a difficult one but should not be avoided or left to moral philosophers. The various religious and philosophical origins and interpretations of this fundamental notion could be usefully expounded and debated within the framework of the United Nations. There are roughly four different foundations for justice: divine and revealed law; positivism (what is legal is what is just); the idea of the social contract; and the application of the principle of utility, or utilitarianism. Rawls, in the tradition of Kant, builds his reasoning on the notion of a social contract. Utilitarianism was adopted two centuries ago by

the Anglo-Saxon culture and remains the dominant approach, though positivism and divine and revealed law have experienced a revival that has challenged the status quo. Further reflection and debate on the nature and foundations of justice are relevant to the question of universalism and pluralism but are also important from the perspective of building knowledge and creating a better understanding among people. It has been said that the opposite of violence is not benevolence but thought.

- If justice, consisting of social justice and international justice, can once again be established as a key organizing principle of society and the world, some sort of common understanding of the values and virtues that support it or at least are not incompatible with it will have to be achieved. Is frugality, simplicity or (to use a concept dear to Hume) moderation a virtue that will help bring more justice to the world? Moderation is probably useful in protecting the environment and can therefore contribute to the achievement of justice for future generations. However, among other questions that should be addressed candidly in the United Nations setting, what will become of economic justice if simplicity is a value and moderation a moral norm applied to economic activities? It is often maintained that humankind urgently needs to expand, deepen and enrich its spiritual, moral and political horizons, and the findings of this limited inquiry indicate that such an assertion is not unfounded. The potential role of the United Nations in facilitating this process must not be underestimated.
- The relationship between freedom and justice has always been problematic. Their reconciliation is at the heart of all theories of justice based on secular premises, and their antagonism is at the core of most personal and political conflicts. This is an issue that can be "perfectly" settled only through the suppression of one (and sometimes both) of the protagonists, but it is also an issue that the world has a duty to address—relentlessly—with the hope of finding a reasonable compromise. Such a compromise, if achieved, will always be fragile, for justice and liberty exist in the realm of passion and are affected, in their conception and exercise, by virtually all the elements that make up a society and shape international relations. The current terms of this conflict are not all that different from those of the past, but the stakes are perhaps higher, as the world is becoming both smaller and increasingly fragmented. To risk a possibly imprudent generalization, freedom appears to have gained the "upper hand"—but what does this mean? Is freedom still a luxury, and are injustices still the cross the multitude must bear? How is freedom understood and lived? Has it retained, for the average citizen of today, some of its traditional links with the quest for moral and professional excellence? As a working hypothesis, one would have to assume that those who are promoting freedom as an endorsement of crude competition between perpetually dissatisfied and greedy individuals and nations

are making a fundamental mistake. In the hearts and minds of the men and women in today's societies, freedom and justice are both cherished. It is the duty of organizations such as the United Nations to help them and the States in which they live.

Endnotes

[1] United Nations, "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all: report of the Secretary-General" (A/59/2005; 21 March 2005).

[2] United Nations, Office of Public Information, *Charter of the United Nations and Statute of the International Court of Justice* (New York); the Charter was signed on 26 June 1945 at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, and entered into force on 24 October 1945. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted and proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 217 A (III) of 10 December 1948.

[3] See General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000.

[4] See United Nations, "Report of the World Summit for Social Development", which includes the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (A/CONF.166/9; 19 April 1995).

[5] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, revised edition (Cambridge, Massachusetts, The Belknap Press/Harvard University Press, 1999), p. 13.

[6] Chapter VII focuses on action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression.

[7] Ibid.; see, in particular, pp. 4 and 5.

[8] For a succinct explanation of the views of Karl Marx on justice, see *A Dictionary of Marxist Thought*, second edition, Tom Bottomore, ed. (Cambridge, Massachusetts, Blackwell, 1991); see, in particular, the entries on justice and on equality.

[9] This notion of an "impartial observer" was used by Adam Smith, notably in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, sixth edition (London, A. Millar, 1790).

[10] See note 6.

[11] See United Nations, "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all: report of the Secretary-General" (A/59/2005; 21 March 2005), p. 40, para. 159.

[12] See the *World Bank Atlas*, 36th edition (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2004). The other data included in this section were taken from the regional studies prepared for the last meeting of the Forum, held in New York in October 2004. These studies are available upon request from the United Nations Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development

[13] The data included in this chapter were also taken from the regional studies mentioned above.

[14] The Gini coefficient is usually used to measure income inequality but can be used to measure any form of uneven distribution. The Gini coefficient is a number between

0 and 1, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality (everyone has the same income) and 1 corresponds to perfect inequality (one person has all the income, and everyone else has none). The Gini index is the Gini coefficient expressed in percentage form, and is equal to the Gini coefficient multiplied by 100.

[15] See Giovanni Andrea Cornia, *Inequality, Growth and Poverty Alleviation* (Helsinki, United Nations University/World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU/WIDER), 2000).

[16] See General Assembly resolution 3201 (S-VI) of 1 May 1974.

[17] See General Assembly resolution 3281 (XXIX) of 12 December 1974.

[18] Lima Declaration and Plan of Action on Industrial Development and Cooperation, adopted by the Second General Conference of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization at its final plenary meeting (Vienna, June 1975), para. 28.

[19] See General Assembly resolution 55/2 of 8 September 2000. The Millennium Development Goals derived from this Declaration by the Secretariat were not formally adopted by the General Assembly. However, they have been discussed by the Assembly at each of its sessions since 2001.

[20] The quoted material in this paragraph is taken from the United Nations Millennium Declaration, paras. 11, 13 and 15.

[21] The Millennium Development Goals and their accompanying targets and indicators are reproduced in annex II to the present publication (available from http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/).

[22] Apart from the Declaration itself and its two covenants, inspiration for the interpretation of the notion of human rights has been drawn primarily from Paul Sieghart, *The Lawful Rights of Mankind* (Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 1986); also see the work of Mary Ann Glendon in *A World Made New: Eleanor Roosevelt and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (New York, Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2001).

[23] Proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 2542 (XXIV) of 11 December 1969.

[24] Under Economic and Social Council resolution 1985/17 of 28 May 1985.

[25] The other half of this pair, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, entered into force at the same time.

[26] United Nations, Department of Public Information, *Basic Facts about the United Nations*, updated in 2004 (Sales No. E.04.I.7), p. 243.

[27] See General Assembly resolution 45/158 of 18 December 1990.

[28] See United Nations, "Potential for cooperation to solve world's social ills has never been greater, Secretary-General declares at Summit meeting", press release (SOC/COP.SG/6; 10 March 1995).

[29] United Nations, Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, 6-12 March 1995 (DPI/1707-9515294; August 1995), foreword, p. v.

[30] United Nations, "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development" (A/RES/50/161; 22 December 1995), para. 24.

[31] United Nations, "Report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly", *Official Records*, twenty-fourth special session, supplement 3 (A/S-24/8/Rev.1), annex on further initiatives for social development; also see resolution S-24/2 on further initiatives for social development (1 July 2000).

[32] United Nations, Commission for Social Development, Declaration on the Tenth Anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development, adopted on 11 February 2005 by the Commission at its forty-third session, held in New York from 9 to 18 February.

[33] United Nations, *"We the Peoples": The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century—Millennium Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations* (A/54/2000; 27 March 2000).

[34] Equally specific policy prescriptions appear in the outcome document of the special session held in Geneva in 2000.

[35] United Nations, "We the Peoples": The Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century—Millennium Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations (A/54/2000; 27 March 2000).

[36] United Nations, "In larger freedom: towards security, development and human rights for all: report of the Secretary-General" (A/59/2005; 21 March 2005).

[37] Rawls, op. cit., p. 6; see, in particular, chapter 5, on distributive shares.

[38] Ibid., pp. 53 and 266.

[39] The "just savings principle" is based on the idea that "each generation must not only preserve the gains of culture and civilization, and maintain intact those institutions that have been established, but it must also put aside in each period of time a suitable amount of real capital accumulation. This saving may take various forms, from net investment in machinery and other means of production to investment in learning and education" (ibid., p. 252.)

Annex I

Commitments of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development[1*]

Commitment 1

We commit ourselves to creating an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable people to achieve social development.

To this end, at the national level, we will:

(a) Provide a stable legal framework … which includes and promotes equality and equity between women and men, full respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, access to justice, the elimination of all forms of discrimination, transparent and accountable governance and administration and the encouragement of partnership with free and representative organizations of the civil society;

(b) Create an enabling economic environment aimed at promoting more equitable access for all to income, resources and social services;

(c) Reinforce, as appropriate, the means and capacities for people to participate in the formulation and implementation of social and economic policies and programmes … ;

(d) Reinforce peace by promoting tolerance, non-violence and respect for diversity, and by settling disputes by peaceful means;

(e) Promote dynamic, open, free markets, while recognizing the need to intervene in markets, to the extent necessary, to prevent or counteract market failure, promote stability and long-term investment, [and] ensure fair competition and ethical conduct … ;

(f) Reaffirm, promote and strive to ensure the realization of the rights set out in relevant international instruments and declarations, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights … ;

(g) Create the comprehensive conditions to allow for the voluntary repatriation of refugees in safety and dignity to their countries of origin, and the voluntary and safe return of internally displaced persons to their places of origin and their smooth reintegration into their societies.

[*]This excerpt is taken from part C of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development (available from *http://www.un.org/esa/socdev/wssd/agreements/*).

At the international level, we will:

(h) Promote international peace and security and make and support all efforts to settle international disputes by peaceful means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations;

(i) Strengthen international cooperation for achieving social development;

(j) Promote and implement policies to create a supportive external economic environment, through, inter alia, cooperation in the formulation and implementation of macroeconomic policies, trade liberalization, mobilization and/or provision of new and additional financial resources that are both adequate and predictable … and more equitable access of developing countries to global markets, productive investments and technologies and appropriate knowledge, with due consideration to the needs of countries with economies in transition;

(k) Strive to ensure that international agreements relating to trade, investment, technology, debt and official development assistance are implemented in a manner that promotes social development;

(l) Support, particularly through technical and financial cooperation, the efforts of developing countries to achieve rapid, broadly based sustainable development;

(m) Support, through appropriate international cooperation, the efforts of countries with economies in transition to achieve rapid broadly based sustainable development;

(n) Reaffirm and promote human rights, which are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated, including the right to development as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights, and strive to ensure that they are respected, protected and observed.

Commitment 2

We commit ourselves to the goal of eradicating poverty in the world, through decisive national actions and international cooperation, as an ethical, social, political and economic imperative of humankind.

To this end, at the national level, in partnership with all actors of civil society and in the context of a multidimensional and integrated approach, we will:

(a) Formulate or strengthen as a matter or urgency, and preferably by the year 1996; the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, national policies and strategies geared to substantially reducing overall poverty in the short-

est possible time, reducing inequalities and eradicating absolute poverty by a target date to be specified by each country in its national context;

(b) Focus our efforts and policies to address the root causes of poverty and to provide for the basic needs of all. These efforts should include the elimination of hunger and malnutrition; the provision of food security, education, employment and livelihood, primary health-care services including reproductive health care, safe drinking water and sanitation, and adequate shelter; and participation in social and cultural life. Special priority will be given to the needs and rights of women and children, who often bear the greatest burden of poverty, and to the needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups and persons;

(c) Ensure that people living in poverty have access to productive resources, including credit, land, education and training, technology, knowledge and information, as well as to public services, and participate in decision-making on a policy and regulatory environment that would enable them to benefit from expanding employment and economic opportunities;

(d) Develop and implement policies to ensure that all people have adequate economic and social protection during unemployment, ill health, maternity, child-rearing, widowhood, disability and old age;

(e) Ensure that national budgets and policies are oriented, as necessary, to meeting basic needs, reducing inequalities and targeting poverty, as a strategic objective;

(f) Seek to reduce inequalities, increase opportunities, and access to resources and income, and remove any political, legal, economic and social factors and constraints that foster and sustain inequality.

At the international level, we will:

(g) Strive to ensure that the international community and international organizations, particularly the multilateral financial institutions, assist developing countries and all countries in need in their efforts to achieve our overall goal of eradicating poverty and ensuring basic social protection;

(h) Encourage all international donors and multilateral development banks to support policies and programmes for the attainment, in a sustained manner, of the specific efforts … relating to people-centred sustainable development and to meeting basic needs for all … ;

(i) Focus attention on and support the special needs of countries and regions in which there are substantial concentrations of people living in poverty, in particular in South Asia … .

Commitment 3

We commit ourselves to promoting the goal of full employment as a basic priority of our economic and social policies, and to enabling all men and women to attain secure and sustainable livelihoods through freely chosen productive employment and work.

To this end, at the national level, we will:

(a) Put the creation of employment, the reduction of unemployment and the promotion of appropriately and adequately remunerated employment at the centre of strategies and policies of Governments, with full respect for workers' rights and with the participation of employers, workers and their respective organizations, giving special attention to the problems of structural, long-term unemployment and underemployment of youth, women, people with disabilities, and all other disadvantaged groups and individuals;

(b) Develop policies to expand work opportunities and productivity in both rural and urban sectors by achieving economic growth, investing in human resource development, promoting technologies that generate productive employment, and encouraging self-employment, entrepreneurship, and small and medium-sized enterprises;

(c) Improve access to land, credit, information, infrastructure and other productive resources for small and micro-enterprises, including those in the informal sector, with particular emphasis on the disadvantaged sectors of society;

(d) Develop policies to ensure that workers and employers have the education, information and training needed to adapt to changing economic conditions, technologies and labour markets;

(e) Explore innovative options for employment creation and seek new approaches to generating income and purchasing power;

(f) Foster policies that enable people to combine their paid work with their family responsibilities;

(g) Pay particular attention to women's access to employment, the protection of their position in the labour market and the promotion of equal treatment for women and men, in particular with respect to pay;

(h) Take due account of the importance of the informal sector in our employment development strategies with a view to increasing its contribution to the eradication of poverty and to social integration in developing counties, and to strengthening its linkages with the formal economy;

(i) Pursue the goal of ensuring quality jobs, and safeguard the basic rights and interests of workers and to this end, freely promote respect for relevant Inter-

national Labour Organization conventions, including those on the prohibition of forced and child labour, the freedom of association, the right to organize and bargain collectively, and the principle of non-discrimination.

At the International level, we will:

(j) Ensure that migrant workers benefit from the protections provided by relevant national and international instruments, take concrete and effective measures against the exploitation of migrant workers, and encourage all countries to consider the ratification and full implementation of the relevant international instruments on migrant workers;

(k) Foster international cooperation in macroeconomic policies, liberalization of trade and investment so as to promote sustained economic growth and the creation of employment, and exchange experiences on successful policies and programmes aimed at increasing employment and reducing unemployment.

Commitment 4

We commit ourselves to promoting social integration by fostering societies that are stable, safe and just and that are based on the promotion and protection of all human rights, as well as on non-discrimination, tolerance, respect for diversity, equality of opportunity, solidarity, security, and participation of all people, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons.

To this end, at the national level, we will:

(a) Promote respect for democracy, the rule of law, pluralism and diversity, tolerance and responsibility, non-violence and solidarity by encouraging educational systems, communication media and local communities and organizations to raise people's understanding and awareness of all aspects of social integration;

(b) Formulate or strengthen policies and strategies geared to the elimination of discrimination in all its forms and the achievement of social integration based on equality and respect for human dignity;

(c) Promote access for all to education, information, technology and know-how as essential means for enhancing communication and participation in civil, political, economic, social and cultural life … ;

(d) Ensure the protection and full integration into the economy and society of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups and persons;

(e) Formulate or strengthen measures to ensure respect for and protection of the human rights of migrants, migrant workers and their families, to eliminate

the increasing acts of racism and xenophobia in sectors of many societies, and to promote greater harmony and tolerance in all societies;

(f) Recognize and respect the right of indigenous people to maintain and develop their identity, culture and interests, support their aspirations for social justice and provide an environment that enables them to participate in the social, economic and political life of their country;

(g) Foster the social protection and full integration into the economy and society of veterans … ;

(h) Acknowledge and encourage the contribution of people of all age groups as equally and vitally important for the building of a harmonious society, and foster dialogue between generations in all parts of society;

(i) Recognize and respect cultural, ethnic and religious diversity, promote and protect the rights of persons belonging to national, ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities, and take measures to facilitate to facilitate their full participation in all aspects of the political, economic, social, religious and cultural life of their societies and in the economic progress and social development of their countries;

(j) Strengthen the ability of local communities and groups with common concerns to develop their own organizations and resources and to propose policies relating to social development, including through the activities of non-governmental organizations;

(k) Strengthen institutions that enhance social integration, recognizing the central role of the family and providing it with an environment that assures its protection and support. In different cultural, political and social systems, various forms of the family exist;

(l) Address the problems of crime, violence and illicit drugs as factors of social disintegration.

At the international level, we will:

(m) Encourage the ratification of, the avoidance as far as possible of the resort to reservations to, and the implementation of international instruments and adherence to internationally recognized declarations relevant to the elimination of discrimination and the promotion and protection of all human rights;

(n) Further enhance international mechanisms for the provision of humanitarian and financial assistance to refugees and host countries and promote appropriate shared responsibility;

(o) Promote international cooperation and partnership on the basis of equality, mutual respect and mutual benefit.

Commitment 5

We commit ourselves to promoting full respect for human dignity and to achieving equality and equity between women and men, and to recognizing and enhancing the participation and leadership roles of women in political, civil, economic, social and cultural life and in development.

To this end, at the national level, we will:

(a) Promote changes in attitudes, structures, policies, laws and practices in order to eliminate all obstacles to human dignity, equality and equity in the family and in society, and promote full and equal participation of urban and rural women and women with disabilities in social, economic and political life, including in the formulation, implementation and follow-up of public policies and programmes;

(b) Establish structures, policies, objectives and measurable goals to ensure gender balance and equity in decision-making processes at all levels, broaden women's political, economic, social and cultural opportunities and independence, and support the empowerment of women, including through their various organizations … and also through measures to integrate a gender perspective in the design and implementation of economic and social policies;

(c) Promote full and equal access of women to literacy, education and training, and remove all obstacles to their access to credit and other productive resources and to their ability to buy, hold and sell property and land equally with men;

(d) Take appropriate measures to ensure, on the basis of equality of men and women, universal access to the widest range of health-care services, including those relating to reproductive health care, consistent with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development;

(e) Remove the remaining restrictions on women's rights to own land, inherit property or borrow money, and ensure women's equal right to work;

(f) Establish policies, objectives and goals that enhance the equality of status, welfare and opportunity of the girl child, especially in regard to health, nutrition, literacy and education, recognizing that gender discrimination starts at the earliest stages of life;

(g) Promote equal partnership between women and men in family and community life and society, emphasize the shared responsibility of men and women in the care of children and support for older family members, and emphasize men's shared responsibility and promote their active involvement in responsible parenthood and responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour;

(h) Take effective measures, including through the enactment and enforcement of laws, and implement policies to combat and eliminate all forms of discrimi-

nation, exploitation, abuse and violence against women and girl children, in accordance with relevant international instruments and declarations;

(i) Promote and protect the full and equal enjoyment by women of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;

(j) Formulate or strengthen policies and practices to ensure that women are enabled to participate fully in paid work and in employment through such measures as positive action, education, training, appropriate protection under labour legislation, and facilitating the provision of quality child care and other support services.

At the international level, we will:

(k) Promote and protect women's human rights and encourage the ratification of, if possible by the year 2000, the avoidance, as far as possible, of the resort to reservations to, and the implementation of the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other relevant instruments, as well as the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women, the Geneva Declaration for Rural Women, and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development;

(l) Give specific attention to the preparations for the Fourth World Conference on Women, to be held at Beijing in September 1995, and to the implementation and follow-up of the conclusions of that Conference;

(m) Promote international cooperation to assist developing countries, at their request, in their efforts to achieve equality and equity and the empowerment of women;

(n) Devise suitable means to recognize and make visible the full extent of the work of women and all their contributions to the national economy, including contributions to the unremunerated and domestic sectors.

Commitment 6

We commit ourselves to promoting and attaining the goals of universal and equitable access to quality education, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental heath, and the access of all to primary health care, making particular efforts to rectify inequalities relating to social conditions and without distinction as to race, national origin, gender, age or disability; respecting and promoting our common and particular cultures; striving to strengthen the role of culture in development; preserving the essential bases of people-centred sustainable development; and contributing to the full development of human resources and social development. The purpose of these activities is to eradicate poverty, promote full and productive employment and foster social integration.

To this end, at the national level, we will:

(a) Formulate and strengthen time-bound national strategies for the eradication of illiteracy and universalization of basic education, which includes early childhood education, primary education and education for the illiterate, in all communities, in particular for the introduction, if possible, of national languages in the educational system and by support of the various means of non-formal education, striving to attain the highest possible standard of learning;

(b) Emphasize lifelong learning by seeking to improve the quality of education to ensure that people of all ages are provided with useful knowledge, reasoning ability, skills, and the ethical and social values required to develop their full capacities in health and dignity and to participate fully in the social, economic and political process of development. In this regard, women and girls should be considered a priority group;

(c) Ensure that children, particularly girls, enjoy their rights and promote the exercise of those rights by making education, adequate nutrition and health care accessible to them, consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and recognizing the rights, duties and responsibilities of parents and other persons legally responsible for children;

(d) Take appropriate and affirmative steps to enable all children and adolescents to attend and complete school and to close the gender gap in primary, secondary, vocational and higher education;

(e) Ensure full and equal access to education for girls and women, recognizing that investing in women's education is the key element in achieving social equality, higher productivity and social returns in terms of health, lower infant mortality and the reduced need for high fertility;

(f) Ensure equal educational opportunities at all levels for children, youth and adults with disabilities, in integrated settings, taking full account of individual differences and situations;

(g) Recognize and support the right of indigenous people to education in a manner that is responsive to their specific needs, aspirations and cultures, and ensure their full access to health care;

(h) Develop specific educational policies, with gender perspective, and design appropriate mechanisms at all levels of society in order to accelerate the conversion of general and specific information available worldwide into knowledge, and the conversion of that knowledge into creativity, increased productive capacity and active participation in society;

(i) Strengthen the links between labour market and education policies, realizing that education and vocational training are vital elements in job creation and in

combating unemployment and social exclusion in our societies, and emphasize the role of higher education and scientific research in all plans of social development;

(j) Develop broad-based education programmes that promote and strengthen respect for all human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, promote the values of tolerance, responsibility and respect for the diversity and rights of others, and provide training in peaceful conflict resolution, in recognition of the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2005);

(k) Focus on learning acquisition and outcome, broaden the means and scope of basic education, enhance the environment for learning and strengthen partnerships among Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, local communities, religious groups and families to achieve the goal of education for all;

(l) Establish or strengthen both school-based and community-based health education programmes for children, adolescents and adults … ;

(m) Expedite efforts to achieve the goals of national Health-for-All strategies, based on equality and social justice in line with the Alma-Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care … ;

(n) Strive to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to rehabilitation and other independent living services and assistive technology … ;

(o) Ensure an integrated and intersectoral approach so as to provide for the protection and promotion of health for all in economic and social development …;

(p) Seek to attain the maternal and child health objectives, especially the objectives of reducing child and maternal mortality, of the World Summit for Children, the United Conference on Environment and Development and the International Conference on Population and Development;

(q) Strengthen national efforts to address more effectively the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic by providing necessary education and prevention services, working to ensure that appropriate care and support services are available and accessible to those affected by HIV/AIDS, and taking all necessary steps to eliminate every form of discrimination against and isolation of those living with HIV/AIDS;

(r) Promote, in all educational and health policies and programmes, environmental awareness, including awareness of unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.

At the international level, we will:

(s) Strive to ensure that international organizations, in particular the international financial institutions, support these objectives, integrating them into their policy programmes and operations as appropriate. This should be complemented by renewed bilateral and regional cooperation;

(t) Recognize the importance of the cultural dimension of development to ensure respect for cultural diversity and that of our common human cultural heritage. Creativity should be recognized and promoted;

(u) Request the specialized agencies, notably the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and the World Health Organization, as well as other international organizations dedicated to the promotion of education, culture and health, to give greater emphasis to the overriding goals of eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment and fostering social integration;

(v) Strengthen intergovernmental organizations that utilize various forms of education to promote culture; disseminate information through education and communication media; help spread the use of technologies; and promote technical and professional training and scientific research;

(w) Provide support for stronger, better coordinated global actions against major diseases that take a heavy toll of human lives, such as malaria, tuberculosis, cholera, typhoid fever and HIV/AIDS; in this context, continue to support the joint and co-sponsored United Nations programme on HIV/AIDS;

(x) Share knowledge, experience and expertise and enhance creativity, for example by promoting the transfer of technology, in the design and delivery of effective education, training and health programmes and policies, including substance-abuse awareness, prevention and rehabilitation programmes, which will result, inter alia, in endogenous capacity-building;

(y) Intensify and coordinate international support for education and health programmes based on respect for human dignity and focused on the protection of all women and children, especially against exploitation, trafficking and harmful practices, such as child prostitution, female genital mutilation and child marriages.

Commitment 7

We commit ourselves to accelerating the economic, social and human resource development of Africa and the least developed countries.

To this end, we will:

(a) Implement, at the national level, structural adjustment policies, which should include social development goals, as well as effective development strate-

gies that establish a more favorable climate for trade and investment, give priority to human resource development and further promote the development of democratic institutions;

(b) Support the domestic efforts of Africa and the least developed countries to implement economic reforms, programmes to increase food security, and commodity diversification efforts through international cooperation, including South-South cooperation and technical and financial assistance, as well as trade and partnership;

(c) Find effective, development-oriented and durable solutions to external debt problems, through the immediate implementation of the terms of debt forgiveness agreed upon in the Paris Club in December 1994 … ; invite financial institutions to examine innovative approaches to assist low-income countries with a high proportion of multilateral debt … ; and develop techniques of debt conversion applied to social development programmes and projects in conformity with Summit priorities. … ;

(d) Ensure the implementation of the strategies and measures for the development of Africa decided by the international community, and support the reforms efforts, development strategies and programmes decided by the African countries and the least developed countries;

(e) Increase official development assistance, both overall and for social programmes, and improve its impact … ;

(f) Consider ratifying the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa … ;

(g) Take all necessary measures to ensure that communicable diseases, particularly HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, do not restrict or reverse the progress made in economic and social development.

Commitment 8

We commit ourselves to ensuring that when structural adjustment programmes are agreed to they include social development goals, in particular eradicating poverty, promoting full and productive employment, and enhancing social integration.

To this end, at the national level, we will:

(a) Promote basic social programmes and expenditures, in particular those affecting the poor and the vulnerable segments of society, and protect them from budget reductions, while increasing the quality and effectiveness of social expenditures;

(b) Review the impact of structural adjustment programmes on social development, including, where appropriate, by means of gender-sensitive social impact assessments and other relevant methods, in order to develop policies to reduce their negative effects … ; the cooperation of international financial institutions in the review could be requested by interested countries;

(c) Promote, in the countries with economies in transition, an integrated approach to the transformation process, addressing the social consequences of reforms and human resource development needs;

(d) Reinforce the social development components of all adjustment policies and programmes, including those resulting from the globalization of markets and rapid technological change, by designing policies to promote more equitable and enhanced access to income and resources;

(e) Ensure that women do not bear a disproportionate burden of the transitional costs of such processes.

At the international level, we will:

(f) Work to ensure that multilateral development banks and other donors complement adjustment lending with enhanced targeted social development investment lending;

(g) Strive to ensure that structural adjustment programmes respond to the economic and social conditions, concerns and needs of each country;

(h) Enlist the support and cooperation of regional and international organizations and the United Nations system, in particular the Bretton Woods institutions, in the design, social management and assessment of structural adjustment policies, and in implementing social development goals and integrating them into their policies, programmes and operations.

Commitment 9

We commit ourselves to increasing significantly and/or utilizing more efficiently the resources allocated to social development in order to achieve the goals of the Summit through national action and regional and international cooperation.

To this end, at the national level, we will:

(a) Develop economic policies to promote and mobilize domestic savings and attract external resources for productive investment, and seek innovative sources of funding, both public and private, for social programmes, while ensuring their effective utilization;

(b) Implement macroeconomic and microeconomic policies to ensure sustained economic growth and sustainable development to support social development;

(c) Promote increased access to credit for small and micro-enterprises, including those in the informal sector, with particular emphasis on the disadvantaged sectors of society;

(d) Ensure that reliable statistics and statistical indicators are used to develop and assess social policies and programmes so that economic and social resources are used efficiently and effectively;

(e) Ensure that, in accordance with national priorities and policies, taxation systems are fair, progressive and economically efficient, cognizant of sustainable development concerns, and ensure effective collection of tax liabilities;

(f) In the budgetary process, ensure transparency and accountability in the use of public resources, and give priority to providing and improving basic social services;

(g) Undertake to explore new ways of generating new public and private financial resources, inter alia, through the appropriate reduction of excessive military expenditures, including global military expenditures and the arms trade, and investments for arms production and acquisition, taking into consideration national security requirements, so as to allow possible allocation of additional funds for social and economic development;

(h) Utilize and develop fully the potential and contribution of cooperatives for the attainment of social development goals, in particular the eradication of poverty, the generation of full and productive employment, and the enhancement of social integration.

At the international level, we will:

(i) Seek to mobilize new and additional financial resources that are both adequate and predictable and are mobilized in a way that maximizes the availability of such resources and uses all available funding sources and mechanisms, inter alia, multilateral, bilateral and private sources, including on concessional and grant terms;

(j) Facilitate the flow to developing countries of international finance, technology and human skill in order to realize the objective of providing new and additional resources that are both adequate and predictable;

(k) Facilitate the flow of international finance, technology and human skill towards the countries with economies in transition;

(l) Strive for the fulfilment of the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product for overall official development assistance as soon as possible, and increase the share of funding for social development programmes, commen-

surate with the scope and scale of activities required to achieve the objectives and goals of the present Declaration and the Programme of Action of the Summit;

(m) Increase the flow of international resources to meet the needs of countries facing problems relating to refugees and displaced persons;

(n) Support South-South cooperation, which can take advantage of the experience of developing countries that have overcome similar difficulties;

(o) Ensure the urgent implementation of existing debt-relief agreements and negotiate further initiatives … ; invite the international financial institutions to examine innovative approaches to assist low-income countries with a high proportion of multilateral debt … ; [and] develop techniques of debt conversion applied to social development programmes and projects in conformity with Summit priorities;

(p) Fully implement the Final Act of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations as scheduled, including the complementary provisions specified in the Marrakesh Agreement establishing the World Trade Organization, in recognition of the fact that broadly based growth in incomes, employment and trade are mutually reinforcing, taking into account the need to assist African countries and the least developed countries in evaluating the impact of the implementation of the Final Act so that they can benefit fully;

(q) Monitor the impact of trade liberalization on the progress made in developing countries to meet basic human needs, giving particular attention to new initiatives to expand their access to international markets;

(r) Give attention to the needs of countries with economies in transition with respect to international cooperation and financial and technical assistance, stressing the need for the full integration of economies in transition into the world economy … ;

(s) Support United Nations development efforts by a substantial increase in resources for operational activities on a predictable, continuous and assured basis, commensurate with the increasing needs of developing countries, as stated in General Assembly resolution 47/199, and strengthen the capacity of the United Nations and the specialized agencies to fulfil their responsibilities in the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development.

Commitment 10

We commit ourselves to an improved and strengthened framework for international, regional and subregional cooperation for social development, in a spirit of partnership, through the United Nations and other multilateral institutions.

To this end, at the national level, we will:

(a) Adopt the appropriate measures and mechanisms for implementing and monitoring the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, with the assistance, upon request, of the specialized agencies, programmes and regional commissions of the United Nations system, with broad participation of all actors of civil society.

At the regional level, we will:

(b) Pursue such mechanisms and measures as are necessary and appropriate in particular regions or subregions. The regional commissions, in cooperation with regional intergovernmental organizations and banks, could convene, on a biennial basis, a meeting at a high political level to evaluate progress made towards fulfilling the outcome of the Summit, exchange views on their respective experiences and adopt appropriate measures. The regional commissions should report, through the appropriate mechanisms, to the Economic and Social Council on the outcome of such meetings.

At the international level, we will:

(c) Instruct our representatives to the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, international development agencies and multilateral development banks to enlist the support and cooperation of these organizations and bodies to take appropriate and coordinated measures for continuous and sustained progress in attaining the goals and commitments agreed to by the Summit. The United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should establish regular and substantive dialogue, including at the field level, for more effective and efficient coordination of assistance for social development;

(d) Refrain from any unilateral measure not in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations that creates obstacles to trade relations among States;

(e) Strengthen the structure, resources and processes of the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies, and other organizations within the United Nations system that are concerned with economic and social development;

(f) Request the Economic and Social Council to review and assess, on the basis of reports of national Governments, the regional commissions, relevant functional commissions and specialized agencies, progress made by the international community towards implementing the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development, and to report to the General Assembly, accordingly, for its appropriate consideration and action;

(g) Request the General Assembly to hold a special session in the year 2000 for

an overall review and appraisal of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit and to consider further actions and initiatives.

Note

The special session requested in paragraph (g) of Commitment 10 was convened in Geneva from 26 June to 1 July 2000. At this session, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", the General Assembly adopted resolution S-24/2 on further initiatives for social development. This comprehensive document (A/RES/S-24/2) comprises a political declaration, a review and assessment of the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit, and a section on further actions and initiatives to implement the commitments made at the Summit. In adopting this text, Member States of the United Nations not only reaffirmed the validity of the agreements and commitments made in Copenhagen but in many respects strengthened their resolve to work towards their achievement. For example, they detailed the requirements of a people-centred approach to development and international cooperation, notably with regard to international macroeconomic and financial policies; they highlighted the necessity of implementing effective employment policies to reduce poverty and improve living standards; they affirmed their support for the comprehensive ILO programme on decent work; they adopted a number of precise objectives and targets, pledging, for example, to close the gender gap in primary and secondary education by 2005 and to ensure free compulsory and universal primary education for both girls and boys by 2015; and they went further than the Copenhagen text in identifying the measures required for ensuring adequate financing for social programmes and development, with specific mention made of the need to develop and maintain equitable, progressive and efficient tax systems, prevent tax avoidance, explore ways to combat tax shelters and tax havens, and conduct a rigorous analysis of proposals for developing new and innovative sources of funding.

With regard to the critical follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of these commitments at the international level, the General Assembly urged "the United Nations system and all other relevant actors to take further determined sustained action" (para. 156) and requested "the Economic and Social Council to assess regularly, through the Commission for Social Development, the further implementation of the Copenhagen commitments and the outcome of the special session, not excluding the possibility of bringing together, at the appropriate time, all parties involved to evaluate progress and to consider new initiatives" (para. 156).

Every year, the Commission for Social Development has, in fact, discussed the annual report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up of the agreements made in Copenhagen and Geneva and has adopted conclusions or resolutions for consideration by the Economic and Social Council. The Council, however, has not take any specific action with regard to the Commission's recommendations, as it has concentrated its efforts on the integrated follow-up of the various world conferences and summits convened by the United Nations and particularly on the implementa-

tion of the Millennium Development Goals. The General Assembly, for its part, has also received annual reports of the Secretary-General on the follow-up of the World Summit and has conducted brief debates followed by the adoption of essentially routine resolutions.

In February 2005, the Commission for Social Development had before it a report of the Secretary-General providing a comprehensive and critical assessment of the degree of implementation of the Copenhagen commitments. The Commission adopted, by consensus, the Declaration on the tenth anniversary of the World Summit for Social Development (E/CN.5/2005/L.2). In ten paragraphs, this Declaration reaffirms that the texts adopted in Copenhagen and Geneva "constitute the basic framework for the promotion of social development for all at the national and international levels" (para. 1) and that the Copenhagen commitments "are crucial to a coherent, people-centred approach to development" (para. 2). It acknowledges that "ten years after Copenhagen, despite the efforts made and progress achieved in economic and social development, the situation of many developing countries, particularly in Africa and the least developed countries as well as countries with economies in transition, requires further attention and action" (para. 9). It also emphasizes that "the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments and the attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration, are mutually reinforcing" (para. 2). Finally, it evokes "a shared vision for a more just and equitable world" (para. 10). This Declaration, submitted to the Economic and Social Council, represented the fulfilment by the Commission of its responsibilities for the ten-year review of the World Summit, as well as its contribution to the high-level plenary meeting of the General Assembly for the review of the Millennium Declaration, held in September 2005.

In March 2005, in preparation for this high-level meeting (referred to as the World Summit), the Secretary-General issued a report entitled "In larger freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all" (A/59/2005). Devoted to an assessment of the level of implementation of the Millennium Declaration and to proposals for reforms of the Organization that were "within reach" if the "necessary political will" could be garnered (para. 5), this report makes no reference to the ten-year review of the World Summit for Social Development. It mentions the achievement of "an unprecedented consensus on how to promote global economic and social development" (para. 23). It states that the "past 25 years have seen the most dramatic reduction in extreme poverty that the world has ever experienced. … Yet at the same time, dozens of countries have become poorer, devastating economic crises have thrown millions of families into poverty, and increasing inequality in large parts of the world means that the benefits of economic growth have not been evenly shared" (paras. 25 and 26). In an important departure from previous official positions of the Secretariat, the report recognizes that it is necessary "to see

the Millennium Development Goals as part of an even larger development agenda. While the Goals have been the subject of an enormous amount of follow-up inside and outside the United Nations, they clearly do not in themselves represent a complete development agenda" (para. 30).

There are important elements of this larger and more complete development agenda in the "2005 World Summit Outcome", the comprehensive document adopted by the General Assembly at the conclusion of its well-attended Summit of 14-16 September 2005. Negotiated for months under the leadership of the president of the General Assembly, this document has the distinct merit—apart from its advances in the domains of peace and collective security, human rights and the rule of law—of placing the reduction of poverty and other specific goals back within the context of development and international cooperation for the overall betterment of the human condition. The words "justice," "social justice" and "social development" are virtually absent (social development is mentioned once as one of the three dimensions of international development), and the World Summit for Social Development and its ten commitments are also ignored, but a number of the dimensions of international justice and social justice —as understood in this inquiry—are indeed highlighted in the "2005 World Summit Outcome"; among the issues addressed within this context are the participation of developing countries in the management of the global economy, employment (the goal of full and productive employment and decent work for all is explicitly endorsed), and migration and development.

With regard to the growing de facto interdependence of countries at different levels of development, the document notes that since "the scope for domestic policies … is now often framed by international disciplines, commitments and global market considerations … it is for each Government to evaluate the trade-off between the benefits of accepting international rules and commitments and the constraints posed by the loss of policy space" (para. 22 (d)). This recognition that national Governments have the right to "policy space" and therefore the right to elaborate their own policies to respond to the forces of globalization is one of the conditions for reconciling justice and freedom at the national and international levels. Another condition, the building of international and global organizations that would offer a political counterweight to the current power of these globalizing forces, remains in the realm of utopia.

Although with considerably more discretion, and as proposed by its Third Committee, the General Assembly at its sixtieth session adopted resolution A/60/500 of 15 November 2005 on the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly. This resolution goes beyond a pro forma reaffirmation of the validity of the commitments made ten years before at the World Summit for Social Develop-

ment in Copenhagen. It re-actualizes the policies that were attached to these commitments. Notably, it emphasizes that "poverty eradication policies should attack poverty by addressing its root and structural causes and manifestations, and that equity and the reduction of inequalities need to be incorporated in those policies (operative para. 8). The promotion of "full and productive employment and decent work for all under conditions of equity, equality, security and dignity" should involve the incorporation of "employment creation … into macroeconomic policies" (operative para. 9). Similarly, social integration is linked to "access to basic social services" and to addressing the "challenges posed by globalization and market-driven reforms on social development" (operative para. 10). Most importantly, it is stresses that the "development agenda cannot be advanced without addressing the challenges of inequality within and between countries and that the failure to address this inequality predicament will ensure that social justice and better living conditions … remain elusive"(operative para. 2).

Should this resolution of the General Assembly be taken seriously by national Governments and international organizations, including the United Nations, the struggle for greater justice in the world might gain a new impetus.

Annex II

The Millennium Development Goals, targets, and indicators for monitoring progress *

Goal 1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger

Target 1. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day.

Indicators

1. Proportion of population below US$ 1 (1993 PPP) per day
2. Poverty gap ratio (incidence times depth of poverty)
3. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption

Target 2. Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger.

Indicators

4. Prevalence of underweight in children under five years of age
5. Proportion of population below minimum level of dietary energy consumption

Goal 2. Achieve universal primary education

Target 3. Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling.

Indicators

6. Net enrolment ratio in primary education
7. Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach grade 5
8. Literacy rate of 15- to 24-year olds

Goal 3. Promote gender equality and empower women

Target 4. Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015.

Indicators

9. Ratio of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education
10. Ratio of literate women to men, 15-24 years old
11. Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector
12. Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament

Goal 4. Reduce child mortality

Target 5. Reduce by two thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate.

* United Nations, Millennium Development Goal Indicators Database (available from *http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mi/mi_goals.asp*).

Indicators

13. Under-five mortality rate
14. Infant mortality rate
15. Proportion of 1-year-old children immunized against measles

Goal 5. Improve maternal health

Target 6. Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio.

Indicators

16. Maternal mortality ratio
17. Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel

Goal 6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases

Target 7. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS.

Indicators

18. HIV prevalence among pregnant women aged 15-24 years
19. Condom use rate of the contraceptive prevalence rate
    - 19a. Condom use at last high-risk sex
    - 19b. Percentage of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS
    - 19c. Contraceptive prevalence rate
20. Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years

Target 8. Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases.

Indicators

21. Prevalence and death rates associated with malaria
22. Proportion of population in malaria-risk areas using effective malaria prevention and treatment measures
23. Prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis
24. Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under DOTS [directly observed treatment short course]

Goal 7. Ensure environmental sustainability

Target 9. Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources.

Indicators

25. Proportion of land area covered by forest
26. Ratio of area protected to maintain biological diversity to surface area
27. Energy use (kg oil equivalent) per US$ 1,000 GDP

28. Carbon dioxide emissions per capita and consumption of ozone-depleting CFCs [chlorofluorocarbons]
29. Proportion of population using solid fuels

Target 10. Halve, by 2015, the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation.

Indicators

30. Proportion of population with sustainable access to an improved water source, urban and rural
31. Proportion of population with access to improved sanitation, urban and rural

Target 11. By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers

Indicator

32. Proportion of households with access to secure tenure

Goal 8. Develop a global partnership for development

Target 12. Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system. Includes a commitment to good governance, development, and poverty reduction—both nationally and internationally.

Target 13. Address the special needs of the least developed countries. Includes tariff- and quota-free access for least developed countries' exports, enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA [official development assistance] for countries committed to poverty reduction.

Target 14. Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly).

Target 15. Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term.

Indicators for targets 12-16 (combined)

Official development assistance (ODA):

33. Net ODA, total and to LDCs [least developed countries], as percentage of OECD/Development Assistance Committee (DAC) donors' gross national income (GNI)
34. Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)
35. Proportion of bilateral ODA of OECD/DAC donors that is untied

36. ODA received in landlocked countries as a proportion of their GNI
37. ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their GNI

Market access:

38. Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and from LDCs, admitted free of duty
39. Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries
40. Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as percentage of their GDP
41. Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity

Debt sustainability:

42. Total number of countries that have reached their Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC) decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)
43. Debt relief committed under HIPC initiative
44. Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services

Target 16. In cooperation with developing countries, develop and implement strategies for decent and productive work for youth.

Indicator

45. Unemployment rate of young people aged 15-24 years, each sex and total

Target 17. In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries.

Indicator

45. Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis

Target 18. In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications technologies.

47. Telephone lines and cellular subscribers per 100 population
48. Personal computers in use per 100 population and Internet users per 100 population

Annex III

Themes and questions figuring in the agendas of the four meetings of the International Forum for Social Development

First meeting of the Forum
Financing Global Social Development

Theme 1: Is there a rationale for the international/global financing of social development?

Traditionally, financial and other forms of international assistance were channelled to developing and least developed countries because of their relatively low levels of wealth; such support was seen as a complement to national efforts. This aid was considered transitory, to be provided only until the country "graduated" to a level of development considered acceptable. To the extent that the issue was explicitly debated, the justifications for such assistance and cooperation included a mutual interest in shared prosperity, reparations for historical events such as colonialism, the moral obligation to help those less fortunate, and, quite simply, adherence to the agenda of cooperation set by the United Nations.

While still largely valid, this scenario has been modified by a few recent developments. Humanitarian assistance, which focuses on the situation of people rather than countries and on addressing "accidental" rather than structural needs, has gained importance and sometimes overlaps with international cooperation for development. It is often a matter of perspective; if, for example, poverty eradication were to achieve the status of a global public good, there would be a quasi-legal rationale for the global financing of efforts to that end. There has also been something of a change in the meaning and perceived value of solidarity, which now appears to be more closely linked to the notion of social justice at the world level. In addition, the old idea that there is a basic consistency or uniformity in human nature and that the existence of core values shared across religions and cultures implies universal responsibilities and obligations is regaining some ground in the modern psyche. The somewhat parallel view that relations between countries should be characterized by the pursuit of self-interest tamed by mutually accepted rules has certainly not lost its appeal. Within this framework, the role of international financing for social development is marginal. Related to this perspective is the belief that the need for various forms of international assistance will disappear when all countries achieve a reasonable level of economic development through the implementation of sound domestic policies and participation in an open world economy.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Is there a need for the international/global financing of social development?*
- *If so, should such assistance be considered a temporary complement to national sources of finance or a step towards a system of global resource redistribution?*
- *What is the most sensible rationale, from the perspective of the common good of humankind, for the global transfer of resources for social development? An economic rationale, with attention focused on stimulating demand along the lines of a global Marshall Plan? A political rationale, based on the presumed link between prosperity, stability and peace and on the consequent need to reduce inequalities between countries and regions and to prevent the emergence of a dual world? A moral rationale, founded on the notions of common humanity, moral imperative, and solidarity and justice?*
- *What are the messages and teachings of the great religions with regard to the redistribution of financial resources for social purposes?*

Theme 2: Is globalization favourable to the financing of social development?

The current process of globalization, seen by many as the resumption of a secular trend interrupted by the wars and tragic upheavals of the twentieth century, is characterized by the increased mobility of ideas, technologies, capital and, to an extent, people. This process, in part because of the dissent it generates, is contributing to the emergence of a worldwide social consciousness and of forces advocating innovative approaches to financing development. In some parts of the developing world, it is helping create conditions for improved standards of living. It is facilitating the development and dissemination of a worldwide culture of initiative, dynamism, freedom and self-fulfilment in which the short-term outlook prevails and the immediate satisfaction of needs is sought. It tends to favour the private appropriation of income and wealth. The freedom of economic and financial actors to make their own choices and decisions, even with regard to their social responsibilities, is valued. There is a corresponding aversion to regulations and legal obligations. The process of globalization appears to be leading to a greater concentration of private economic and financial power. At this point, it also seems to be increasing the fragility and vulnerability of the world economy and society, perhaps because the multiple forms of interdependence it serves to strengthen are not yet adequately supported by modern public institutions with sufficient power and influence.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Does globalization help create opportunities for entrepreneurship and employment?*

- *Does globalization help generate resources that could be mobilized, nationally and internationally, for the financing of social services and global public goods?*
- *Is the currently dominant role of the financial economy an obstacle to the national and international mobilization of resources for social development?*
- *Is the concentration of private economic and social power that the current process of globalization appears to promote having an impact on social development and the financing of such development?*
- *Competition is presented both as a feature of human nature and as a virtue, at least in the political ethos surrounding globalization. Does this emphasis on competition have implications for the financing of social development?*

Theme 3: Ideally, what should the contours of financing for social development be?

One of the working assumptions of the Forum was the usefulness of orienting thoughts and actions within a wider frame of reference—a long-term perspective, an intellectual and moral horizon, or even a utopia. This is perhaps especially necessary when the subject under discussion has various technical aspects. A corollary to this assumption is that ideals should be firm in terms of underlying values but flexible with regard to modes of implementation and open to question and revision as they are challenged by other ideals and changing circumstances. Reflection and debate on the subject of financing global social development might, for example, focus on the respective roles of public agencies, the business sector, civil society organizations, and families and individuals at the local, national, international and global levels; the merits of the idea of a guaranteed minimum income for all individuals, with part of the financing coming from global sources, or of the idea of a global system of social protection and social security; and the type(s) of institution(s) that would be required to assume such global responsibilities while being subjected to democratic management and control.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *What principles and criteria could help determine the ideal mix of local, national, regional and global sources for the public financing of the various aspects of social development?*
- *How could the roles and responsibilities of public and private sources be defined and divided most effectively?*
- *What would the best method be for financing global public goods?*
- *Would the "globalized" part of social development be best financed by a progressive income tax, by taxes on various transactions, by voluntary public and*

private contributions, or by a mix of sources? Would a "world assembly of the people" be the ideal forum for issuing legislation on such global sources of financing for social development?

- *Is the idea of a universal guaranteed minimum income an interesting utopian idea?*

Theme 4: Which features of the current situation require the most immediate attention?

The financial needs and problems of developing countries have been debated for a number of years. In the 1960s, developed countries made a commitment to provide official development assistance equivalent to at least 0.7 per cent of their gross national income. The debt issue has been high on the international agenda since the beginning of the 1980s. It has been noted in a number of United Nations documents that there is a reverse flow of resources from developing to developed countries. Before the liberalization of capital flows and the increased pursuit of foreign direct investment, the policies and practices of transnational corporations in developing countries were subjected to frequent inquiry and debate. The texts adopted by the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and by the General Assembly at its special session in Geneva five years later contain a number of detailed commitments and recommendations for improved development financing from both domestic and international sources. In many circles, new proposals for international taxes, in particular the Tobin tax and a tax on fossil fuel consumption, have been given serious consideration. On 14 January 2002, at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee of the International Conference on Financing for Development, the Secretary-General of the United Nations urged developed countries to double their official development assistance from the current level of US$ 50 billion to US$ 100 billion annually.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Would further reducing or cancelling the debt of developing countries and increasing official development assistance constitute the best strategy for promoting global social development?*
- *Would a mix of expanded official development assistance and the financing of global public goods through various means, including international taxation, constitute a workable solution?*
- *Among the proposals for improved international/global financing for development that are currently under debate, which deserve priority attention (for instance, the Tobin tax, a tax on the consumption of fossils fuels, or the establishment of an international tax organization)?*

- *From the perspective of increased international/global responsibility for the financing of social development, would it be more feasible and constructive to work first on the design and implementation of a global/international system for financing efforts to achieve a specific objective identified in the Millennium texts, such as the reduction of child mortality?*

Second meeting of the Forum Cooperation for Social Development: The International Dimension

Theme 1: How does international cooperation contribute to the social development of developing countries?

For the past several years, the agenda of international cooperation for development has been dominated by the issue of poverty eradication. The United Nations system is mobilized for the achievement of one of the primary objectives identified in the United Nations Millennium Declaration and Millennium Development Goals, which is "to halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of the world's people whose income is less than one dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger and, by the same date, to halve the proportion of people who are unable to reach or to afford safe drinking water". [*] The World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, added a comparable target relating to sanitation. In 1999, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank launched the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers initiative, through which low-income countries develop their own comprehensive strategies for poverty reduction; each Paper is to incorporate an assessment of the country's poverty situation and a framework for domestic policies and external cooperation and assistance, representing a crucial link between national public actions, donor support and the development outcomes aimed for in the Millennium Development Goals. At a more general level, four of the ten commitments incorporated in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development explicitly mention social development. International cooperation comes in many forms and encompasses a broad range of objectives and actions focusing on different aspects of social development in developing countries. Examples include the agreements concluded by the IMF with Governments facing financial difficulties; the humanitarian assistance provided to the victims of natural disasters and other humanitarian emergencies; the technical assistance provided in a multitude of domains including human rights and public administration; the efforts to address the spread of major epidemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS; and the interventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) in their respective areas of competence.

[*] Millennium Declaration, para. 19; and targets 1 and 2 under the first Millennium Development Goal.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Is international cooperation contributing to a reduction in poverty? Is it providing or facilitating the provision of income, work opportunities, and incentives and assistance for domestic economic initiatives?*
- *Is international cooperation contributing to the development of public social services? What is its impact on education, health and housing policies?*
- *Has international cooperation had an impact on inequalities, on class structures, or on political institutions and processes? Is it helping to promote human rights?*
- *Do the policy prescriptions and recommendations developing countries receive from the various international organizations constitute a coherent whole from the perspective of domestic social development?*
- *The expression "international cooperation for social development" is rarely used. Does this fact have any significance?*

Theme 2: Does international cooperation help developing countries participate in and shape the process of globalization while also promoting universal moral principles and multiple paths to social progress?

The current process of globalization, driven in part by the creation of world markets and facilitated by scientific and technological innovations, derives and proceeds from a model or a set of values delineating the contours of what constitutes a good and successful life and society. It encompasses a particular vision of social progress for the world. For a developing country, integrating into or joining this process means adopting its premises and underlying values. Active and meaningful participation requires more than mere integration, however. Full involvement must reflect a conscious choice, ideally one that is well-informed, carefully considered, and guided by democratic principles. Participants must have the capacity and desire to question the globalization process and to enrich it and shape it, both for their own benefit and for the benefit of mankind, reflecting a genuine understanding of what it means to be part of a world community.

Effective participation in the process of globalization requires that countries other than those leading the movement have a degree of political freedom sufficient to allow informed choices and decisions. This political freedom is not fully realized until a Government has a say in the institutions setting the terms of multilateral relations and regimes—whether in trade, finance, human rights or sustainable development—and has the capacity to negotiate on its own terms with transnational

economic and financial forces. International cooperation should help developing countries achieve this degree of political freedom and autonomy in decision-making vis-à-vis the process of globalization. Such autonomy might be considered a condition for social development.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Capacity-building is one of the main objectives of the United Nations in its operational activities. What can be said of this approach in relation to social development in the context of an increasingly globalized world economy?*
- *It is routinely asserted that developing countries have the primary responsibility for their own development, but it is also generally recognized that the current process of globalization is reducing the margin of manoeuvre for most Governments. Does international cooperation help address this apparent contradiction?*
- *International cooperation through international organizations (and even within the framework of bilateral agreements) is characterized by significant normative content ideally derived from the moral principles and values embodied in the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; these norms and their underlying values and principles guide perspectives and decisions relating to, for example, the definition and reduction of poverty, the definition of good governance, and the role of market mechanisms in society. How might the participation of developing countries in the elaboration and implementation of this normative corpus be enhanced?*

Theme 3: In what areas could international cooperation be strengthened and expanded to contribute most effectively to the social development of developing countries and the overall betterment of the human condition?

The concepts underlying international cooperation and the modalities of its implementation are inevitably affected by ideological and political developments at the world level. During the past few years, international debates and blueprints for action have focused on open markets and good governance as the most crucial elements for achieving prosperity in developing countries and in the world as a whole. Governments of developing countries are called upon to remove obstacles to the free movement of goods, services and capital, and to create internal political conditions that reflect certain democratic norms and encourage national and foreign investment. International cooperation tends to incorporate the dissemination of these ideas and related strategies, though there is a tendency to rely on stop-gap measures rather than more permanent mechanisms in addressing the human suffer-

ing in developing countries. In contemporary international parlance, the expression "emerging markets" is often used in place of "developing countries", as the former denotes dynamism and opportunity and the latter stagnation and uncertainty. A better distribution of the benefits and opportunities emanating from the globalization process is a more frequently stated objective than structural and institutional reforms in the world economy. The latter may, however, be a precondition for the balanced distribution and sharing of the benefits of globalization. Humanitarian assistance is currently in vogue, overshadowing the promotion of social development and social progress, which require long-term commitments and a period of time before results become apparent. The elimination of poverty is a goal that is generally seen to encompass most development objectives and most aspects of international cooperation for development, but there are presently very few negotiated and enforceable agreements that might ensure its realization.

The validity of the traditional concept and practice of international cooperation is clearly being challenged. One could even argue, given the decline in official development assistance, the lingering debt issue, the situation of least developed countries, the various forms of inequality and marginalization that appear to be worsening around the world, the increase in weapons spending, and the prevalence of various forms of violence and conflict, that international cooperation is in crisis. Is there an accompanying decline in support for the idea that all nations, strong and weak, have an equal right to exercise their national sovereignty? Is the principle enunciated in the Preamble to the Charter of the United Nations that the "international machinery" should be employed "for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples" in danger of being neglected?

Others might argue that this is a constructive crisis rather than a decline, as an overhaul of international cooperation has been made necessary by the worldwide changes occurring in connection with the globalization process, by the welcome decline in various forms of State idolatry and technocracy, by the recognition that the private sector and civil society organizations are indispensable in contemporary international relations, and by the realization that development can be facilitated from outside but still depends largely on local initiatives and efforts.

In determining the current state and desirable future of international cooperation, consideration may be given to the notion of a global public good or to the common good of humankind as a universal principle; to long-term objectives (What are the features of a viable international and global community?); and to the principles, values and policies that are likely to be the most conducive to creating a peaceful and harmonious world. There is much conflict and violence and threats of all types on the international scene today, but there is also a better understanding of the link between cooperation for peace, cooperation for human rights, and cooperation for development. In the United Nations context, "cooperation" encompasses both the

process of working together towards the same goal and the provision of assistance. A new balance must be sought between the requirements for the shared pursuit of mutually agreed goals and the conditions surrounding the unequal relationship implied by the provision or receipt of assistance. There is believed to be enormous potential in the development of South-South cooperation. Ultimately, true cooperation derives from the conviction that each party has something to give and something to receive.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Should the emphasis be on greater and more secure financial transfers from the North to the South? Should these transfers come from one or a combination of sources (public or private, traditional or innovative)? Should a system of solidarity and redistributive justice at the world level be imagined—that is, does it constitute a viable long-term objective?*
- *Would it be desirable, and possible, to reinvigorate the traditional idea that the primary objective of international cooperation for development is to close the economic gap between developed and developing countries and achieve greater equality in terms of living conditions, economic opportunities, the capacity to establish sustainable patterns of production and consumption, and the power to contribute to the establishment of rules governing the functioning of the world economy?*
- *Should there be more legally binding agreements and treaties linking all the countries of the world through an expanded array of mutual obligations and responsibilities? Strengthened or new international institutions to administer this body of international law? An international body with the power to issue binding decisions on conflicting rules and obligations?*
- *Alternatively, or perhaps complementarily, should social progress in developing countries and in the world be pursued through multiple and voluntary joint endeavours, or partnerships, between different forces and entities with different functions and motives but some shared interests and values? Through which processes and institutions should these shared interests and values be identified and cooperation facilitated?*
- *Are there new or neglected avenues for international cooperation for social development that ought to be discussed and promoted? Does growing de facto interdependence necessitate closer linkages between the various aspects of international cooperation?*

Third meeting of the Forum International Migrants and Development

Theme 1: The current situation of international migrants

Topic 1: Addressing the public perceptions of international migration and international migrants

International migration is a subject that lends itself to speculation and conjecture, in part because the various types of movements across borders are notoriously difficult to measure. There are tourists, students, economic migrants and asylum-seekers. Some tourists and students are actually job-seekers. The distinction between migrant workers and asylum-seekers has become increasingly blurred. Among migrant workers there are those intending to stay abroad for a short time and those planning to settle in the host country. It is only in some of the developed countries that reasonably accurate data are available at least on the entry of non-nationals and on work permits or equivalent documents granted to foreigners.

The most recent United Nations estimate puts the number of individuals residing for more than a year in a country other than their place of birth at 175 million. The number of illegal or undocumented immigrants is unknown, but there are believed to be several million living in North America and Western Europe alone. There are no reliable statistics on short-term migration, which usually involves working in a foreign country for a few months, but this practice is apparently becoming more prevalent and, again, the number probably comes to several million. In general, the return of migrants to their countries of origin is not properly measured. There are some 16 million people currently recognized as refugees by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNWRA), though this group is, in principle, included in the aforementioned overall estimate of 175 million. There are also internally displaced persons—presently numbering between 15 million and 20 million—who are differentiated from asylum-seekers only by their legal status and who, in terms of vulnerability and hardship, are generally in a worse situation than most of the international migrants.

A common but apparently erroneous belief is that international migration is exclusively oriented in a South-North direction. While 60 per cent of the estimated 175 million people currently residing outside their native lands are in developed countries, a full 40 per cent are in developing countries.

The heterogeneity of international migrants is perhaps not sufficiently recognized. At one end of the spectrum is the small but growing minority of people who are sought by many and often competing countries for their skills and talents in a variety of economic and social fields ranging from computer science and health to sports and entertainment. An immigrant in this category is given all the necessary

facilities and support for obtaining travel and work documents and for acquiring nationality in the country seeking his or her contribution to its prosperity and prestige. This group represents the traditional brain drain from developing to developed countries. When these migrants return, or simply through the role they play in various international networks, they also represent a source of development for developing countries.

At the other end of the spectrum are the poor, desperate individuals who often use smugglers to try and reach countries where they hope to secure employment and an income; the members of this group are frequently victims of exploitation. In this "victim" category are also many of the women "imported" for domestic work in countries that do not grant them the protection to which every human being is entitled. The number of people who are forced to leave their homes and countries for reasons ranging from violent conflicts to drought and starvation is increasing. Their poverty and vulnerability derive from their lack of financial resources, lack of skills in current demand, and lack of social connections. They constitute the proletariat of international migration.

In between is a third group that probably constitutes the majority of international migrants. These individuals do not have the range of options enjoyed by the "aristocracy" of international migrants; however, they are not, strictly speaking, forced to leave their countries by events or circumstances beyond their control. They represent the "average" migrant worker, always at risk but not helpless. In poor cities and villages they are often the most able and dynamic residents, who decide to seek work and income opportunities abroad, sometimes in distant lands. Some return home, usually with savings to invest, and some settle in their new countries for an indefinite period or for good. Those who fail join the victims of international migration; those who succeed achieve a greater degree of control over their lives and provide their children with a decent education and a chance for upward mobility.

A rather common set of perceptions, especially in developed countries, is that foreign immigrants are too numerous, have difficulty respecting the laws and customs of the host country, and compete with nationals for employment. They are seen as a source of problems, or at best as beneficiaries of the societies that receive them, but rarely as contributors to those societies. It seems that their contributions, even from the obvious economic perspective, are always recognized after the fact, with the passage of time. Locals regard foreigners with suspicion, especially when they have a different appearance, language or religion, and already settled immigrants do not automatically welcome newcomers, as the latter are often perceived as competitors for jobs. The history of international migration is replete with cases of discrimination and exploitation.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *What are the reasons for the negative image of international migration and international migrants in the modern world?*
- *Why are the economic advantages of international migration for both receiving and sending countries given so little recognition?*
- *What role have the current difficulties in the world economy played in international migration and perceptions of migrants? To what extent does the present international climate of violent conflict, uncertainty and insecurity also play a role in these contexts?*
- *Do the current classifications of "persons on the move" as legal and illegal migrant workers, asylum-seekers, refugees and internally displaced persons adequately capture the reality of migratory movements at the beginning of this twenty-first century?*
- *In terms of public perception, international migrants are either "accepted" or "rejected" based on income level, race, appearance and skill. What sort of education and information would be needed to help counter this tendency, which both reflects and adds to the inequalities characterizing the contemporary world?*

Topic 2: Ascertaining the social conditions of international migrants

For the *fortunate migrants*, living conditions might be slightly difficult at first, but problems are experienced with the almost certain knowledge that they are temporary and with the comfortable feeling that the essentials of life will always be available. Family and business connections are built and maintained through a variety of personal, professional, financial and other networks. It is becoming increasingly difficult to distinguish between these "middle- and upper-class" international migrants and the new cosmopolitan elites who are active, mobile participants in the process of globalization and are frequently "migrating" rather than seeking permanent settlement in any particular country. Nonetheless, in times of insecurity there is often a resurgence of suspicion and prejudice based on appearance, race or religion, and belonging to a privileged social class does not necessarily ensure protection or the enjoyment of one's basic rights.

The *victims* in migratory movements across borders are generally not even aware that they, like all other human beings, are entitled to a number of rights. Whether they are forced to leave their homes or are attempting to escape poverty or persecution, they often have no choice but to rely on smugglers, who are sometimes criminal traffickers, to reach the countries where they hope, often in vain, to find work and support. A number of them languish in countries of transit. Some are expelled. Some are detained. Some die in trucks or boats under conditions reminiscent of the slave trade. If they manage to become illegal immigrants, they are at great risk of being exploited by unscrupulous and abusive employers. The sexual ex-

ploitation of "imported" women and girls appears to have reached alarming levels in many regions. Unaccompanied minors are more and more frequently among the world's illegal immigrants. All of these victims involved in forced, anarchic and criminal movement across borders are confronted with issues of survival. They know the true meaning of misery and despair. They are the silent and powerless witnesses and "casualties" of the defects in the current international order.

The *average international migrant* faces a greater risk of becoming a victim than does the ordinary citizen of any given country. Does this same migrant also have a better chance of succeeding and becoming a productive member of his or her country of origin or adoption than the same ordinary citizen? A substantial amount of courage is required to emigrate, which augurs well for success and the capacity to overcome adversity. At present, however, the obstacles to successful temporary or long-term integration, and even to successful return, are formidable. The socio-economic situation of the average international migrant is determined first by the availability of a decent job with sufficient remuneration and adequate working conditions. Many migrants must earn not only enough to support themselves but also enough to provide for their families back home; currently, remittances are estimated at some US$ 60 billion a year. Together with a decent job, clear and secure legal status is critical. The incoherence of regulations, the lack of competence and benevolent assistance in the provision of services, and communication difficulties linked to cultural and language barriers are common obstacles preventing migrants from securing the legal status necessary not only for a sense of security but also for access to social services, especially health services, education and various types of social security, without which life in modern society is extremely precarious.

The successful social integration of immigrants—from both their own perspective and that of the communities in which they live, and encompassing the sense of belonging and of sharing a common humanity (in spite of superficial differences)—depends on a number of cultural elements, some very obvious and some quite subtle. Language, religion, customs, etiquette, forms of socialization, and relations between the sexes and between parents and children are among those cultural elements that can become sources of mutual enrichment or sources of misunderstanding, suspicion and eventually rejection, hate and conflict. In the poorer areas of host countries, where international migrants generally live, the local citizens often see the newcomers as competitors for jobs, for welfare benefits (if available), and for social recognition and social status in the district or neighbourhood. Levels of insecurity in such areas are high and tend to breed intolerance and bigotry. True social integration compatible with a political philosophy that supports the recognition of basic human rights is not based on the imposition of the values of the dominant community. It requires neither the abandonment of one's cultural identity nor the uncompromising defence of one's convictions and social mores.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *What are the economic, cultural and political conditions and tendencies that are likely to facilitate or hinder the continued increase in the numbers of successful international migrants and members of the new cosmopolitan elite?*
- *Are international migrants increasingly at risk of becoming victims and of joining the growing ranks of the poor in both developed and developing countries?*
- *Along with the tightening of border controls and the ensuing increase in illegal immigration and unjustified demands for asylum, what are the factors that place international migrants at risk of discrimination, exploitation and poverty?*
- *Is there a relationship between the increase in the number of migrant workers, both legal and illegal, and the apparent deterioration in working conditions throughout the world? What other factors are at play?*
- *What are the main factors accounting for the successful or unsuccessful integration of immigrants in host countries? For example, does the possibility of returning home make a difference?*
- *Are migratory movements likely to become increasingly short-term, thereby modifying the terms of the debate on the social conditions of international migrants?*

Theme 2: Building an orderly regime for international migrants: the role of international cooperation

Topic 3: Assessing the prospects and limits of national policies, bilateral agreements and regional processes

Most of the affluent countries in which the majority of migrant workers and asylum-seekers hope to settle are presently trying to limit the number of foreigners entering their territories. The traditional destinations of migrants—the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand—have become increasingly restrictive and selective. A drastic change in policy occurred in Western Europe in the mid-1970s, in the wake of the oil crisis. Many of the countries in this region had been actively recruiting manpower from abroad, but with the sharp decline in levels of economic growth, various measures were adopted and implemented during the last quarter of the twentieth century to limit the entry of foreign workers. However, at the same time—for humanitarian purposes, to facilitate the social integration of immigrants, and for a host of other reasons—developed countries opened their doors to allow "family reunification", a concept that was liberally interpreted and resulted in a large influx of immigrants.

Violent and prolonged political conflicts and upheavals, notably in the former Yugoslavia, in Afghanistan, and in East Africa, generated a surge in demands for

asylum that were often difficult to distinguish from demands for work, and these circumstances, together with the almost concomitant collapse of the Soviet Union and the opening of borders for a large number of Central European countries, provided an added rationale for the adoption of policies by affluent countries to restrict the entry of asylum-seekers and new migrants seeking employment. Borders have been tightened further in recent years owing to the growing fear of terrorism, which has been used to justify the application of restrictive and sometimes discriminatory policies.

The imposition of policies restricting the entry of new migrants is often accompanied by claims of determined efforts to integrate already established immigrants. Some countries grant foreigners the right to participate in local elections. Legislation allowing or denying foreigners the right to acquire nationality varies enormously, but the present trend is not towards greater liberalism. Host countries, in developing and implementing relevant national policies, are confronted with difficult issues relating to social cohesion, a sine qua non for any society. Examples of harmonious integration and coexistence are paralleled and often obscured by examples of fractured and divided communities, discrimination, exploitation and racism.

Developed countries are linked to developing countries through their aid and development policies. Although the overall political rationale for bilateral and multilateral cooperation for development remains the closing of the economic gap between developed and developing countries through various forms of solidarity and the rearrangement of international economic relations, an explicit connection is sometimes made between the provision of aid and technical assistance and the lessening of the pressure for emigration. This issue is not as straightforward as it might seem. There is evidence that candidates for emigration come from communities that have been lifted out of absolute poverty and isolation; it is only after decades of overall development that nationals can find sufficient work and income opportunities at home to balance the perceived advantages of moving abroad.

Most developing countries with high levels of emigration do not try to limit the freedom of movement of their citizens. Some of them restrict the emigration of women, a policy based on arguments of protection that sometimes provokes allegations of unjustified discrimination. In countries receiving substantial migrant remittances, there has lately been somewhat less emphasis on the problems caused by the brain drain.

Migrant workers, asylum-seekers, and other international migrants are often compelled to travel through transit countries on their way to their final destinations. Those migrants without the appropriate documentation exist in a legal vacuum, and transit countries are a privileged field of operation for smugglers and traffickers. Some of these countries are themselves the destinations of migrant workers and asylum-seekers are in the difficult situation of having to elaborate different policies

for people whose intentions and status are often unclear. Many migrants are subjected to detention or quasi-detention, expulsion, endless waiting, and the usual amount of misery that accompanies this sort of situation.

National policies relating to migratory movements and the situation of migrants are often based on bilateral agreements between sending and receiving countries or multilateral agreements between sending, receiving and transit countries. Such agreements, frequently concluded between former colonial powers and their former colonies, cover a variety of matters ranging from visa regimes to financial aid for returnees.

Over the past decade or so, regional consultations and agreements have been increasingly relied upon for the conclusion, modification or reorientation of national policies and bilateral agreements relating to migration. Regional consultative processes, which are usually informal, bring together representatives from Governments, international organizations—essentially the International Organization for Migration (IOM)—and civil society organizations. Examples of such consultations include the Puebla Process, the Manila Process, the Migration Dialogue for South Africa, and the Budapest Process. These regional consultations are credited with the creation of a climate of understanding between the partners involved, and with a number of concrete achievements.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *What are the virtues and shortcomings of the current migration policies of those affluent countries most sought by international migrants? This broad question might be addressed from the perspective of the receiving countries themselves, from the perspective of the countries of emigration, and from the perspective of the United Nations.*
- *What lessons can be derived from attempts to link international migration policies and development policies?*
- *In which aspects of the regulation of international migration and the protection of international migrants do bilateral agreements play an essential role?*
- *What are the reasons for the increased reliance on, and widely acknowledged usefulness of, informal regional consultative processes?*
- *Would a world regime for international migration and international migrants that would be reasonably satisfying for all concerned have a chance to emerge if it were backed up by coherent national policies and bilateral and regional consultations and agreements launched when and where interested countries deemed them necessary?*

Topic 4: Reflecting on the objectives, instruments and modalities of strengthened international cooperation

There is currently no agreement among Member States as to whether international migration should be placed on the agenda of the United Nations. The narrow limits of international cooperation on this issue are illustrated in the following:

- Even in the European Union (EU), the world's most integrated regional grouping, the development of a common policy on migration has proved difficult.
- Since the beginning of the 1990s, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has been very active in exploring the international migration issue through debates, studies and other means. It has a Working Party on Migration and regularly publishes a report on international migration trends, but these activities have so far not been translated into policy initiatives.
- The ILO was created in 1919 and became the first specialized agency of the United Nations in 1946. Labour migration was regulated through instruments such as Convention No. 97 of 1949 concerning Migration for Employment and Convention No. 143 of 1975 concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers. International migration is an important aspect of the work of the ILO, but this organization has never had the authority to ensure that its legal instruments are enforced.
- The World Bank has undertaken a number of studies, notably on remittances, but international migration is not part of its policy prescriptions and recommendations to developing countries.
- The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), which constitutes one of the primary legal foundations for the World Trade Organization (WTO), contains an annex on the "movement of natural persons"—an expression also used in the Monterey Consensus of the International Conference on Financing for Development. Negotiations under this Agreement for the liberalization of the delivery of services will also address the liberalization of the movement of persons actually delivering these services, but such negotiations have hardly begun, and any decisions made within this framework will, at least initially, involve only a small fraction of international migrants.
- The IOM, the only major organization focused exclusively on international migration, provides services to Governments, migrants, refugees and displaced persons on a considerable scale, but it is not part of the United Nations system and has no mandate to address normative issues.
- The United Nations itself has developed legal instruments relating to international migration, the most comprehensive of which is the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, which entered into force in July 2003. However, as none of the countries with significant levels of immigration has ratified the Convention, it is unlikely that its provisions will be implemented.

- The United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and its two protocols on human trafficking and the smuggling of migrants were adopted in 2000. There appears to be less opposition to international cooperation in this domain.
- The most elaborate normative text concerning international migration is incorporated in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, held in Cairo in September 1994. The authors of this non-binding text advocate the notion of "orderly international migration" (para. 10.1) and encourage "more cooperation and dialogue between countries of origin and countries of destination" (para. 10.2 (b)). It is emphasized that people should have the viable option of remaining in their countries of birth. The Commission on Population and Development is responsible for the follow-up of the Programme of Action, but the last time international migration was on the agenda of this Commission, its members were unable to reach a consensus on the need for meaningful debate.
- The United Nations Millennium Declaration includes some reminders of the human rights of migrants and exhortations to address "increasing acts of racism and xenophobia" and to promote "greater harmony and tolerance in all societies" (Commitment 4, para. (e)). However, migration issues do not constitute an integral part of this Declaration, which essentially focuses on the reduction of poverty—a central goal within both the United Nations system and the international community.
- International cooperation in matters relating to asylum-seekers and refugees is governed by the 1951 United Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and there have been some difficulties with the implementation of these legal instruments. Except with regard to the often blurred distinction between economic migrants and asylum-seekers, the issue of refugees and internally displaced persons fell outside the scope of the Forum's discussions.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Is there an ideal normative framework that could orient international cooperation and be used as a reference point in assessing the validity of ideas and policies concerning the movement of people across borders?*
- *Could an orderly regime for international migrants be based on the principle of subsidiarity, whereby international and global organizations would perform only those functions that could not be assumed at the local, regional and national levels?*
- *Could international cooperation play a role, either directly or indirectly, in fostering cohesiveness and a greater openness to international migrants within and*

between communities and nations? How does promoting the social integration of migrants in host countries fit with the objective of establishing an open and diverse world community? How does it fit with the objective of ensuring respect for cultural diversity?

- *Why have difficulties been encountered with the human rights approach to improving the situation of international migrants? What conclusions can be drawn that might guide future international cooperation in this domain?*
- *What steps might be taken to ensure that civil society organizations, including those representing and/or partially or fully comprised of international migrants, participate actively and effectively in the forums and agencies that debate and implement international cooperation in this domain?*
- *What are the concepts and practices that could benefit from increased international exposure and an international framework for discussion and action? In addition to the issue of remittances, might the list include nationality, naturalization, citizenship, the rights and obligations of short-term and long-term migrants, systems of social protection, and pension benefits in the countries of origin, destination and return?*

Fourth meeting of the Forum Equity, Inequalities and Interdependence

Theme 1: Interpreting current trends in inequality

Inequality within societies, measured on the basis of income distribution, has generally been rising over the past couple of decades. During an extended period following the Second World War levels of inequality declined steadily, but this trend was reversed with the dramatic ideological and policy changes that occurred in the major industrialized countries in the early 1980s and later throughout the world, particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Overall, though there have been some notable exceptions, the gap between the rich and the poor has widened considerably.

Inequality between countries, ascertained through comparisons of gross national product, has also increased overall during the past several decades. Some of the middle-income developing countries, especially in Asia, have managed to narrow the gap separating them from the major industrialized economies, while others, notably in Latin America, have not fared as well in this respect. Most pronounced has been the widening of the gap between rich and poor countries, or more precisely, between the affluent developed countries and the least developed or low-income countries (essentially, those in Africa).

The distribution of income, because of its intrinsic significance and its direct link to virtually every aspect of life and society, probably remains the best indicator of the

extent of inequality within and between countries. Other factors that might be considered in ascertaining overall levels of equity and equality include the distribution of assets, the distribution of opportunities for independent work and remunerated employment, the distribution of access to essential public social services, the distribution of possibilities for political participation, and the distribution of human security.

It is impossible to offer any verifiable general conclusions, given the lack of systematic inquiry into these aspects of equity and equality; however, various facts suggest that the overall trend towards rising income inequality has not been offset by greater equality in other domains. Evidence that inequality persists at multiple levels can be found in the continued failure of developing countries to achieve a greater say in the management of the world economy and greater control over private global economic and social forces.

The preceding paragraphs have focused on various aspects of "vertical" inequality, which is measured using a scale based on income or any other variable applicable to all the members of a defined group (such as the entire population of a country or the entire membership of the United Nations). Developments with regard to "horizontal" inequality, measured by comparing separate, identifiable groups, offer a somewhat brighter picture. Especially noteworthy are the advances made in the pursuit of equity and equality between women and men. Progress, while often slow and uneven, has nonetheless been steady in this critical domain. Various initiatives undertaken within the United Nations, such as the creation of a forum for indigenous peoples and the various agreements and activities focused on disabled persons, suggest that inequalities associated with some forms of discrimination presently have a better chance of being addressed (if not redressed) than do inequalities associated with the functioning of the economy.

The current international focus on poverty eradication and the identification of the poor as a group towards which public programmes ought to be targeted proceed from the same logic. Absolute or extreme poverty is obviously a concept incompatible with the notion of inequality, as its measurement does not involve comparison but rather the use of a threshold, such as a poverty line. However, relative poverty is by definition a comparative measure and is therefore consistent with the concept of inequality. The World Summit for Social Development addressed the issue of poverty from both perspectives.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Is the spread and apparent deepening of various forms of inequality a product of the fundamental transformation that has taken place in the economy and society over the past several decades, or is it mainly the result of the current domination of identifiable political forces and ideas? Is there a theoretical basis*

or justification for the aggravation of inequalities within societies, in particular inequalities relating to income and wealth? Is there a link between the prevalence of extreme poverty and levels of inequality? How does the existing dichotomy between an economic sphere (currently the domain of those promoting the laissez-faire approach) and a social sphere (presently the domain of the State and the civil society) affect matters of distribution and redistribution?

- *What are the elements of a universally shared conception of equity? What can be said of the relative intellectual and political strength of the Governments, organizations and movements advocating an overall reduction in inequality? Do the principles and prescriptions relating to equity, equality and poverty contained in a text such as the Copenhagen Declaration represent shared values and ideals? If so, how can the virtual disappearance of this text, at least in official political circles, be explained?*
- *What are the analytical and political links between inequalities within countries and inequalities between countries? Is greater openness and increased integration in the world economy generating higher levels of inequality within countries?*
- *Are there traditional or emerging forms of inequality that are important for the people concerned but that have not been adequately recognized or addressed? Is this neglect related to deficiencies in the concepts, methods or approaches currently in use? In particular, how might the focus on results, on measurements of conditions at discrete points in time, be complemented by greater attention to the evolving social processes, social arrangements and institutions that define and guide the course of people's lives and their perceptions of equity and inequity? Within this context, should more attention be given to equity between successive generations?*

Theme 2: National policies for sustainable growth and for preventing and reducing inequalities

Resolutions, declarations and programmes of action adopted by the United Nations generally incorporate a clause emphasizing that countries are responsible (or at least "mainly" or "primarily" responsible) for their own development, in particular their social development. This affirmation is consistent with the fact that the living conditions of people are still largely determined by local and national policies and circumstances, and it serves to reassure the less powerful States that their national sovereignty and independence is still recognized, while also constituting a reminder to these States that they cannot rely entirely on international and bilateral assistance. Exemplifying the dichotomy between the social and economic spheres, this clause of national responsibility typically refers to social development and is very rarely associated with economic development. This notion of the responsibility of Governments for the formulation, adoption and implementation of appropriate

national development policies is still an essential part of the United Nations ethos.

Lately, however, quite apart from the debates and controversies surrounding the massive violations of humanitarian norms and respect for national sovereignty, it has been said with increasing frequency that with the current form of globalization and increased interdependence, Governments are experiencing a reduction in their autonomy and in their margin of manoeuvre to design and implement the policies of their choice. Analyses of the situation suggest that developed countries are constrained by the growing interdependence within the international arena and by the multiple types of relationships they have with one another (examples include the Group of Eight and the European Union), and developing countries are, to a much greater extent, limited in their political and socio-economic choices by the same interdependence and by multiple external influences that they either welcome or do not have the capacity to resist. Among these outside influences are international institutions that impose requirements and conditions developing countries must satisfy in order to receive aid and assistance, which explains why many of these countries assume the burden of "responsibility without power".

Do these facts indicate that national responsibility for development is an illusion or a remnant of the past? The general trend of rising inequalities, associated as it has been during the past few decades with the dominant policy of economic liberalization and reduced government intervention, suggests that States have had to follow a common path but have been affected quite differently by events occurring in this context. As mentioned previously, inequality has increased overall since the 1980s, both within and between countries, though there have been important exceptions to this trend.

Explanations for both increases and decreases in inequality are generally very complex, as they involve analyses of disparate political circumstances, cultures and structures. However, evidence suggests that the factors contributing to the recent increases in inequality include the diminished progressivity of the tax structure, reductions in expenditures on universal social programmes, rising unemployment, the deregulation of the financial sector, and a decline in the share of national income accruing to labour. All of these factors are, to varying degrees, at least influenced by public policies. Obviously, countries that possess greater power on the international scene have a wider array of choices; more concrete conclusions or observations would require far more detailed, in-depth research and analysis.

Other general conclusions drawn from various regional and global inquiries are equally relevant to the debate on national policies for growth and equity. Economic growth is not neutral; it involves the distribution and redistribution of income, wealth, opportunities and power. In turn, policies for the purposeful redistribution of these endowments have an impact on the level, composition and quality of economic growth. The degree of inequality necessary for the effective functioning of

a market economy is generally quite low; in most developed and developing countries, levels of inequality are above this threshold. Greater distributional equality provides a favourable "initial condition" for rapid and sustainable growth, and is a necessary condition for reducing poverty. To conclude, while it is true that outside forces or global trends may impose certain constraints or limit choices, the policy choices made by national Governments are ultimately primarily responsible for the increases or decreases in inequality.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *What are the policy options and the margin of manoeuvre available to a Government wishing to pursue both integration in the world economy and the prevention or reduction of inequalities? Under what conditions is a national policy for growth and equity still possible? What type of "integration" and "openness" does such a policy imply? What is the importance of the immediate regional environment either as a constraint or as a support?*
- *Taking into account particular national circumstances, can and should the features of a "proper mix" of distributive and redistributive policies conducive to both growth and equity be identified? What is the meaning and content of the notion of "sound" macroeconomic policy within such a context? If this notion needs to be revisited, through which processes and institutions should the debate take place? Should the concept of macro-social policy be developed?*
- *As policies targeting poverty and the poor appear to be yielding disappointing results, and as some countries are reducing poverty but are also exacerbating inequalities through rapid economic growth, there would seem to be a case for rethinking comprehensive strategies for sustainable growth and social progress. Again, taking into account national circumstances, what would the common features of such national strategies be?*
- *What are the features of an external environment supportive of national strategies and policies aimed at promoting growth and equity?*

Theme 3: Contributions of the United Nations to the pursuit of equity in an interdependent world

For the United Nations, *international equality* is both a guiding principle and a central objective. According to Article 2 of the Charter, the specified purposes of the Organization and its Members must be pursued in accordance with certain principles, and the first of these emphasizes that the basis of the Organization is "the sovereign equality of all its Members". The United Nations—by virtue of the near universality of its membership, its respect for the "one country, one vote" rule within the General Assembly, and its very existence—represents the supreme expres-

sion and guardian of the sovereign equality of States, on which the contemporary understanding of international relations is based. The Charter also acknow-ledges that the world is characterized by a very unequal distribution of power, and therefore of responsibility, and it is from this fact that the concept of *international equity* emerges.

The principles of equality and equity at the international level have also guided United Nations efforts to promote development, which is defined in the Preamble of the Charter as "social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom". The presumption is that international cooperation is a moral imperative, necessary for the reduction of inequalities between States. In this context, equality demands the participation of all States in the debates and negotiations required for effective international cooperation, while equity requires that the more affluent members of the international community express their solidarity through the provision of assistance, first through multilateral channels, to the poorer members. Equity further demands that international cooperation be built upon on processes, rules and agreements that give preference and advantages to the weakest, and not based on the "equal" treatment of partners that are, objectively speaking, very unequal.

Recalling these essential principles of international equality and equity embodied in the culture and mandate of the United Nations evokes the difficulties and uncertainties the Organization is currently facing. Each Member State still has one vote, but the General Assembly does not have much influence on decisions shaping world affairs. When critical issues are raised within this forum, the practice of securing a consensus—prevalent since the beginning of the 1980s—gives de facto veto power to the most influential members. The Security Council has become the only "visible" arm of the Organization; reforms that would establish a more equitable composition and decision-making process have long been pending. Contempt for international law and the conviction that violence and war are legitimate and effective ways to pursue interests, resolve differences and maintain security have resurfaced with formidable strength. The related idea that raw competition between all players in all domains is a good and workable organizing principle for the world economy and polity has also gained considerable ground in recent decades.

Those voices on the international scene calling for an open world market and for the integration of all countries in the global economy through free trade and the free movement of capital have been louder and more effective than the voices arguing for a more prudent, orderly and participatory construction of an open and interdependent world community of nations. Solidarity among unequal members of the international community tends to be considered a "soft" "social" value that should motivate humanitarian actions but certainly not be a factor in the development of an efficient and dynamic world economy. Within the United Nations itself, forces representing narrow national and class interests and views have precluded demo-

cratic debate and the achievement of a consensus on what constitutes the common good. As it is no longer possible for nations to remain independent of one another, defining the common good has become an absolute necessity. Notwithstanding the global solidarity and mobilization that have characterized the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals, the United Nations is clearly facing enormous obstacles in its efforts to promote and preserve international equity and equality.

From the perspective of the contribution of the United Nations to the pursuit and achievement of equity and equality, there are two main justifications for making a conceptual distinction between *global* and *international* efforts. First, the traditional activities of the United Nations, in particular those relating to human rights and development, have largely reflected a focus on people rather than on their countries of citizenship. Efforts to reduce the incidence of HIV/AIDS are typical of a global approach to a global problem. The Millennium Declaration incorporates a global poverty reduction target but does not explicitly address the issue of inequality, including inequality between developed and developing countries. Finally, the Charter of the United Nations, signed by nations committing themselves to cooperation, is largely based on the presumption of a fundamental universality of values and aspirations.

The second reason for differentiating between the global and international nature of United Nations efforts to promote equity and equality in the world is that, since the adoption of the Charter and Universal Declaration, there has been a steady and significant increase in problems and threats, expectations and opportunities, and forces and powers that extend beyond national borders. Technologies have been developed that allow human beings to engage in murder and destruction on a massive scale, virtually anywhere in the world, while other technologies have made worldwide communication and travel much faster and easier, effectively reducing the distances that separate communities and people. Such developments have changed human perceptions of the world in which they live. The environmental damage wrought by human activities has given rise to a global consciousness that the earth's shared resources must be preserved and protected. A "third generation" of human rights, focusing on the collective rights of people and including the right to peace, development, and a healthy environment, had been elaborated before being pushed aside by the currently dominant ideology. Multinational and transnational corporations have developed their own global strategies and have strengthened their global influence. Humanitarian concerns have acquired a universal dimension. There are global forces promoting selfishness, greed, and the raw exercise of power; however, there is also a global movement driven by the conviction that the fundamental human objectives of freedom and security can only be reconciled through the achievement of global equity and equality.

In this configuration of global forces, opportunities and threats, the United Na-

tions is a struggling actor. It must identify, promote and defend global values while also promoting tolerance, diversity and pluralism. In its normative role it must distinguish truly universal values, principles and rights from ideas and policy orientations that reflect specific interests, beliefs, convictions and prejudices. It must play a leading role within a network of international organizations that have different mandates and constituencies and in some cases more power. It must try to convince its most powerful members to respect the rules and culture of multilateralism. In recent years, faced with the dominant view among concerned parties that the activities of private economic and financial forces should not be subjected to international laws and regulations, the United Nations has endeavoured to convince these forces that it is in their best interest to voluntarily abide by certain universal principles. The United Nations has also offered more space, in both its normative and operational activities, to organizations of civil society in order to pave the way for the emergence of a global form of democracy. Tied in with the pursuit of global equity and democracy are proposals for various types of global taxes that would help finance global programmes, representing a concrete manifestation of world solidarity and redistribution. Above all, perhaps, the United Nations has been struggling to play an effective role in the identification, prevention, control and reduction of global inequalities and inequities, and to preserve the fundamental principle of the equality of sovereign nations in this rapidly changing world.

Since the 1960s, United Nations efforts to reduce *national inequities and inequalities* have focused on what were originally called "underdeveloped" and later "developing" countries. Normative texts reflect an overt emphasis on universal coverage and universal intent. In times past, developed countries would report on any progress achieved in the implementation of international instruments they had ratified (in the domain of equity and equality, this would include the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights). Texts such as the Copenhagen Declaration have had some impact in the more affluent countries, particularly with regard to the issues of social exclusion and poverty. However, in terms of international cooperation in the economic, social, cultural and humanitarian fields, the United Nations has concentrated almost exclusively on providing development assistance to the South. The funds and programmes directly linked to the Organization have as their mandate the channelling of resources and various forms of technical assistance to developing countries. Other international organizations, in particular the WTO and the Bretton Woods institutions, strongly influence the national policies of a large number of developing countries through the norms and agreements they establish and through the advice and conditions attached to their loans and other forms of financial assistance.

The direct contributions of the United Nations to the development and social progress of developing countries are conceptually and politically linked to the pursuit of international equity. Such support should gradually diminish and eventually disap-

pear as higher levels of development are achieved. To some extent, this explains the current focus of development cooperation on the least developed countries. Development cooperation must take into account the principle of national responsibility for development as well as the recognized need for diversity and respect for differences in traditions and political cultures. Prescriptions and injunctions for all countries, and not only developing countries, should perhaps be firm on the general principles of equity and equality derived from basic negotiated texts, precise on technical points such as the various methods of measuring inequality or poverty, and very restrained with regard to the objectives and concrete policies that should be pursued.

Discussions relating to the present thematic focus prompted the following questions:

- *Given the growing influence of transnational forces on patterns of inequity and inequality, and on perceptions and interpretations of justice, how might the United Nations go about creating the processes and institutions through which these forces could be brought together and eventually subjected to a global system of checks and balances?*
- *General normative frameworks for matters of equity and equality tend to be ignored during ideological and political shifts. In some cases they are transformed and lose their relevance. Detailed normative frameworks are intrusive and tend to reflect specific views and interests. Which road should be taken by the United Nations?*
- *How might the United Nations best assist countries with limited power that wish to participate in the world economy while also maintaining domestic distributive and redistributive policies promoting patterns of equity and equality?*
- *How can the United Nations both participate in and benefit from the reflection and research required to address issues of equity and equality in an interdependent and conflicted world?*

Annex IV

Participants in the four meetings of the forum

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