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FOLLOW-UP TO THE WORLD SUMMIT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Emerging issues, trends and new approaches, and programme
activities of the Secretariat and the regional
commissions relating to social development, including the
situation of specific groups

Report of the Secretary-General

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INTRODUCTION

1. In its resolution 1996/7, the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to submit to the Commission for Social Development under the substantive item "Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development", inter alia, a report on emerging issues and trends and new approaches to issues affecting social development, including the situation of specific groups. In the provisional agenda of the Commission for Social Development for its thirty-fifth session, as approved by the Council in its decision 1996/243, the Secretary-General is further mandated to report, in the context of the above-mentioned report, on related programme activities of the Secretariat and the regional commissions. The present report has been prepared in response to those mandates with respect to global issues and related programme activities. Regional issues and related United Nations activities are summarized in an addendum (E/CN.5/1997/5/Add.1).

I. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

A. Major issues and recent developments

2. In the report on this subject prepared two years ago for the Commission for Social Development, it was emphasized that, in a period of rapid change, it was particularly difficult to identify significant trends and distinguish transient from lasting changes affecting society. If anything, the pace of change in many spheres of economy and society has accelerated since then, adding to the difficulties faced by Governments in identifying problems and responding with appropriate policy initiatives.

3. Against a background of the many real changes affecting the everyday life of citizens, changes in perception have also gathered pace in all regions of the world regarding the respective roles in policy of the different social partners and the various economic agents in promoting economic growth, prosperity and the well-being of communities.

4. In countries at different levels of development and in different regions, certain common concepts on how to manage the economy have nonetheless gained ground, with an emphasis on market approaches and privatization. In the realm of government, different forms of devolution, decentralization or people empowerment are being advocated and experimented with in many countries and sectors. No clear consensus has yet emerged about the efficacy, yet alone the social acceptance, of those new approaches, which seem to have been determined in large measure by subjective factors that can change rapidly. One important phenomenon that needs close attention is the impact of globalization - driven by the dominant political and commercial interests in a handful of major economies - on different societies and on various population groups.

5. Economic growth has been concentrated in countries and regions. Rapid growth in East and South-East Asia has diminished the incidence of poverty, supported in some notable cases by national policies to target significant groups living in poverty. The world's poor are increasingly concentrated in

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sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and some regions of Latin America, where growth rates are lower and distribution patterns more skewed.

B. Programme activities

6. The World Summit for Social Development, at the level of heads of State or Government, was the first gathering of Governments to recognize the significance of social development and human well-being for all and to accord the highest priority to those goals. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action reflect a comprehensive perception of social development and mark the emergence of a collective determination to treat social development as the highest priority of national and international policies.

7. The secretariat of the Summit, assisted by the Division for Social Policy and Development, Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat, provided substantive servicing to the third session of the Preparatory Committee for the Summit, which was held in New York from 16 to 27 January 1995. The Summit secretariat assisted in the preparation of the draft declaration and programme of action, which were transmitted for further consideration and adoption by the Summit, as well as in the final preparations for the Summit, including the accreditation of non-governmental organizations and the adoption of the provisional agenda and organization of work.

8. Throughout the preparatory process and during the Summit, the Summit secretariat worked closely with the host Government to ensure that facilities and organization at the site met the requirements for a United Nations conference. It organized special events, including meetings, symposia, round tables, workshops and panel discussions. Arrangements were made for the large number of non-governmental organizations in attendance (more than 800 organizations, with more than 2,000 representatives).

9. The Summit was attended by 186 States; 117 were represented at the level of head of State or Government. The secretariat provided substantive servicing to the Main Committee to finalize the draft declaration and programme of action for approval by the Summit. The Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action were adopted by the Summit on 12 March 1995.

10. Since the Summit, the Division for Social Policy and Development has continued to provide substantive services to the intergovernmental bodies that review and appraise the implementation of the outcome of the Summit, in particular the Commission for Social Development, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The Division has prepared documentation and policy recommendations on social development issues for consideration by those bodies; kept abreast of activities and actions taken by national Governments, the programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, and actors of civil society; and served as a link with non-governmental organizations for the monitoring and implementation of the objectives of the Summit.

11. At the thirty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development, discussion focused on the arrangements for the implementation and follow-up of

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the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action; a note on that subject was prepared by the Summit secretariat (E/CN.5/1995/8). In its resolution 34/4, the Commission transmitted its views to the Economic and Social Council on follow-up to the Summit, including recognition that the Commission should have a central role, and called for review by the Council of the mandate, agenda and composition of the Commission, including an expansion of its membership and annualization of its meetings. It also recommended opening its debates to experts and the main actors of civil society in the field of social development.

12. The Summit secretariat organized a seminar on the involvement of civil society in the follow-up to the Summit in 1995. The seminar brought together representatives of Governments, the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to develop ideas for the implementation of the objectives, commitments and policy recommendations adopted by the Summit.

13. The Economic and Social Council, at its substantive session of 1995, had before it a note prepared by the Summit secretariat on the implementation and follow-up to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development (E/1995/102). The Council subsequently adopted resolution 1995/60 on social development, in which it reaffirmed the recommendation contained in the Programme of Action that the Council should oversee system-wide coordination of the implementation of the outcome of the Summit.

14. At its fiftieth session, the General Assembly considered the item "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development". It had before it the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/670), which focused on the supportive role of the intergovernmental bodies and the organizations of the United Nations system in the implementation of the Declaration and the Programme of Action adopted at Copenhagen. In its resolution 50/161 of 22 December 1995, the Assembly endorsed the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

15. In 1996, the Division for Social Policy and Development published a newsletter entitled Summit Plus One (three issues in 1996); the Bulletin on the Eradication of Poverty (two issues); and a special issue of the review Social Policy and Social Progress devoted to the Social Summit.

16. The Administrative Committee on Coordination, at its second regular session of 1995, established inter-agency task forces to ensure that the United Nations system effectively provides support for the integrated implementation at the country level of the action programmes that emerged from the World Summit for Social Development and other recent United Nations conferences. The Division represented the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development in the Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods and the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All.

17. The Division prepared two reports of the Secretary-General for the special session of the Commission for Social Development held in May 1996 on the future role of the Commission for Social Development (E/CN.5/1996/2) and policy and programme considerations in the formulation of integrated strategies for poverty eradication, meeting the basic human needs of all and promotion of self-reliance and community-based initiatives (E/CN.5/1996/3).

18. During the special session, the Division organized three panel discussions, with invited experts on strategies and actions for the eradication of poverty, as well as a dialogue with the chairpersons of the inter-agency task forces on follow-up to recent major international conferences.

19. The Economic and Social Council, in its decision 1996/208, decided to invite, on an exceptional basis, all non-governmental organizations accredited to the Summit to participate at the special session of the Commission. Some 100 individuals from 50 non-governmental organizations attended the special session, representing the fullest non-governmental participation in the history of the Commission. Throughout the session, the Division facilitated their active participation in the work of the Commission.

20. At its fifty-first session, the General Assembly considered the item "Implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development", on the basis of the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/348). General debate on the item was held in the plenary and a resolution was adopted at the end of the session.

21. In response to General Assembly resolution 49/110 and to facilitate an exchange of views in the Economic and Social Council on a possible programme to observe the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (1996), the Division prepared a note for the Council at its substantive session of 1995 (E/1995/92) containing elements of a draft programme for the Year.

22. A report of the Secretary-General on the draft programme for the observance of the Year (A/50/551) was subsequently submitted to the General Assembly, closely based on the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. It also reflected the resolutions and decisions adopted at the thirty-ninth session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the thirty-fourth session of the Commission for Social Development, and the third session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, as well as the results of consultations with the United Nations system and concerned non-governmental organizations.

23. The report elaborated the proposals contained in the above-mentioned note (E/1995/92), taking into account the observations and suggestions made in response to a note verbale sent to United Nations Member States by the Secretary-General in June 1995, as well as additional information provided by entities of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The report identified the objectives, principles and theme of the Year, and described major activities that might be undertaken in observance of the Year. A logo for the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty was also created.

24. A number of events were organized to publicize the Year. On 18 December 1995, a special ceremony at United Nations Headquarters officially launched the Year, in conjunction with a celebration of the United Nations fiftieth anniversary. In June 1996, the Secretary-General met at Geneva with a delegation of people living in extreme poverty from 20 countries to discuss the concerns of the poor. On 17 October 1996, a special ceremony highlighting the Year and the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty was held at United

Nations Headquarters. The ceremony featured the dedication of a commemorative stone on the grounds of United Nations Headquarters.

25. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/107, a report of the Secretary-General provided the Assembly with a summary of action taken by the United Nations system in observance of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty (A/51/443). The report also provided a description of initiatives taken within and by the United Nations system to lay down the foundation of a long-term programme of support for the goals and objectives of the first United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (1997-2006). It also contained suggestions and recommendations for specific activities for each year of the Decade.

26. There is growing recognition that development policy should address not only conditions for efficient and sustained growth but livelihood and well-being as well. Economic and social issues are increasingly being seen less as discrete dimensions and more as particular perspectives on development. From the social perspective, development policies should address both social and economic variables, as well as the implications of planned objectives and instruments for levels of living, empowerment and social solidarity.

27. In the light of the observed shifts in development philosophy and approaches, the Division for Social Policy and Development, in cooperation with the Staff Development Service of the United Nations, organized workshops on the social perspective on development during 1995 and 1996, involving staff at United Nations Headquarters and, by correspondence, staff away from Headquarters and a select group of academics, policy analysts and governmental officials. The 1995 seminar considered approaches to policy formulation and evaluation from the social perspective, and the 1996 workshop, in the light of the observation of the International Year for the Eradication of Poverty, examined socially sensitive and gender-responsive approaches to policy design and evaluation to poverty eradication.

28. The workshops draw upon joint work between the Division for Social Policy and Development and the Development Planning Unit of University College, London, on strengthening national capacities for policy design and evaluation from the social perspective. As described in the monograph Socially Sensitive Policies in the Context of Structural Adjustment: A Training Manual,¹ the work was initially concerned with the social dimension of structural adjustment, and has since being applied to a wider range of priority clusters.

29. The Division has published a technical document entitled "Prevention of suicide: guidelines for the formulation and implementation of national strategies". The document resulted from collaboration among the Division, the Division of Mental Health of the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Calgary WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Training in Mental Health in the holding of an international expert meeting on guidelines for the formulation and implementation of comprehensive national strategies for the prevention of suicidal behaviour and the provision of supportive and rehabilitative services to persons at risk and to other affected persons, in May 1993. The above-mentioned technical document includes the report of the meeting, a comprehensive set of guidelines and a case study of a national strategy to prevent suicide.

The case study is the only known example of a national strategy that attempts, within an integrated approach, to identify the functions of all relevant institutions, public and private.

30. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 47/90, the Division has continued to act as focal point and catalyst for United Nations activities related to the promotion and support of the international cooperative movement. The Division has assisted the secretariats of the World Summit for Social Development, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in giving due consideration to the role of cooperatives. The conferences acknowledged the importance of the cooperative sector, and made reference to the cooperative movement in the commitments and strategies adopted. In cooperation with other members of the Committee for the Promotion and Advancement of Cooperatives (COPAC), the Division prepared the report of the Secretary-General (A/51/267) on the status and role of cooperatives in the light of new economic and social trends.

31. The Division represented the United Nations in COPAC and supported the Committee's various activities. It co-organized, with the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA), a panel discussion on the theme "Partnership between the United Nations and the international cooperative movement in the follow-up to Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul", held in New York on 1 July 1996.

32. In 1995, on the first Saturday in July, the first United Nations International Day of Cooperatives was observed in accordance with General Assembly resolution 47/90. "Cooperative enterprise: empowerment for people-centred sustainable development" was the theme chosen by the Division and ICA for joint observance of the Day in 1996.

33. The Division has prepared the major publication entitled Cooperative Enterprise in the Health and Social Care Sectors: A Global Survey. The Survey provides information on how needs for health care and social services are being met effectively and affordably through a variety of cooperative arrangements.

II. YOUTH

A. Major issues and recent developments

34. There has been some improvement in the situation of youth since the observance of International Youth Year (1985), such as increased attendance by young women in tertiary level education, increased health services for youth, and increased opportunities for youth to vote and participate in the political processes of many countries. At the same time, however, young people continue to encounter difficulties to find and enter productive employment; youth unemployment remains a chronic problem in many countries, and unemployment rates among youth are much higher than rates for adults throughout the world. In industrialized countries, the unemployment rate of the 15-24 age group in 1993 was estimated by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to be 17 per cent for young women and 16 per cent for young men, compared with figures of 8.2 per cent and 7 per cent for all women and men, respectively. In developing countries, ILO has indicated that available data suggests a similar pattern.

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The countries with economies in transition are experiencing similar problems. Consequently, the world has witnessed the emergence of sizeable groups of young persons detached from the economic mainstream and caught in the webs of poverty.

35. Young people in some parts of the world continue to suffer from poor health as a result of societal conditions, including such factors as customary attitudes and harmful traditional practices, and in some cases as a result of their own actions. A number of Governments have taken action to provide basic health services for youth; promote good sanitation and hygiene practices among youth; develop health education and accessible, available and affordable primary health care services (including services related to sexual and reproductive health and relevant education in those fields, such as information about sexually transmitted diseases, such as human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS)); eliminate sexual abuse of young people; and combat malnutrition among young people.

36. According to WHO the worldwide daily rate of new infections with HIV is over 6,000 people. In many countries, 60 per cent of new infections are found among young people. Young women are twice as likely to be infected as young men. The group most vulnerable in terms of absolute numbers is single-partner married women, who are exposed to infection by sexually promiscuous husbands.

37. In addition, the incidence of unwanted pregnancies, especially teenage pregnancies, is high throughout the world. It was recently estimated that teen pregnancy rates in the United States of America amount to almost one million each year. In many developing countries, the problem is increasing because of inadequate access for young women to education about reproductive choices and family-planning services, and young women's lack of control over their reproductive decisions in unequal sexual partnerships.

38. The provision of sufficient and relevant educational opportunities for young people still remains a serious problem. Because of its high cost, education remains out of reach for many young people. Many educational systems have not responded adequately to the needs of youth or the general population. Many young people remain unprepared to enter the labour market as competent and qualified workers. Illiteracy among youth remains a pervasive problem in many countries, and is a major issue facing development planners. But in spite of the obstacles, young people are eager to gain access to educational resources and to use those resources to develop their lives, their communities and their countries.

B. Programme activities

39. The Youth Unit of the Division for Social Policy and Development undertook five types of activities during the period in question to observe the tenth anniversary of the United Nations International Youth Year (1985-1995) and to prepare for the implementation of the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond.

40. In the field of international cooperation, consultations were held with representatives of a large number of non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations concerned with youth policies and programmes.

41. The Division organized the second World Youth Forum of the United Nations System (Vienna, 25-29 November 1996) bringing together approximately 500 representatives of both non-governmental youth organizations and intergovernmental youth-related organizations, pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 44/59 and 50/81. Among the non-governmental organizations were both those with formal affiliation or consultative status with the United Nations system and those that were meeting for the first time under the aegis of the United Nations.

42. Six meetings of an International Planning Committee were held to prepare for the Youth Forum. The following youth-related intergovernmental organizations were represented: Association of South-East Asian Nations Subcommittee on Youth, Commonwealth Youth Programme, Council of Europe's European Youth Centre and North-South Centre, Ibero-American Youth Organization, Inter-American Development Bank Youth Forum, League of Arab States Division of Youth and Sports, Organization of African Unity Division of Children and Youth, and the South Pacific Commission's Division of Youth.

43. Based on replies received from United Nations Member States, programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental organizations, as well as non-governmental organizations, the Division submitted a draft world programme of action for youth to the year 2000 and beyond (A/49/434) to the General Assembly at its forty-ninth session and to the Commission for Social Development at its thirty-fourth session (E/CN.5/1995/3). The Division provided substantive services to the detailed negotiations of the Commission, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

44. The Division also provided substantive services to the plenary meetings of the General Assembly, at its fiftieth session, held on the tenth anniversary of the International Youth Year, to consider the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. The special plenary meetings consisted of statements by representatives of 51 Member States, including ministers responsible for youth questions and directors of departments and commissions on youth. Representatives of eight international youth non-governmental organizations spoke in a special segment on 26 and 27 October 1995.

45. The Division continued to publish the United Nations Youth Information Bulletin in English, French and Spanish, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/135 on channels of communication with youth and youth organizations, which contains guidelines for the improvement of the channels of communication between the United Nations and youth and youth organizations (see, in particular, sect. C, "International"). In July 1996, the Division began the process of disseminating the Bulletin on-line as part of a new electronic network on the Internet, the United Nations Youth Information Network (UNYIN). UNYIN consists of two parts: a directory of world youth resources and the interactive World

Youth Forum. Information can be obtained at the following World Wide Web address:

<http://www.un.org/dpcsd/dspd/unyin.html>.

46. The World Youth Forum on the World Wide Web will reflect the 12 basic working groups of the World Youth Forum in which young people can share their ideas about the youth-related issues discussed: the working groups on education and leisure; employment; health and population; hunger and poverty; environment and sustainable development; human settlements; drug abuse; crime and juvenile delinquency; tolerance, racism and xenophobia; girls and young women; youth participation and youth rights; and youth and communications. The Web site introduces the objectives, work programme and participants of the World Youth Forum, and calls for messages to be sent by young people throughout the world.

47. Youth volunteers, interns and experts have begun to work in the United Nations Youth Unit to service this project. The ideas presented by young people have been summarized and presented to the relevant working groups at the World Youth Forum. One Web site has been set up by the Austrian Federal Youth Council at:

<http://www.blackbox.at/wyf>.

This project was also undertaken by the United Nations Youth Unit's UNYIN and the United Nations Children's Fund "Voices of youth" project at:

<http://www.unicef.org>

48. The United Nations Youth Fund has continued to provide seed-money grants in support of catalytic and innovative action in the field of youth by Governments and non-governmental youth organizations. A new emphasis, based on the mandate of the Programme of Action, is for pilot action, studies and technical exchanges on issues concerning youth that encourage the participation of youth in devising and carrying out projects whose short time-frames often make it difficult to obtain needed support from conventional budgeting processes. During 1995 and 1996, 14 projects were funded by the United Nations Youth Fund. In addition, the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development has allocated funds to assist the travel and subsistence of youth leaders of regional youth non-governmental organizations from Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Western Asia to attend the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system in Vienna.

49. The Governments of Austria, Denmark and Norway have made financial grants to assist the travel and subsistence of youth leaders of non-governmental youth organizations from the least developed countries to participate in the World Youth Forum. The Government of Sweden has financed the services of an associate expert on youth to help the Youth Unit prepare for, service and follow up the World Youth Forum in 1996, with operational projects undertaken on a joint basis between non-governmental youth organizations and youth-related organizations and agencies of the United Nations system. The Government of the Netherlands has contributed to follow-up projects of an operational nature, especially to implement the United Nations World Programme of Action for Youth.

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50. Pursuant to the Programme of Action, the existing ad hoc inter-agency working group on youth was convened three times in 1996 in connection with the World Youth Forum of the United Nations system. Those meetings brought together youth-related organizations and agencies of the United Nations system and other intergovernmental organizations; their primary purpose was to discuss ways and means of promoting the implementation of the Programme of Action on a coordinated basis.

51. The purposes of the annual inter-agency meeting on youth convened by this group were to review the progress achieved and obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Programme of Action; assist inter-agency preparation for the Forum; and strengthen inter-agency cooperation on youth at the national, regional and global levels. The first item consisted of a review of the status of the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond; the report of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Children and Youth in Especially Difficult Circumstances; the report of the Inter-Agency Steering Committee on Youth and Sustainable Development; the report of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Youth and Development; and reports on inter-agency follow-up on youth issues pertaining to recent United Nations world conferences concerned with human settlements, women, crime prevention and treatment of offenders, social development, population and development, human rights, and environment and sustainable development (1992-1996).

III. AGEING

A. Major issues and recent developments

52. Recent thinking on the question of ageing has focused on the participation and integration of older persons in society.

53. The World Summit for Social Development promoted the concept of a society for all. In that context, "Towards a society for all ages" was established as the overall theme for the International Year of Older Persons, 1999 (as set out in the conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 (A/50/114)).

54. The purpose of adopting that theme was to draw attention to integrating older persons and developing their potential to benefit society, while also ensuring that care is available for frail older persons. It therefore promotes an approach that will utilize the skills and ability of older persons to improve both their own financial and social positions, and their ability to contribute to society.

55. The theme "Towards a society for all ages" has stimulated widespread interest, and is being taken up in studies, conferences, and practical initiatives in observance of the Year. The end result should be an age-integrated society, in which ageing issues are mainstreamed into development planning, the early stages of life are adjusted for longevity, intergenerational arrangements are adjusted for population ageing, and the needs of the old and frail are fully met.

56. While debate is under way on exactly what constitutes a society for all ages, work continues on the situation of older persons, guided by the two principal texts of the United Nations programme on ageing: the International Plan of Action on Ageing and the United Nations Principles for Older Persons. Promotion of the Principles for Older Persons into policy, programmes and actions has been designated the overall objective of the Year of Older Persons.

57. A convergence of approaches to ageing is emerging among developed and developing countries, prompted in part by the weakening of traditional support systems - welfare in the case of developed economies, and family and community in the case of developing economies. To diminish welfare costs, developed country Governments are beginning to extend the retirement age, facilitate part-time employment in old age, introduce long-term care insurance, and in general rely on family and community to play a more active role in care-giving. Developing country Governments, in contrast, are introducing some welfare measures to complement the security formerly provided by family and community members as traditional support networks weaken in the wake of industrialization, urbanization and modernization. Just the same, the surest policy measures for older persons in developing countries remains what it has always been: support for family and community, which, in turn, is supported by rural development in particular.

58. Given the extended lifespan and the economic realities of the growing dependency ratios in today's societies, public policies should be explored to promote continued employment and retraining for those who still want to work. In addition, developing countries in the early stages of designing social policies for their rapidly ageing population also need to support community enterprises and their caretaking capacity.

59. In summary, the approach to ageing is evolving conceptually in the context of preparations for the Year, encompassing sectoral adjustments for lifelong self-reliance, family and community solidarity, and new social welfare and security arrangements. Efforts are now being made to match the conceptual evolution with a comparable operational expansion by involving - in addition to the traditional actors of government, non-governmental organizations and the United Nations system - new actors, such as the private sector, academia and the development community. The development community, in particular, has yet to demonstrate an active interest in the question of ageing and the situation of older persons.

B. Programme activities

60. During the period under review, a report of the Secretary-General, containing a conceptual framework of a programme for the preparation and observance of the International Year of Older Persons in 1999 was prepared for the General Assembly (A/50/114). In its resolution 50/141 of 30 January 1996, the General Assembly took note of the report and requested Member States, United Nations organizations and bodies, as well as non-governmental organizations, to undertake concrete measures for the preparation for the Year. The report established the theme for the Year, "Towards a society for all ages", and the objective to promote the United Nations Principles for Older Persons (see

Assembly resolution 46/91). The report also outlined a framework to lead international debate surrounding the Year consisting of four dimensions: the situation of older persons; lifelong individual development; multigenerational relationships; and development and the ageing of populations.

61. The Division is currently preparing its next report to the General Assembly, for submission at its fifty-second session. That report will establish the operational framework for the implementation of activities for the Year at the national, regional and international levels.

62. United Nations Member States, the programmes and agencies of the United Nations system, and non-governmental organizations are involved in the preparations for the Year.

Member States

63. During the special session of the Commission for Social Development (21-31 May 1996), a decision was recommended and later approved by the Economic and Social Council to establish an informal open-ended support group to assist the Commission in the preparations for the observance of the Year. The first organizational meeting was held in October and a substantive meeting was held in December 1996. Currently, 16 countries have named a focal point for the Year.

United Nations system

64. Financial constraints have prevented the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development from organizing and attending a seventh inter-agency meeting, planned for November 1995 in Geneva. Consequently, the Department has initiated plans for holding further inter-agency meetings in conjunction with major events in cases where outside sponsorship for the attendance of United Nations bodies can be found. The first such meeting will be at the International Association of Gerontology Congress at Adelaide, Australia, in August 1997. Twelve United Nations entities have named a focal point to date.

Non-governmental organizations

65. On 17 September 1995 at Jerusalem, an informal consultation of non-governmental organizations on preparations for the Year was organized by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development on the occasion of the Second Global Conference of the International Federation on Ageing. Participants agreed to establish a collaborative international network of non-governmental organizations to facilitate preparations for the Year. The network will undertake international projects and disseminate information to various constituencies. It will also attempt to reach out beyond traditional constituencies, particularly to the media, the development community and the private sector.

66. A number of other networks of non-governmental organizations have been established: Coalition 99, established by the American Association of Retired Persons; a network of national affiliates of the Fédération internationale des associations de personnes âgées; Creative Connections, established by the

Non-Governmental Organizations Committee on Ageing, New York; and Twinage, established by the International Institute on Ageing, Malta.

67. Sixteen non-governmental organizations have named focal points for the Year.

Private sector

68. As part of a new initiative and in conjunction with the World Health Organization, the Department organized the First Joint Conference on Healthy Ageing in New York on 29 April 1996. The focus of the Conference was the nutritional and biomedical aspects of ageing. It was sponsored by two pharmaceutical companies: ASTA Medica Inc. and Henkel Corporation. The Conference received wide coverage in the media, in particular an extended feature on CNN International.

United Nations Secretariat

69. In mid-1995, the Division for Social Policy and Development started a newsletter entitled Countdown to 1999, which will be issued several times per year and distributed primarily to the non-governmental sector for their constituents.

70. During the reporting period, the Department allocated space for the programme on ageing on its Internet home page. Documents now available are the Countdown to 1999 series, the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, General Assembly resolution 47/5 establishing the Year, and the report of the Secretary-General on the conceptual framework for the Year (A/50/114).

71. The format of the Bulletin on Ageing was changed at the end of 1994 so that issues 2 and 3 in each year could be combined to contain articles on specific thematic issues. Issue 2/3 of 1995 was devoted to older women, issue 2/3 of 1996 to older persons and poverty. Issue 1 of each year will retain the original content and format: reporting on major developments in the area of ageing in the United Nations, Member States and non-governmental organizations.

72. The programme on ageing substantively participated in or co-sponsored the following events during the reporting period: a workshop on population ageing in Europe and North America, held at Geneva; the Whitehouse Conference on Ageing, held at Washington, D.C.; the Fourth International Congress of the European Association for Directors of Residential Care Homes for the Elderly, held in London; the International Federation on Ageing Global Conference on Ageing, held at Jerusalem; the Trans-Americas Congress on the theme "Better living: adding life to years", held at Santiago; the Fifth and Sixth Design Competition for the Elderly, held in Tokyo; an expert group meeting on the theme "Meeting the challenges of ageing populations in the developing world", held in Malta; the International Summit on Service to the Citizen, held at Denver; an international expert group meeting on political participation of older people in Europe, held at Bonn; an international symposium on human settlements, held at San Diego; the Encuentro Iberoamericano de Asociaciones de Adultos Mayores, held at Havana; and the 1996 West Virginia Conference on Ageing.

73. As a follow-up to its expert group meeting on the role of governmental and non-governmental sectors in developing and implementing practical strategies on ageing in countries in change and transition, the United Nations programme on ageing prepared a technical publication entitled "Older persons in European countries in transition from the centrally planned economies: designing a policy response".

74. Because of dwindling contributions to the Trust Fund for Ageing, only two projects could be considered for support during the reporting period, funded from earmarked contributions from the Government of Germany: the literacy and income-generation training component of a project in the United Republic of Tanzania under the auspices of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to assist older Rwandan refugees living in camps in order to retrain and assist them to become self-sufficient upon their return to Rwanda; and the maintenance and development of a home visiting programme for vulnerable older people in Croatia.

IV. DISABLED PERSONS

A. Major issues and recent developments

75. In recent years, major advances have been made in the manner in which disability issues are viewed by societies and Governments, and in the elaboration of policies to address the needs and rights of persons with disabilities. The adoption by the United Nations of the Standard Rules for the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities was an important symbolic event highlighting on a global scale the cause of disabled persons. It was also a spur for practical action, which was given additional impetus by the global support given to the notion "society for all", coined at the World Summit for Social Development, a notion that had been conceived by the community of persons with disabilities and was later extended to all segments of society with special needs or handicaps. At the same time, the situation of the majority of persons with disabilities shows little concrete progress. They still face barriers to full participation, and in most developing countries lack even rudimentary technical aids and access to rehabilitation services.

B. Programme activities

76. During the period in question, a major project was completed with the publication for the United Nations by the National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health in Finland of a manual entitled "The disability dimension in development action". The manual presents procedural guidance on how to design an inclusive policy framework in which people with disabilities can exercise their human rights and have equal opportunities to achieve well-being as full citizens. The manual also presents step-by-step advice and examples on how sensitivity to the disability dimension can be incorporated into development programmes and projects. The manual was prepared with the full participation of persons with disabilities, as well as social workers, experts and planners at different levels of government in all regions of the world. An abridged version for field level use is nearing completion.

77. A report of the Secretary-General was prepared on the implementation of the World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons (A/50/473).

78. Three issues of the Disabled Persons Bulletin have been published. Guidelines have been prepared for observing the International Day of Disabled Persons (3 December). The Division helped to organize events to observe the Day at United Nations Headquarters in 1995 and 1996.

79. Conferences and workshops on disability legislation and policy were organized in New York and at Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, Accra, Ghana, Conakry, Guinea, and Vienna, and an information service was organized at the Third Paralympic Congress in Atlanta.

80. The United Nations Voluntary Fund on Disability supported 17 projects in the amount of US\$ 360,000.

81. The Special Rapporteur on Disability of the Commission for Social Development, Mr. Bengt Lindqvist, carried out a full schedule of activities. He prepared a report for the consideration of the Commission for Social Development of its thirty-fourth session. On the basis of this report, and the findings of the Commission's working group, the Commission adopted resolution 34/2, entitled "Monitoring the implementation of the Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities". In that resolution, the Commission took note with appreciation of the report of the Special Rapporteur and of his recommendations, and welcomed his general approach to monitoring, including the emphasis to be placed on advice and support to States in the implementation of the Rules.

82. The Special Rapporteur organized and carried out a global survey related to the monitoring of the implementation of the Standard Rules. A total of 84 Governments and 163 non-governmental organizations from 96 countries responded to the questionnaire of the Special Rapporteur. The findings will be summarized in the final report on the three year mission 1994-1997 (A/52/56).

83. The Special Rapporteur convened two meetings of his expert panel of representatives of organizations of disabled persons. He travelled extensively to raise awareness of the Standard Rules, organize workshops and consult Governments, international organizations and national non-governmental organizations on matters relating to the Standard Rules. He also participated in 35 international conferences.

V. FAMILIES IN DEVELOPMENT

A. Major issues and recent developments

84. Families represent the basic unit of society, and as such play a central role in all spheres of life. Families are the first and most immediate medium of socialization, and under certain circumstances, provide security as well as emotional and social support to their members.

85. New sets of demands on families and new issues for Governments to address are being created by rapid but uneven changes in economic and demographic trends, such as an increasing number of single-parent households (largely headed by women); increasing incidence of first marriages at a later age but also a surge in teenage pregnancy; a decreasing number of children in families; longer life expectancy and increasing population of elderly family members; a predominantly young population in developing countries; and growing participation of women in the labour market. Such tendencies have caused changes in the structure, composition, forms and functions of families, resulting in varying perceptions of the roles and rights of their individual members.

86. The large number of employed women, the emerging new roles of men, and the need to balance work and family responsibilities are all challenges that place additional burdens on female members of households, while requiring changes in the role and contributions of fathers and husbands, especially with regard to homemaking, child care and family planning.

87. To tackle the diverse intersectoral concerns confronting families worldwide and provide the necessary support and protection to families, family-sensitive policies have been initiated in many countries in the areas of health, education, employment, housing and social security, participation, legislation and human rights. Adequate family support systems to facilitate balance between the diverse roles of family members - production, care and nurturing, and socialization - have become imperative. Empowerment and equal participation of families and of their individual members are essential to strengthen both families and the societies in which they live.

B. Programme activities

88. Activities relating to the follow-up to the International Year of the Family (IYF) have been integrated into the work programme of the Division for Social Policy and Development. The overall objective of the subprogramme is to achieve long-term development objectives regarding families in the context of the follow-up to the Year, within the framework of the implementation of family-related provisions of the global conferences of the 1990s.

89. Current work is guided both by the global conferences of the 1990s and the specific family-related mandates provided by intergovernmental bodies. The significance for families of the outcomes of the global conferences lies in their affirmation of the objectives of the International Year of the Family and their ability to create greater awareness of the value of a family-sensitive perspective in policy development.

90. During 1995-1996, the Division, as the focal point within the United Nations system in matters relating to families, continued its efforts to consult and cooperate with Governments, non-governmental organizations and other IYF partners on an effective follow up.

91. The operation of the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities has provided financial assistance to projects of direct benefit to families,

particularly in developing countries and the least developed countries. The Division has reviewed requests from Governments and non-governmental organizations for funding. Positive responses and requests for assistance have come from various governmental and non-governmental partners.

92. The Division initiated actions for the worldwide observance of the International Day of Families (celebrated each year on 15 May) by preparing background materials and information notes on the family and the international theme. Messages of the Secretary-General have been widely distributed during 1995 and 1996.

93. In its efforts to promote international cooperation on family issues, the United Nations has signed a memorandum of agreement with the Bratislava International Centre for Family Studies in the Slovak Republic, and has substantively assisted the Federal Ministry of Environment, Youth and Family Affairs of the Government of Austria in selecting candidates for the Visitor's Programme for Studying Exemplary Family Benefits and Family Services in Austria. An inventory of best practices of family policies has been initiated.

94. Supportive relationships with the non-governmental organizations committees on the Family at Vienna and in New York and Paris have been reinforced. Moreover, in 1996, the Division participated in various family-related meetings organized by concerned Governments and non-governmental organizations, including the Sixth International Seminar on Integrating Families in Social Progress and Development, held at Vienna in November 1996; the International Family Policy Forum, held at Kansas City in October 1996; and the International Seminar on Family Policy and Plans of Actions, held at Quebec City, Canada, in December 1996.

95. In the area of research, the Division initiated action-oriented research and case studies on the multiple roles of women; the impact of the technological revolution on the family; and reconciling family life with work.

Notes

¹ London, University College Press on behalf of the United Nations Development Programme, 1994.
