



Compilation of
NGO Comments on:

*“In Larger Freedom:
Towards Security,
Development and
Human Rights for All”
(A/59/2005)*

Report of the Secretary-General
of the United Nations



United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, 2005

NGO Responses to

***“In Larger Freedom:
Towards Development, Security
and Human Rights for All”***

**Report of the Secretary-General of the
United Nations (A/59/2005), March 2005**



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Introduction

On 21 March, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan released his report entitled *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All (A/59/2005)*. *In Larger Freedom* will provide the framework for discussion during the High-level Plenary of the 60th session of the General Assembly scheduled from 14-16 September, more informally known as the Millennium Summit+5. *In Larger Freedom* draws, partly, on the report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility (A/59/565)*, the Millennium Project's report *Investing in Development: A Practical Plan to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals* and the report of the High-level Panel on UN-Civil Society Relations *We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance (A/58/817)*.

In line with the Secretary-General's wish that his report be widely disseminated and debated, NGLS, on 21 March, distributed it electronically worldwide to some 7,000 NGOs on its listserv, inviting recipients to comment on the report by 30 April. NGLS received 128 responses by the deadline ranging in length from a paragraph or two to submissions of many pages providing detailed recommendations on different aspects of the Secretary-General's report. All of the submissions can be found on NGLS's website (www.un-ngls.org/sg-report-NGOs-comment.htm).

In compiling this informal summary in time for the Informal Interactive Hearings of the General Assembly with NGOs, civil society organizations and the private sector, to be held in New York from 23-24 June 2005, NGLS has tried to produce an overview that reflects the overall thrust of the commentaries received, and that will support a constructive exchange at that meeting. We have therefore taken into account the relevance, pertinence and competence of the submissions, all of which have been thoroughly reviewed by several of NGLS staff.

It proved impossible to make reference to all submissions in the text of the compilation. At the same time we have decided not to mention any particular organization in the text but reference their inputs at the end. A listing of all NGOs featured in the text is provided in Annex I. A listing of all NGOs that made submissions is provided in Annex II. The report, therefore, represents a large number of snapshots on NGO thinking on a range of issues raised by the Secretary-General's report. It is offered in the hope that it will further inform and enrich discussion and debate up to the September Summit. A striking aspect of this exercise was the constructive and positive tone of respondents who were overwhelmingly supportive of the Secretary-General's initiative and their opportunity to contribute to it.

NGLS, 14 June 2005

The Secretary-General's report, *In Larger Freedom*, is divided into four main sections: *Freedom from Want*, *Freedom from Fear*, *Freedom to Live in Dignity*, and *Strengthening the United Nations*. The following compilation of commentaries from NGOs and civil society organizations follows the same structure.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in these comments/materials are those of the respective authors. They do not represent those of the United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service, or any other part of the United Nations System. The designations used do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of NGLS or any part of the United Nations system concerning the legal status of any country, area or territory or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers.

All submissions are available on the NGLS website (www.un-ngls.org/sg-report-NGOs-comment.htm).

I. A Historic Opportunity in 2005

In its introductory paragraphs, *In Larger Freedom* notes that the year 2005 presents an opportunity to move decisively to make far-reaching reforms to equip and resource the United Nations to reduce global poverty, the prevalence of violent conflict and terrorism, halt the spread of major known diseases, increase respect for human dignity in every land, and reduce the massive divides that persist between the rich and poor. The Secretary-General spells out action that he believes is both vital and achievable in the coming months.

At the heart of the report is the idea that development, security and human rights reinforce each other. The comments received by NGLS reflected two main approaches: those who wished to see development placed at the centre, and those who wished to see human rights as the focus.

*“The Millennium Development Goals hold a central place in the report, of which the first chapter is dedicated to development issues. In this regard, we are delighted by the intention of the Secretary-General to keep development matters on top of the agenda of the UN Millennium Summit next September. We welcome as well the strong link, expressed at many points in the report, between development and security and share the vision of Kofi Annan of a comprehensive approach of development, security and human rights issues.”*¹ The same NGO also noted *“there is no safe and stable world possible without an efficient fight against extreme poverty at the worldwide level. Beyond facing a moral imperative, rich countries have therefore a vested interest in achieving the MDGs.”*

Many NGOs expressed concern that while the upcoming Summit’s agenda includes poverty eradication, security and human rights, there is a risk that, during the Summit, countries will focus more on the reform of the Security Council than on development issues:

*“With commitments to end extreme poverty already in place and with the resources and technical capacity available, it is critical that the +5 Review focus on action in these areas: national strategies, financing for development, fair trade, debt relief, support for regional infrastructure and institutions, reform of global financial institutions. All of these items are named as priority areas for action in the Secretary-General’s report. It would indeed be a tragedy if, in the face of the further dehumanization of the world’s poorest populations, the September Summit focused narrowly only on the reform of the Security Council or a security agenda which failed to include human security.... Only a few short years ago, the UN earned the Nobel Peace Prize. Now, the UN is rightly criticized for being long on commitments and short on action to end extreme poverty and war. This is particularly troubling at a time when the technical expertise and resources place these goals within reach. The UN must match its rhetoric with bold, new action.”*²

Also responding to the interlinkages between development, security and human rights, a number of NGOs observed that the human rights aspect of the report was not stressed strongly enough:

“The human rights concept expressed in the report is not holistic. The central focus of human rights is missing. Human rights have to be placed at the very centre of the UN

system and structure (and of the report). Human rights are at the core of development and security. The lack of human rights endangers development and security.”³

“Freedom from fear, freedom from want and freedom to live in dignity are all dimensions of a social and international order in which all human rights can be understood and made meaningful in the lives of all citizens.

“To develop a profoundly transformative process based on the three freedoms it is essential that human rights learning, education, and socialization be introduced through all levels of society. This crucially important dimension of societal development through the learning about human rights, as a way of life, is missing in the Secretary-General’s report.

“The Secretary-General could apply this understanding of human rights learning throughout the cross-cutting human rights dimension of his reform of the United Nations system. The development of regional centres for the promotion and support of human rights learning programmes would be an important step.

“Human dignity is indivisible, globally shared, and is the basic condition for life In Larger Freedom for all peoples in all societies, States and regions of the world. Civil society has an indispensable role in participatory democratic governance. Human rights learning, understood as the process through which citizens take responsibility for their own future by claiming their own human rights while respecting those of others, is the bedrock of democratic governance. It is through human rights learning that the skills necessary for all people to fully take part in the democratic process are acquired. The Secretary-General’s report does not address these concerns.”⁴

Calling for coordinated action in achieving the interlinked objectives for development, human right and security, one NGO noted:

“The report rightly identifies the need for ‘agile and effective’ regional and global intergovernmental institutions to mobilize and coordinate collective action [Paragraph 21]. [T]here is also an increasingly urgent need for regular strategic dialogue at national, regional and international levels between governments, civil society and the private sector. It is essential therefore that this report also acknowledges the need for active, effective and accountable coordinating and representative institutions for civil society and volunteering, and for the private sector. This would be a means of ensuring that there can be regular and meaningful dialogue between the sectors, leading to better and more effective planning and coordinated action, engaging their respective strengths to best effect and avoiding unnecessary duplication.”⁵

Others also expressed concern that garnering the necessary political will would be difficult:

“If the UN Charter and the various UN conference programmes, plans, and platforms of action or implementation were fully implemented, the UN would function more effectively. Without political will, more reforms will simply create more unfulfilled mandates.”⁶

II. Freedom from Want

A Shared Vision of Development

A large amount of comments were received on the subject of development, ranging from the need to include specific mention of the essential role of the family in achieving the MDGs (as a powerful agent for sustainable social, economic and cultural development)⁷ to the absolute necessity to include people living in extreme poverty as essential partners in development, to the need to ensure quality and relevant education for children living in conflict zones.

Some NGOs suggested that the MDGs should focus on the root causes of poverty and insecurity:

“[W]e must take great care that the Millennium Development Goals do not become either an end in themselves, or the full measure of a world In Larger Freedom. The MDGs are, at best ‘minimum goals.’ They tend to foster a ‘charity’ approach to the problems of poverty and underdevelopment without giving much attention to the systemic change needed to eliminate the root causes which support existing structural injustice at the national and international levels.

“While the Secretary-General’s report suggests some significant changes in the present structure and function of the United Nations it fails to adequately address the need for fundamental reform of the present international economic and political structures. There is little chance that the MDGs will be achieved or that sustainable development will take root without the democratization of present international political and financial institutions.

“The scope of our attention must be widened to include not only the consequences of poverty and social exclusion but also the root causes of the current conditions of want, insecurity and injustice.”⁸

It was noted that the Secretary-General had, in his report, addressed earlier criticism made by NGOs on the “narrow focus” of the MDGs on combating only “extreme” poverty and “achieving a few, purely quantitative social development goals.”⁹ *In Larger Freedom* states, “At the same time, we need 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 both inside and outside the United Nations, they clearly do not represent a complete development agenda.” [Paragraph 30] The report notes that they do not directly encompass some of the broader issues covered by the conferences of the 1990s, nor do they address the particular needs of middle-income developing countries or the questions of growing inequality and the wider dimension of human development and good governance, “which all require the effective implementation of conference outcomes.”

“The MDGs do not represent the entire development agenda as other processes are also important. The outcome of the September Summit should ensure that clear links are made between achieving MDGs and implementing the outcomes of the UN global conferences of the 1990s, including those on women. Moreover, the nexus between conflict prevention and sustainable development should be reinforced by the political and financial commitments made at the Summit.”¹⁰

Others stressed that the greatest challenge at the UN Summit in September would be to reach an agreement on concrete measures and timetables required to achieve the Goals.¹¹

Poverty

“Unfortunately, neither the MDGs nor the Secretary-General’s report identify poverty as a function of human rights violations (such as the Right to an adequate standard of living recognized by the Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Right to freedom from discrimination stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the ICERD [International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination], the CEDAW [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women], and the Durban Declaration among others, and the Right to pursue development described in Article 1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Declaration on the Right to Development). Indeed, the MDGs posit housing, health care, and access to food and water not as non-negotiable and universal rights, but as ‘needs’ to be met. By extension, the poor are not seen as autonomous subjects demanding that governments meet their legal obligations, but as a passive ‘target group’ of policymaking. Sustainable development—which depends on broad civic participation, social justice, and a fundamental shift in the balance of power—is sidelined by this failure of the MDGs to operate within a human rights framework.... Ultimately, ‘freedom from want’ is not only an end in itself, but a necessary precondition to achieving the ‘larger freedom’ enshrined in the United Nations Charter.”¹²

“Our experience working towards sustainable development has taught us that we cannot hope to eradicate poverty without addressing the pervasive threats to the safety and wellbeing of people and their communities. And we know from our work in disasters and conflict zones that men and women cannot be said to be ‘secure’ until they can fully realize their right to a life of dignity and opportunity.”¹³

“People living in extreme poverty must be recognized as genuine and essential partners in development and in the fight against poverty. Among the poor, the poorest experience the strongest social exclusion. They are often excluded from participating in social and political activities that affect and change their lives. The recent statement by the Millennium Project that ‘Governments need to identify mechanisms to allow groups commonly excluded from the political process to participate actively in decision making processes’ is thus welcomed. In order to ‘make poverty history,’ the vicious cycle that transmits poverty from one generation to the other must be broken. This can only be done if the poorest and most excluded feel that they are part of a community, which provides them with the support they need to build an identity and a family. At the country level we mustn’t forget that the fight against poverty and extreme poverty is a long-term and ongoing process which requires the commitment of all; notably States, intergovernmental agencies, the private sector, civil society, and citizens.”¹⁴

Several NGOs stressed that at current rates of progress, many of the Goals will be missed in many parts of the world. One NGO¹⁵ estimates that if current trends are allowed to continue:

- 45 million more children will die between now and 2015;
- 247 million more people in sub-Saharan Africa will be living on less than US\$1 a day in 2015, the majority of them women and girls;
- 97 million more children will still be out of school in 2015; and
- 53 million more people in the world will lack proper sanitation facilities.

The NGO is calling for:

- *an immediate US\$50 billion increase in aid and definite timetables for developed countries to reach 0.7% of gross national product (GNP) in aid by 2010. (In the form of aid that is focused on achieving the MDGs and is better allocated, long-term, predictable, untied, and coordinated, with donors financing recurrent costs and undertaking better evaluations of the impact of their aid.)*
- *100% bilateral and multilateral debt cancellation for the poorest countries to meet the MDGs where relief is needed.*
- *a commitment to conclude by 2006 the Doha Round of the World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations in order to make trade work for the poor. (This should deliver new trade rules that will: a) end dumping, b) ensure that poor countries have the power to decide the pace and scale of opening their markets, and c) offer new opportunities for poor countries to gain access to rich country markets. The onus must be on rich countries to liberalize agricultural trade, remove all export subsidies by 2010, and address issues of tariff peaks and tariff escalation, as well as recognize that special support is necessary for low income countries to overcome the supply-side constraints to trade.)*
- *a time-bound commitment to provide universal, free basic social services in all poor countries. The Summit must affirm that the MDGs will not be met unless there is massive investment in the ability of poor country governments to eliminate user fees for basic health and education services. Rich countries should guarantee the financing needed to provide this.*

The NGO further suggested that no developed country should get a permanent or semi-permanent seat on the Security Council before it has established a definite timetable to reach the 0.7% target for official development assistance (ODA) by 2010 and has formally committed itself to this timetable at the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic and Co-operation Development (OECD).¹⁶

National Strategies

A number of NGOs reacted to the report's call in Paragraph 34 for "each developing country with extreme poverty should by 2006 adopt and begin to implement a national development strategy bold enough to meet the Millennium Development Goal targets for 2015."

Some NGOs noted that these strategies need to be a part of truly owned national process—including the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) and National Strategies for Sustainable Development (NSSD). It was further suggested that incorporating action on the MDGs should be a part of these existing national processes, which should also encourage the participation of different spheres of government and sectors of society.

“[A]ny strategy that address the development issues concerning the vast majority of the peoples should be people-centric in terms of their participation at all levels. The strategy to remove extreme poverty by way of implementing the MDGs through concerned national governments with conditional ODA from developed countries does not seem to mirror the real need of the hour.”¹⁷

The same NGO noted:

“[P]eople at the bottom who form the majority of the population in every developing country should have smaller forums to ensure their participation in terms of identification and prioritization of problems, group discussions, collective planning, consensual decisions, effective implementation, community monitoring, social auditing and participatory evaluation. The 30-family neighborhood-based communities at the bottom level and their representative structures at grassroot level upwards could exterminate poverty from the face of the earth in a time-bound manner.”

“[T]he Secretary-General’s paper recognizes the importance of ‘strengthening governance’ as a part of the national responsibility towards development. Stronger and more effective governance needs to refer to all spheres of governance, including the local sphere.”¹⁸ The same NGO also suggested that the UN should work in partnership with national associations of local government to help promote democracy and implementation of development priorities at the local level.

Noting that the section on *Freedom from want* “has some clear pluses in its overall perspective on development,” one NGO pointed out that: “[I]ts vision also has some gaps and minuses:

- *It asks developing countries to put in place ‘the policies and investments to drive private sector led-growth’ without anywhere providing a balance in terms of needed regulation, or ensuring that equity, economic justice, and public goods are protected and promoted.*
- *It assumes that such private sector-led growth will automatically support the MDGs or at least not be inimical. Indeed meeting the MDGs appears to ‘set the foundation for private sector-led growth.’ [Paragraph 39]*
- *It is silent on the potential and actual impacts of trade and financial liberalization on food security, the cost and availability of services, the impacts of privatization on water, seeds, etc. Thus it has nothing to say about how possible negative impacts may be avoided.” [Paragraph 39]¹⁹*

“Efforts to eradicate poverty must be accompanied by an earnest re-evaluation of global systems and processes—including governance, trade, and the private sector—that perpetuate the growing extremes of wealth and poverty. Specifically, there is a need for strong binding corporate rules at the national and international levels. Greater corporate accountability must not be restricted to the environment and labour standards but must also take into account the full panoply of human rights.”²⁰

Noting that they were pleased with the fact that the report addressed issues of reform of the global institutions, one NGO said:

“However, we would like to see more emphasis on these issues as part of the discussion on meeting the MDGs. In fact, we are concerned that it is easy for the international debate on the MDGs to slip into ‘costing’ exercises that tend to deviate attention from the power and institutional relations that are at the root of unjust patterns of resource distribution. The statement that ‘Each developing country has primary responsibility for its own development’ is one that we deeply share. We welcome the Secretary-General’s view that ‘developing countries that put forward sound, transparent and accountable national strategies’ to meet the MDGs should receive the necessary external resources to implement them. However, countries can only adequately fulfil this responsibility when they count with sufficient policy space to implement the mix of economic and social policies, of private sector and government regulation, tailored to their particular social and political conditions. As recognized by the UNCTAD XI Conference (UNCTAD XI Declaration, Paragraph 8), this policy space is nowadays significantly limited by international financial and trade arrangements, so it is important that these are also reviewed.”²¹

Education

A number of NGOs stressed that education is a precondition for progress on each of the interrelated goals of development, peace and human rights.

“Education protects children in many crucial ways; it plays an important role in peacebuilding and has been shown to bring about development successes.”²²

Several noted that unless immediate action was taken to ensure gender parity in primary and secondary education, progress would be unacceptably slow and will:

“continue to be measured in the unnecessary deaths of millions of people, the loss of billions of dollars and the postponement, perhaps by decades, of the accomplishment of all the other Millennium Development Goals.”²³

Also stressed was the need to provide quality education that promotes understanding, tolerance and respect for human rights.

A special concern raised was ensuring quality and relevant education in emergencies for conflict-affected populations, including refugees, returnees and internally displaced people (IDP):

“In areas affected by emergencies, both conflict and natural disasters, the Millennium Development education goals are the furthest from being met.”²⁴

The international community is called upon to prioritize quality education in emergency responses by ensuring access to education, especially for girls; donors must ensure adequate funding for education at the onset of an emergency and throughout post-conflict reconstruction phase; coordination around education must be improved and inter-agency coordination mechanisms must be inclusive and transparent; and the international community must promote and implement the Minimum Standards for Education in Emergencies, Chronic Crises and Early Reconstruction launched in December 2004. Furthermore, broad based civil society participation in the September Summit was also seen as a step towards progress.²⁵

“As part of the five-year evaluation of the MDGs, careful attention must be paid to the ways in which current economic and social policies work against achievement of the goals and targets. In education, for example, many countries’ education budgets have not been raised to meet higher demand from a population increasingly aware of the benefits of education. This reduces the quality of education. Furthermore, under pressure from the international financial institutions and other creditors to reduce State intervention in all areas, governments are privatizing education. Regarding the elimination of school fees [Paragraph 44 of the Secretary-General’s report], governments are moving in the opposite direction, yet this reality is not reflected in the report. There is a need to identify the concrete policies that deny children a quality education, and a comprehensive evaluation of the barriers facing the other MDGs should also be undertaken.”²⁶

Gender Equality

Numerous comments were received on the issue of gender, several of them noting a lack of reference to it specifically in the report and elsewhere:

“One of the weakest aspects of the report is the glaring lack of gender analysis and perspectives, with references to gender or women concentrated only in the development section (II). It completely fails to acknowledge that the Millennium Development Goals cannot be achieved without gender equality, women’s empowerment and women’s rights, despite widespread recognition of this very point, including in the Millennium Project report. Furthermore, the report reduces commitments made to women in the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), Beijing Platform for Action and Cairo Programme of Action to one single recommendation—that governments take action on the strategic priorities identified by the Millennium Campaign Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (5(j)). In recent remarks at the opening of the 49th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, the Secretary-General stated, ‘[T]here is no tool for development more effective than the empowerment of women.’ We had hoped this understanding would be better reflected throughout the entire report.”²⁷

“On the whole we think that a gendered perspective in reaching the MDGs is necessary. Without it one goal might very much stand in the way of another, especially if the translation from macro-economic goals to micro-economic goals is not made very carefully.”²⁸

“A focus and real commitment to the principles of gender equality are crucial. Achieving gender equality in all societal areas is crucial for good global development and peace. Keeping in mind that 70% of the world’s absolute poor are women, Member States, NGOs and all actors ought to fully recognize and affirm the centrality of gender equality to development, and that the achievements of the MDGs depends on the empowerment of women. It is therefore of great importance to ensure the full integration of gender equality targets and objectives in all of the MDGs.”²⁹

“The overarching vision of the Millennium Summit—to reduce poverty among the world’s poorest people, who are primarily women and children—will not and cannot be achieved unless gender equality and women’s empowerment are defined broadly to include the

commitments of the Beijing Platform for Action and CEDAW, and are fully integrated into all of the specific Millennium Development Goals, as well as into the recommendations that cut across the Secretary-General's efforts at UN reform. A reaffirmation of the centrality of gender equality to human rights, security and development is needed now more than ever.

*"While we are disappointed that gender concerns (including gender equality and violence against women) were not woven more thoroughly throughout the Secretary-General's report, we also note that the references included contain useful language that should be retained in government deliberations. Further, we regret that there is no call for systematic gender disaggregated data for analysis of women's experience, which limits the capacity of any government to assess accurately progress toward achieving gender equality and ending violence against women."*³⁰

A number of recommendations were made by NGOs including the elimination of all forms of violence against women as a specific target under Goal 3, and linking the MDGs to the Beijing Platform for Action, the CEDAW, and the International Conference for Population and Development (ICPD) Programme of Action. Several NGOs called for universal access to sexual and reproductive health services and its inclusion in the MDG monitoring framework. "This target is necessary for monitoring and achieving the MDGs, particularly the goals of reducing maternal and child mortality, promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women, and halting the spread of HIV/AIDS."³¹ One submission voiced concern over the report and objected to text in paragraph 5(j) of the Annex "ensuring access to reproductive health services."

*"[W]e are concerned that the language has not been unequivocally defined with a negotiated UN document to exclude abortion, and has been repeatedly misinterpreted to justify promoting legalization of and access to abortion and abortifacients."*³²

Another NGO called on Member States to reaffirm the commitments made to ensure sexual and reproductive health rights.

*"When world leaders gather in September 2005 to advance the cause of freedom—including freedom from want, freedom from fear and freedom to live in dignity—we ask that governments be held accountable to those women, men and children who are unable to practice freedom because their sexual and reproductive rights are not fulfilled or respected. As the Secretary-General so aptly asked in his February 28, 2005 statement to the Commission on the Status of Women 'How can we achieve real equality when half a million women die of pregnancy-related causes every year—causes that are entirely preventable?' We urge that governments reaffirm and act on their commitments to respecting and implementing principles of women's human rights and gender equality that are so central to sexual and reproductive health and rights."*³³

*"The outcome document of the September Summit should reaffirm the commitments to women and girls, such as overcoming violence against women, increasing girls' access to primary education, ensuring women's equal participation in decision making and ensuring access to reproductive rights and services, with time-bound targets and benchmarks for action."*³⁴

Youth and the MDGs

Youth have been actively pursuing the Millennium Development Goals, both in their advocacy and implementation. Throughout 2004, an international team of youth experts formed a working group to write a policy paper, entitled: “Youth and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Challenges and Opportunities for Implementation,” on the role of young people in achieving the MDGs. Based on wide-consultations with young people from around the globe, this paper served as a call out to governments and institutions to get more youth involved with the Goals.

Emerging out of this self-organized and constructive initiative, youth NGOs expressed their disappointment in the way their role in development was undervalued in the Secretary-General’s report. As one Youth NGO noted:

“Young people are already actively contributing to achieving the MDGs, but the full potential and talent of youth is still not being utilized by national governments and multilateral institutions. [...] Although youth can be considered part of civil society, young people comprise a large untapped resource that should be recognized and utilized as an important actor in development. Youth should be considered as a key target of training and capacity building. Investing in youth will provide the highest and most sustainable dividend for the future.”³⁵

Recognizing that the SG’s report outlines various direct interventions that could be implemented in the various clusters, youth recommended that further interventions could include: ¹

- *Gender:* Promoting non-formal education targeting girls and women, as well as facilitating young women into trainers programs in participation and leadership.
- *Environment:* Providing incentives for youth to work for safe water in their community, and facilitating youth led renewable energy enterprises.
- *Rural development:* Supporting agri-based micro-entrepreneurial endeavors of rural youth.
- *Urban Development:* Fostering the creation of community-driven projects with urban youth living in poverty, and supporting current youth-led entrepreneurial initiatives in urban communities.
- *Health systems:* Training unemployed youth to become health-service providers, and promoting peer-to-peer education about sexual and reproductive health.
- *Education:* Promoting non-formal education, and involving youth in the development of curricula.
- *Science, technology, and innovation:* Utilizing young people’s expertise in Information and Communication Technology (ICT), and promoting ICTs as means to address multiple development needs.

Another key recommendations made by youth organizations was the need for governments to include youth in all their delegations, and for developed countries to sponsor youth delegates from developing countries in order to ensure equal representation.

¹ Recommendations obtained from Youth and MDG report

Ageing Population and the MDGs

An NGO committee on ageing issues pointed out that older persons are the fastest growing population group worldwide and have major social and economic importance and impacts on the programmes proposed by Member States and within the development process:

“Yet, the MDGs and the Millennium Declaration, while they address a number of major groups including youth and women, overlook older persons. The successful achievement of the MDGs requires the full and active partnership of governments, civil society organizations and, particularly, those directly affected by development plans and policies. There is little hope of success for the MDGs without the full participation of a largely invisible and undervalued group—older persons—and the careful consideration of the global impact of population ageing. Older persons should not only be seen as a vulnerable group but also as change agents in the development process with vital social and economic contributions to society.”³⁶

The committee strongly recommends that the issues of older persons as stated in the United Nations Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, should be well taken into account at the Summit.

Widows and the MDGs

The lack of efforts to redress the poverty and human rights abuses suffered by widows was also pointed out:

“Essential that governments and UN entities specifically focus on the particular situation of widows if the MDGs have any realistic chance of being realized. The poverty and exclusion of widows recycles and expands the poverty trap to embrace all those dependent on them with irrevocable consequences for society as a whole. Neglecting the impact of marginalized widowhood frustrates all the 8 goals of the MDGs and their targets. Children of widows are withdrawn from school, widow poverty through lack of legal rights to inheritance, land and property, forces widows and their daughters into economic exploitation including child labour, prostitution, trafficking. Inhuman and degrading burial and mourning rites help to spread AIDS.

“Never before has the female population in many developing countries known so many widows. In the aftermath of conflict, in the context of AIDS, estimates for some countries suggest that over 60% of all women are widows or wives of the missing and 70% of children dependent on destitute women without male breadwinners.”³⁷

HIV/AIDS

“The problem with seeing AIDS as essentially a product of poverty and socio-economic conditions is that prevention and cure must then be postponed till Utopia— or something approaching it. Long term, socio-economic upliftment may well curb the epidemic but AIDS is happening in the short term. Leaders are needed who can enable people and communities to devise appropriate strategies for coping with AIDS rather than using it as a political football. The leadership challenge is thus to make inroads into tackling underlying causes such as poverty and gender inequality while simultaneously taking specific steps to target HIV/AIDS.”³⁸

A number of NGOs expressed their concerns over the impact of AIDS in the context of efforts to achieve the MDGs. One of them echoed the Secretary-General's call for rich countries to increase funding to fight global AIDS by paying their fair share of the amount needed—estimated by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) to be US\$12 billion in 2005 and US\$20 billion annually by 2007—to finance AIDS care, treatment and prevention.³⁹ They also expressed their disappointment that the Secretary-General's discussion of the HIV/AIDS crisis did not deal explicitly with the issue of access to generics, despite mention of the need to provide “proper antiretroviral treatment to all who need it within the coming decade.” [Box 3]

“Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreements have also been a stumbling block to providing life-saving drugs to people suffering with diseases including HIV/AIDS in epidemic proportions around the globe. The World Health Organization revised drug strategy declares that public health should be paramount in trade disputes. Compulsory licensing should enable the production of cheaper generic drugs, making pharmaceuticals more accessible to poor people, but drug companies argue that this practice, legal under current world trade law, could undercut their profits. Trade policy must not be used to restrict the right to health, and negotiations that promote or expand drug company monopolies must be set aside to promote public health and access to affordable medication.

“Furthermore, bilateral and regional trade agreements should no longer be used to circumvent WTO safeguards allowing for availability of generic medications in impoverished nations. The G-7 must change its existing and pending bilateral and regional agreements to comply with the Doha Declaration's agreement on intellectual property rights to protect public health and access to medicines for all. The General Assembly should address these trade issues in September in order to adequately attend to Goal Six of the MDGs and attain the strong health systems called for in Paragraph 44.”⁴⁰

“The retention of references to HIV/AIDS, especially in Paragraph 5(i) of the Annex, is important. We agree with the need to provide resources for expanded and comprehensive responses to HIV/AIDS and to fully fund the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Overall, we note that references to HIV/AIDS in the report did not address the experience of women and girls and in particular the interlinkage of violence against women, sexual and reproductive rights and HIV/AIDS. We agree that the phrase ‘work with UNAIDS and its partners’ implies addressing gendered dimensions of the pandemic, but the language would be better if it stated this directly.”⁴¹

Another NGO pointed out difficulties encountered in rural African areas:

“Most times HIV/AIDS crusades start and stop at the urban areas, leaving the rural dwellers uninformed about the necessary facts they should be aware of.”⁴²

Other challenges identified by the NGO included stigma and discrimination, harmful media reportage, and housing issues for AIDS patients.

Making Goal 8 work: trade and financing for development

-- Aid

NGOs responding to the section on aid [*In Larger Freedom*, Paragraphs 48-53] voiced their support for efforts to provide more development financing to developing countries while expressing concern that such aid must not be accompanied by conditions on market reform and that the structural adjustment policies imposed over the past 25 years must be abandoned. They also expressed concern that the language in Paragraph 50 requiring developing countries to put forward “sound, transparent and accountable” national strategies as a precondition to receiving ODA places a high burden on developing countries, who are at the mercy of donor countries’ interpretation of what constitutes “sound” policy.

“Aid is a critical resource which, when complemented by trade justice and debt cancellation, will help build a more equitable and secure world. For four decades wealthy nations have ignored their obligation to increase foreign aid to the internationally-agreed target of 0.7% of their GNP. We agree that all countries who have not already done so, including the US, should create a clear timetable for allocating 0.7% of GNP to development assistance. In addition, increases in ODA should represent net long-term finance for social development, not debt write-offs, dollar depreciation, or military aid.

“In addition to increasing the quantity of aid, donor countries must transform the purpose and quality of aid. We are concerned that programmes like the US Millennium Challenge Account require countries to compete against each other on the basis of US-designed criteria. Such conditions undermine countries’ democratic structures and accountability mechanisms. The US must immediately untie the strings of its aid machinery that, according to the OECD, funnel 71 cents out of every aid dollar to US goods and services. Other developed countries should take similar steps to ensure that ODA is efficiently and effectively used to finance development projects to benefit the neediest communities.

“We strongly support the Secretary-General’s call to increase the quality, transparency and accountability of ODA. As the report mentions in Paragraph 53, this will require donors to link aid to the local development needs identified by recipient countries. ODA should not be dictated by donor countries’ political agendas or beholden to the needs of their suppliers. We hope that donor countries will follow the Secretary-General’s recommendation to ‘set, by September 2005, timetables and monitorable targets for aligning their aid delivery mechanisms with partner countries’ MDG-based national strategies.”⁴³

“Substantial increases in ODA are essential for meeting the MDGs. We welcome the emphasis within the report on the need for OECD countries to set timetables for reaching the target of 0.7% of GNP. Given the slow progress on this commitment, we would urge governments to set this goal in national legislation. We welcome the mention in the report of the International Finance Facility (IFF) as an innovative source of finance for development. We would, however, have liked the report to give due consideration to other potential sources of revenue—such as a Currency Transaction Tax or Airline Tax. Such recommendations would be timely, especially given the growing alliance of governments subscribing to the ‘Action against Hunger and Poverty’ led by the Brazilian Government.”⁴⁴

-- Debt

Many comments were received on the paragraph on debt with a number of NGOs strongly endorsing the Secretary-General's proposal to redefine debt sustainability [Paragraph 54], noting that debt cancellation was necessary for highly indebted poor countries (HIPC).

*"The G-24 Communiqué of the 15th April 2005 stated: 'The growth prospects for many countries, particularly the low-income countries, are clouded by high and unsustainable public debt levels.' Debt cancellation needs to happen now so that people can survive—some have paid it many times already. We strongly support the giving of grants rather than loans to the HIPC countries to avoid their falling again into a 'debt trap.' In sum, the eradication of poverty requires debt cancellation and a more equitable and open trade system."*⁴⁵

Also suggested was the idea that debt reduction should aim to eradicate poverty, and move away from notions of debt sustainability based on the quality of borrowing countries' policies.

*"Another important way of combating the debt problem of developing countries would be to develop independent dispute settlement mechanisms for debt crises. The aim of an independent agency or dispute settlement process would be to achieve a more equal distribution of responsibility and burden between debtors and creditors. Possible ways to implement this idea have been analyzed during the Helsinki Process."*⁴⁶

"[T]here is no mention of heavily indebted middle income countries, such as the Philippines and Brazil. Without this, any initiative in debt rescheduling or reprieve will not benefit those countries and similarly situated ones. It is important to acknowledge that often the origin of these debts is directly related to loans made by dictatorship governments and money was not spent on national development."

*"[T]he document is silent on the negative impact of the high cost of debt servicing on the national budget. The trend is decreasing public funds for health and education while debt servicing is securitized through automatic debt appropriation. The effect in most cases is poor health and limited education and lack of resources for other relevant programmes as it is the case of those devoted to the promotion and protection of human rights of women and other discriminated groups."*⁴⁷

"Nations in the global South continue to suffer under a crushing burden of international debt, much of it illegitimately accumulated by undemocratic and corrupt governments and lenders who served as willing accomplices. Sub-Saharan Africa alone pays US\$13 billion to wealthy creditors including the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, each year—roughly the amount the UN estimates is needed to effectively combat HIV/AIDS in that region. Meanwhile, dozens of African nations still spend more of their budget on debt service than on health care in the midst of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Now is the time for definitive debt cancellation if we are to achieve a world in which external debt no longer diverts resources from impoverished people or constrains policy choices."

"We reiterate the report's assertion that in order to meet the MDGs, wider and deeper debt relief is needed [Paragraph 32] and we would welcome the replacement of loans with

grant-based finance [Paragraph 54]. Furthermore, we call on the G-7 to agree to a plan for 100% multilateral debt cancellation for all impoverished nations: relief of debt service payments will not be sufficient. Cancellation could be financed via the responsible sale of IMF gold, the use of accumulated and future profits at the World Bank (IBRD), drawing down the IMF's problematic Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF), or through voluntary contributions from rich country governments.

“Provisions on debt relief in Annex 5(e) should include a commitment to contingency financing in the event of external shocks. In addition, debt relief schemes should ensure that debtor countries preserve policy space for implementing democratically designed national development strategies. Therefore, debt cancellation should not be dependent on harmful economic restructuring, and must be implemented outside the constraints of the IMF/World Bank HIPC Initiative.”⁴⁸

“Debt of developing countries neither is sustainable, nor can it be made sustainable. Cancellation is a must. The spirit of a world In Larger Freedom towards development, security and human rights for all implicitly and explicitly must question the debt problem and crisis, from a moral, social and economic point of view in the light of a real commitment with human rights, security and development. Debt cancellation is a must—for multilateral institutions, for the private sector, for States and for the UN—if there is real commitment with a world In Larger Freedom.”⁴⁹

“We welcome the recommendation that we should ‘redefine debt sustainability at the level of debt that allows a country to meet the MDGs’ and believe it should be interpreted generously so as to include the implementation of broader development strategies geared towards achieving these goals. We believe the recommendations on debt should be extended to the recently reviewed Debt Sustainability Framework.

“In the design of debt sustainability assessments based, to an important degree, on the Country Policy and Institutions Assessment (CPIA) which threatens to provide a ‘window’ for donor conditionality, and as a growing number of countries become subject to the framework, there should be a review of operation of the CPIA in the ongoing conditionality review being carried out by the Bretton Woods institutions. We also welcome the recognition that non-HIPC countries and middle-income countries also are in need of significant debt reduction [Paragraph 54]. In this regard, we believe the international community cannot continue to leave decisions on debt relief levels and conditions for restructuring to the unpredictability and vagaries of ad hoc, unregulated debt workouts. It is urgent, in this context, that a fair and transparent arbitration process, along the lines of the most advanced bankruptcy principles of the world applicable to sovereign entities, be made available immediately to all debtor nations. Such a framework should not discriminate between countries based on their level of income, encompass all types of debt (to both bilateral and multilateral public creditors, as well as private ones), ensure the participation of representatives of those whose lives would be most seriously affected by its decisions and be open to public scrutiny. In the longer-term, the framework should be institutionalized through establishment of an implementing body under the aegis of the United Nations.”⁵⁰

-- Trade

Numerous comments were received on the paragraphs dealing with trade issues [Paragraphs 55-56], with a large number of them calling for reform of the current trade system.

“There is a clear need for a ‘more development-oriented trade system’ as the Secretary-General suggests in Annex point 5(a)(ii). Current trade rules are rigged in favour of the most powerful countries and their businesses, costing the developing world US\$700 billion a year, according to the UN. Rather than experiencing real benefits from trade liberalization and the intense promotion of international trade, the most impoverished people...are bearing the burden of the process.

“We caution against the emphasis on export industries as a means to build trade competitiveness mentioned in Paragraph 56, because current international trade policies and export-led growth models have failed to reduce poverty in developing countries. Supporters of these policies like to point out those countries such as China and South Korea that reduced poverty while experiencing strong export growth. However, these countries’ economies took off at a time when they were imposing extensive restrictions on imports and foreign investment – the opposite of the policies advocated by today’s trade agreements. By contrast, countries in Latin America, which has gone further than any other region to follow the orthodoxy by lifting ‘barriers’ to trade and investment, have seen poverty rise.

“Farmers in impoverished countries have been particularly hard hit by uneven trade rules. These rules limit governments’ power to impose import controls, pitting small producers against large-scale, often heavily subsidized rich-country agribusiness [Paragraph 55]. However, the Secretary-General’s report does not paint a full picture of this problem, which has been exacerbated by World Bank and IMF pressure to slash supports for small farmers. In addition, efforts are underway in the WTO and other trade negotiations that would further limit governments’ powers to ensure that foreign investment, government procurement, and basic services support social goals.”⁵¹

“We agree that a healthy private sector is a vital element of the framework for development. Consumer groups recognize the benefits that market economies can provide. However, we are concerned that much of the debate about poverty, development and the benefits of trade focuses on production—the supply-side of the market equation.”⁵²

The same NGO recommended that the report:

“establish a greater balance between the supply-side and demand-side in the development of markets.”

“In contrast, the demand-side of the market equation focuses both on the impacts that the market economy has on consumers (i.e., the demanders) and other societal pressures (i.e., social, environment, development, cultural, safety, food sovereignty, health, etc) as well as the role these civil society groups may play in the shaping of the economic, political and social policies that contribute to the operation of the market.

“Agriculture and the related issues of food sovereignty and food safety are of key importance to consumers, especially in developing countries due to the prevalence of small-scale rural farmers and the urban poor.

Noting that *“Effective and equitable regulatory structures in the delivery of services such as electricity, telecommunications and water are critical to development and poverty reduction,”* the NGO *“strongly welcomed the affirmation of the ‘right to regulate’ in the Doha Declaration. However, to give this greater legal force, we want to see the right to regulate stated within the body of the General Agreement on Services (GATS) treaty rather than in the preamble.”*⁵³

The same NGO suggested that the report could be strengthened if the following considerations were included:

“Multilateral, regional, bilateral and even national trade rules can help achieve development and poverty reduction goals if the following principles and procedures guide negotiations:

- *All relevant countries should benefit from trade agreements – improvements in market access must outweigh the costs of implementing trade agreement obligations.*
- *Trade is seen as a means to an end rather than an end in its own right – trade must be geared to achieving international sustainable development and reductions in poverty.*
- *All Parties to a trade agreement are able to participate effectively in decision making.”*⁵⁴

Speaking also on trade issues, another NGO observed,

“[T]he imposition of time limits to getting a trade agreement in place within the WTO is not helpful to the needs of the South. The document should instead speak of achieving gains in substantive discussions that aim to strike a balance between nationally determined domestic regulation and protection with market access commitments, and between reciprocity and flexibility, and between standards-setting and special and differential treatment (SDTs).

“[I]n order to ensure that products from least developed countries do not become vulnerable to price fluctuations, market price support mechanisms must be put in place.

“The document is silent onto the privatization of services under the WTO-GATS. Publicly provided services are important for women because these respond to the social reproductive needs of the entire society without which women's work burdens will increase.

*“It is also silent also on the potential negative impact of WTO, Free Trade and Bilateral Trade Agreements that are actively being pursued.”*⁵⁵

One NGO expressed its concern regarding trade policies that are detrimental to local communities and small farmers:

“In Paragraph 33, the report refers to ‘poverty traps that leave many of the poorest countries languishing in a vicious circle of destitution even when they have the benefit of honest, committed governments.’ The report refers to the lack of infrastructure, human capital and limited natural resources as a few of these traps. What is not addressed is the

vicious circle of commodities from developed countries being sold throughout the world, including the developing countries, at prices below production cost. As a result of this commodity 'dumping,' rural farmers in poor countries are forced off of their land because they are unable to protect themselves against under-priced imports.

"In Paragraph 55, the report talks about how 'an open and equitable trading system can be a powerful driver of economic growth and poverty reduction.' But not everyone benefits from the opportunities of increased trade—in many cases the livelihoods of small-scale farmers and agricultural laborers have worsened. The reality is that simply expanding or liberalizing trade does not automatically translate into poverty reduction for the following reasons:

- *First, most food is produced for local consumption, and only a small proportion—about 10%— is traded internationally.*
- *Second, there is no guarantee that food produced for export to rich countries will be accepted (because of specific quality standards).*
- *Third, liberalization also means opening the domestic market to higher levels of imports (which can actually increase food insecurity because imported food can displace local production).*
- *Fourth, few people can benefit from international agricultural trade because only a handful of companies dominate world markets. In 1986 it was estimated that 85%-90% of global agricultural trade was controlled by five companies.*

"Human rights law provides tools that can help define a global food system that guarantees everyone's human rights. All WTO members have ratified at least one of the international human rights treaties and should use these instruments when designing trade policies. To promote true development and fulfill human rights, States must implement policies that have an explicit focus on the needs and capabilities of poor people:

- *Stronger and simpler rules to prevent dumping.*
- *Protecting the right of developing countries to block dumped produce at their borders.*
- *Making Special and Differential Treatment provisions more meaningful.*
- *Tackling Corporate Control by allowing transparency to companies' market shares.*
- *Ensuring coherence between governments' economic and human rights obligations.*"⁵⁶

The same NGO also noted that while it agreed with the report's proposal to complete the Doha Round of multilateral trade negotiations by no later than 2006, it would recommend:

*"the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) be strengthened as an entity to manage the international trade system. UNCTAD has a democratic and well-respected record working on commodities and development in the poorest countries. Concrete support should be given to create an International Task Force on Commodities, a mandate from the UNCTAD meeting in Sao Paulo in 2004. This multi-stakeholder partnership will research and make policy recommendations to stabilize commodity prices and regenerate productivity for rural communities in developing countries."*⁵⁷

Ensuring Environmental Sustainability

In Larger Freedom addresses environmental issues in Paragraphs 41 (where it suggests that countries should adopt time-bound environmental targets), 42 and 43 to some extent (on rural and urban development), and in Section D on Ensuring environmental sustainability [Paragraphs 57-61]. A number of NGOs highlighted the connection between human rights and environmental issues:

“The report falls short in connecting human rights to environmental sustainability, or in connecting freedom to live in dignity to the freedom from want. As part of such a rethinking of human rights, the Secretary-General’s report should call on the General Assembly to approve a treaty on the right to water. It would require access to free and safe water for meeting the basic needs (cooking, drinking and sanitation) of present and future generations.

“Many of the problems of unfettered globalization can only be addressed through active involvement of the States, particularly in providing essential services such as a basic water provision. Such a treaty would be especially appropriate since the International Decade of water has just begun and the UN Conference on Sustainable Development just concluded its 13th session focused on water policy.

“In emphasizing that it is the job of the States to guarantee the rights of their citizens [Paragraph 19], the Secretary-General’s report provides a way forward in this current moment where the role of the State is shrinking inappropriately because of pressures for deregulation, privatization, liberalization and corporate profits.”⁵⁸

Other NGOs voiced opposition to Paragraph 42 that calls for a “twenty-first century African Green Revolution” in 2005:

“However, we oppose the Annan Report’s suggestion to launch a twenty-first century African Green Revolution commencing in 2005. The lessons learned from Asia shows that implementing large-scale agricultural programmes leads to the marginalization of smallholders, dependency on external inputs, and destruction of the environment.”⁵⁹

Also responding to Paragraph 42 and the use of the term “modern energy services” for the rural poor, an NGO caucus on energy stressed:

“Energy for sustainable development should be sustainable energy, especially for the world’s poor and marginalized communities, which are the particular focus of the Millennium Development Goals, and of the Secretary-General’s report, In Larger Freedom. Ideally, sustainable energy is energy with positive impact on the healthy functioning of ecological systems, including the global ecosystem. In the present less than ideal world, sustainable energy can be defined as energy with minimum negative social, health and environmental impacts (e.g., minimum negative impact upon our earth’s air, water and land resources) and which can be supplied continuously to present and future generations on earth.

“Human beings, and particularly the poor and marginalized peoples, cannot live in dignity, with freedom from want and fear, if they do not have clean air, water, and land to sustain themselves, their families and their livelihoods. We should not simply substitute

unsustainable 'modern' forms of energy (that pollute the earth's air, water and land and have serious negative social and health impacts as well) for traditional polluting forms of energy. If such unsustainable forms of energy are 'provided' (or even imposed upon especially to the poor and indigenous peoples who lack the resources to defend themselves against such pollution), and thus cause all kinds of serious negative health, social and environmental impacts, then providing such unsustainable energy may be even worse than providing no 'modern' energy services.⁶⁰

Noting that most of the world's poorest people live in geographical areas that may not have substantial amounts of unsustainable forms of energy, but have huge and infinite supplies of sustainable forms of energy such as solar energy, wind energy and ocean energy, the caucus stressed:

"If the world is really interested in poverty eradication, then developed countries should do everything possible to exploit and develop these forms of sustainable energy in areas where the poor live. Then poor countries can become energy independent, and possibly even export their excess solar or wind energy to neighboring countries."

The same NGO also stressed the need to establish an International Sustainable Energy Fund, which could be financed with a percentage of the monies from phasing out trade distorting subsidies in developed countries that are presently subsidizing unsustainable forms of energy.⁶¹

One NGO noted that a low-cost sustainable technology—the solar cooker—has multiple social, health and environmental benefits for sun-rich communities, and could make significant contributions towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals:

"Over half the world's population relies on wood and charcoal for cooking daily meals. The environmental impact of this dependence is far reaching — loss of tree cover, soil depletion, carbon dioxide emissions, etc. Solar cookers transform clean solar energy into valuable heat for cooking and water pasteurization."⁶²

Noting the linkages between Millennium Development Goal 7 on environmental sustainability to the other MDGs, one NGO called on Heads of State and Government:

- *"Recognize that the MDGs are interconnected and cannot be achieved in isolation, nor can they be achieved sequentially. Investing in MDG7 on environmental sustainability contributes to achieving each of the other MDGs. Failure to invest adequately in MDG7 will, through accelerated degradation of essential ecosystems goods and services, undermine our ability to achieve them all.*
- *Ensure critical direct investments are made in the conservation of natural ecosystems, including funding for protected areas and restoration of critical habitats such as oceans and catchments (watersheds).*
- *Ensure that the value and sustainable management of natural ecosystems and services are fully integrated into relevant policies, processes and decision making - particularly strategic development policy (including poverty reduction strategies) and budget frameworks.*

- *As a vital contribution to MDG7, commit to take action to make and monitor tangible progress on commitments and targets agreed at Rio and Johannesburg, including to substantially reduce the rate of biodiversity loss by 2010.*
- *Ratify and implement existing environmental treaties and agreements, and support improvement of coordination and coherence amongst MEAs and institutions through optimising synergies and limiting overlap and duplication of activities.*
- *Empower and authorize the United Nations and other key multilateral institutions to increase technical and financial support and cooperation for regional and national capacity building for environmental governance and sustainable development, including to protect, restore and manage biodiversity and the natural systems that underpin life, livelihoods and human security.*
- *Engage civil society fully in the Summit process and the Summit itself.*”⁶³

In response to Section D, a number of NGOs noted that discussion of environmental sustainability was much too limited, highlighting that threats to the environment included more than biodiversity loss, climate change and desertification. Also perceived as a threat to the environment were:

*“[T]rade agreements that see environmental protection laws as trade barriers or promote unsustainable development such as highly industrialized, mono-crop farming of cash crops for export. This type of farming is usually wrought with environmental consequences as the small farmer’s intimate connection to the land is lost and with it a theology of care for creation and knowledge of the most locally-appropriate and sustainable farming practices. In cases where development endeavours involve the use of natural resources or pollution that degrades water, air and soil quality, the costs are often disproportionately borne by poor communities, especially in rural indigenous areas. Such enterprises can have serious consequences for public health, quality of life and environmental integrity. Though poor communities often suffer the side effects, they tend to reap few of the benefits: there are far too many examples of communities who lack electricity though they are next to a power plant, or mines who import workers rather than hiring locally. Care must be taken to ensure that development projects are environmentally sustainable and that local communities have significant input and decision making in large scale public and private endeavors. In addition, governments must strengthen their regulation and enforcement of potentially polluting industries to ensure the smallest ecological footprint possible.”*⁶⁴

On the topic of climate change, NGOs noted the need for adaptation measures to be undertaken along with mitigation:

*“Without attention to assisting poor communities adapt to climate change, the effects of global warming will continue to exacerbate poverty through increased extreme weather events, food and water insecurity, ill health, loss of forests and biodiversity, displacement of people, social and political instability and economic decline. An outcome of the Millennium Summit+5 must be commitment to increasing the ability of vulnerable countries and communities to adapt to climate change.”*⁶⁵

Other NGOs stressed that sufficient funding and support must be provided to ensure that all countries develop National Strategies for Sustainability and can take the essential steps to implement them. The establishment of a monitoring and review process was also called for to help ensure that governments follow through on their commitments to develop and implement such plans.

“It is essential that the UN Member States agree to specific mechanisms and new and innovative means of financing sufficient to FULLY FUND the Johannesburg Plan of Action and the MDGs. This could include a Tobin Tax, a charge on the use of the Global Commons, a surcharge on the use of natural resources, a tax on the sale of armaments, a carbon tax, etc.

“A specific process and mechanisms must be established to support government programmes to reduce non-sustainable subsidies and to replace them with incentives for sustainable practices; and a multilateral process must be negotiated to ensure that equitable policies are adopted and implemented between and among all countries.”⁶⁶

A number of NGOs called for the establishment of a United Nations Environment Organization:

“The Millennium+5 Summit must go one step further. We urge the Secretary-General to propose the adoption of a concrete and time-bound process to deliver the strengthening of global environmental governance, with the establishment of a UN Environment Organization as its aim. A UN Environment Organization is necessary to ensure that the basis of the economy—our environment and its resources—can deliver prosperity to all, including future generations.”⁶⁷

Other Priorities

– Global Institutions

A number of comments were received on Paragraph 70 and its call for the international financial institutions to “consider what changes they might undergo in order to better reflect the changes in the world’s political economy since 1945.” A number of NGOs called for reform in the decision-making structures of the Bretton Woods institutions (BWIs) and the World Trade Organization so that developing countries could have a fairer and more effective role in the policies and processes of these bodies.

One NGO stressed:

“The Secretary-General should not shy away from recommending reforms not only to the UN, but also to the way it relates to its development agencies, including the World Bank and the IMF, and the way it relates to other global institutions, such as the World Trade Organization. In this regard, we are glad to see the Secretary-General recalling the Monterrey Consensus agreement for the Bretton Woods institutions to broaden the participation of developing and transition countries in their governing structures. The latest communiqué from the Development Committee of those organizations shows that decision on these subjects continues to be held up by lack of political consensus. That statement validates, in our opinions, the developing country and civil society strongly

voiced views throughout the Monterrey Conference process that the UN was, indeed, the right forum to discuss these issues, because of their eminently political nature.

“We believe that the World Trade Organization, while today not a specialized agency of the UN, should also be among the institutions whose policies are coordinated towards achievement of the MDGs. In fact, the WTO addresses today a growing range of issues that stray far beyond merely trade. Any serious attempt to strengthen the UN’s role in ensuring greater coherence of financial, trade and monetary policies towards the achievement of the MDGs or, more broadly, strengthening its effectiveness in promoting human rights, risks becoming meaningless without proper coordination that involves a formalized and strengthened role vis-à-vis the World Trade Organization.”⁶⁸

Others also echoed the call to bring the Bretton Woods institutions and the WTO into the UN system:

“to democratize the structure and make them accountable to the General Assembly and to civil society.”⁶⁹

-- Migration

Paragraph 71 addresses the issue of migration and a number of NGOs commented on it, calling for concrete measures and policies for migrants:

“The right to move from one country to another for economic reasons is for many the right to life. We have been involved with peoples around the world who have made their living in this way. In the corporate world goods and services can move freely across borders. People ought to be able to move just as freely. We support measures which aim to facilitate more readily the transfer of remittances.”⁷⁰

“The current Diaspora of people emigrating from developing countries has had devastating effects on families and on youth, who often grow resentful or turn to violence when separated from their parents. Measures must be taken so that our global economic system does not separate families.

“The report cites the remittances of emigrants to their countries of origin as a positive result of emigration, and we call for efforts to reduce the transaction costs of such remittances. We would argue that migration forced by war, repression, fear, poverty or other realities of life should never be relied upon as a solution to development. For those who emigrate to escape desperate conditions and who must journey far from home to seek the means for their families’ survival, it is important that the UN recognize the right not to migrate. Governments should target development projects to areas experiencing high emigration rates, so that emigration becomes a choice, and not a necessity. Rural development is urgently needed to slow migration to the cities [Paragraph 71], where there are ‘... growing numbers of people living in slums...’ [Paragraph 31, Box 2 and Paragraph 42].

“Equally important are measures to ensure the right to migrate, and we urge countries to adopt just immigration policies that provide economic refugees with the means to a dignified life.”⁷¹

III. Freedom from fear

The section entitled Freedom from fear also solicited a large number of NGO comments, ranging from redefining security in terms of basic human needs, to the need to identify and deal with the root causes of terrorism, to energetic support for the proposed Peacebuilding Commission. A number of these comments are provided below.

Collective Security

“We propose a redefinition of security in terms of basic human needs, rights and responsibilities. Human security, as opposed to national security, guarantees access to food, clean water, healthcare, education and employment. It recognizes the right of people to participate in important decisions that affect their lives and respects the integrity of creation. Human security would emerge from a ‘globalization of solidarity’ that promotes international cooperation to pre-emptively manage conflicts before they turn violent.”⁷²

“We regret the absence of a stronger position in the report on four vital topics about the collective security: a) the urgent need to work towards the abolition of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (not only to limit their proliferation); b) the necessity to reduce drastically the current (rising) levels of military spending worldwide; we believe that while nations have a military budget larger than its health and education budget it will be impossible, for instance, to meet the Millennium Development Goals; c) the requirement to ensure gender equality at all levels and in all fields and d) the importance of introducing peace education into schools everywhere.”⁷³

“Armed conflict is both a significant threat to fulfilling security, development and human rights and, in turn, is partly caused by the failure to fulfil these rights. Member States should affirm the ‘responsibility to prevent’ and commit to a plan to dedicate the necessary resources, institutional reforms and policies to act to the fullest extent by all peaceful means to prevent violent conflict from emerging, escalating or reoccurring. Governments and IGOs need to mainstream prevention and constructive conflict management as fundamental goals of their security institutions and instruments, as well as of their other policies and programmes. The international community should increase the effectiveness of less intrusive and less coercive preventive measures by devoting more commitment and resources to them. Member States need to authorise the necessary changes to the size and mandate of the Secretariat to truly achieve a culture of prevention.”⁷⁴

“[W]e are of opinion that reducing the risk of prevalence of war and armed conflicts should be in the core activity of UN within in its development agenda for Africa. It needs special attention from the UN for peacebuilding activities. Also, the UN should pay attention to those countries emerging from conflict, wars and emergency system to development era, like Angola, DR Congo, Liberia, Côte d’Ivoire, among others.”⁷⁵

Preventing Catastrophic Terrorism

“We would like to see wording here recognizing that States Parties may be violating human rights behind a facade of fighting terrorism. Functioning democracies are curtailing civil liberties and engaging in human rights abuses while others succumb to the temptation to characterize opposition groups as terrorists in order to claim foreign military aid. The abrogation of human rights cannot be justified for any reason.”⁷⁶

“[W]hile we whole-heartedly support the need for a definition of terrorism and for a comprehensive convention on terrorism and while we endorse the dropping the endless debates concerning State terrorism, we are disappointed that this report does not seem to recognize the importance of identifying the root causes of terrorism. Therefore, we recommend that any definition of terrorism and any convention on terrorism discuss and fully elaborate the causes of terrorism and how these might be ameliorated as part of any strategy to end terrorism.”⁷⁷

Others, while endorsing the Secretary-General’s call to world leaders to conclude a comprehensive convention on terrorism, stressed that:

“the proposed convention must have built-in safeguards—including accountability and appeals mechanisms—to prevent State actors, in particular the military and the police, from taking action to deal with terrorism that does not abide by internationally accepted human rights standards.”⁷⁸

Concern was also voiced about the secondment of due process and fair trial guarantees by States, in the name of countering terror:

“[T]he right to a fair trial is a fundamental right and any derogation from this right, in addition to violating internationally accepted—and binding—principles of jurisprudence and customary international law, endangers world peace and security.”⁷⁹

Nuclear, biological and chemical weapons

Several NGOs responded with comments and suggestions on the section on nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. One NGO called on nuclear weapon States to take the lead in ensuring:

“(1) The swift negotiation on a non discriminatory, multilateral and internationally and effectively verifiable treaty that will end the production, storage and use of fissile materials for military purposes through the Conference on Disarmament at its 2006 session;

“(2) The immediate commencement in the Conference on Disarmament of an appropriate subsidiary body with a mandate to deal with nuclear disarmament, with a view to commencement within five years of negotiations on a treaty on general and complete disarmament under strict and verifiable international control. Should this fail, the creation of a subsidiary body in the NPT with a clear mandate and timetable is an essential backup.

“(3) The necessary ratifications to ensure the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty.”⁸⁰

The same NGO also suggested that in order to effectively address nuclear proliferation, the further reprocessing of plutonium must be stopped, and existing stocks must be treated as nuclear waste.

“Therefore all States should agree to start negotiations immediately on a comprehensive and verifiable fissile material treaty at the Conference on Disarmament with the aim of ending all production, stockpiling and use.... In banning the production of key components of nuclear weapons, enriched uranium and plutonium, the Treaty is a critical lynchpin in the nuclear disarmament process. It would impose restraints on States wishing to develop nuclear weapons and on those which already have it, and together with the test-ban treaty, would substantially and significantly strengthen the regime on nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament. Moreover, it would directly address the key elements of nuclear materials needed for developing nuclear weapons.”⁸¹

“We basically welcome Kofi Annan’s proposals on nuclear disarmament. [...] Yet, further steps are vitally important. We therefore call on all Member States to make a binding commitment to at least halve military spending by 2015 and use the resulting ‘peace dividend’ for social and environmental purposes. This should be a prelude to a binding commitment by all States to promote general disarmament and the ban of all nuclear arms and of all other weapons of mass destruction once and for all. Furthermore, we urge all States to adopt a global Arms Trade Treaty which can provide some safeguards in what is, at best, an unregulated market. The Treaty would ensure that all governments control arms according to the same international standard, thus greatly reducing the risk of letting them fall into irresponsible hands.”⁸²

“We must challenge the assumptions which lead us to believe that violence and war are an inescapable part of life. It is these assumptions which have helped to entrench the industry of war within our social, political and economic systems. The legitimization of violence will continue as long as we behave as though we have no other choice. The construction of ‘security’ as that which can only be achieved by amassing weapons to deter potential invaders has served to bolster the logic and spirit of violence. Our response to issues of disarmament arises, therefore, from our deep conviction that until we have achieved the complete disarmament of all nuclear weapons we will never overcome violence and achieve the genuine security that comes from peace with justice.

“Disarmament is not simply a matter of technicalities. It has to be informed by enthusiasm for the philosophy, language and practice of non-violence. Global ‘security’ will be achieved through social policy and other forms of non-violence not from the possession of arms. Global Action to Prevent War (GAPW) proposes three main strands of activity: a comprehensive programme of global conflict prevention which includes systematic build-up of the conflict reduction capabilities of multilateral organizations; a phased programme to implement global disarmament; and an insistence that global

security is defined in terms that reflect the health and wellbeing of human society and its environment, not in terms of armed defence capabilities of individual States.”⁸³

“In relation to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, we would like to see specific reference in Annex section 6(b) to Article VI of the NPT, which obligates nuclear weapons States to move towards eliminating their nuclear arsenals. Asking States to ‘pledge’ to meet their obligations is not enough. The nuclear weapons States have not taken any steps towards this obligation for years. In fact, the US and Russia are both working to enhance their nuclear weapons capabilities which violates the spirit if not letter of the NPT. The General Assembly should seek an agreement requiring the nuclear weapons States to establish a process of how they intend to meet their obligation, including a process, timetable and a mechanism for evaluation of their efforts.”⁸⁴

The same NGO also expressed concern for the peaceful uses of nuclear power, including electricity generation.

“No solution has been found for the problem of nuclear wastes, which remain radioactive for tens of thousands of years and pose challenges for human and environmental health. In addition, from a security perspective, the existence of any nuclear material poses some threat of being diverted to weapons. These issues should not be ignored.”⁸⁵

Reducing the risk of war

“In his report, the Secretary-General has placed a heavy emphasis on the importance of preventative action. In Larger Freedom also underscores the rule of law and stresses State responsibility in relation to the arms trade. Yet in his report, Kofi Annan has stopped short of the recommendation made to him by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change that UN Member States take steps towards legally binding controls on arms transfers.”⁸⁶

The same NGO stressed:

“[A] new international instrument based on international law—an Arms Trade Treaty—is urgently needed to stop arms getting into the wrong hands. States that export arms have a moral and legal responsibility to ensure that the arms are not misused for human rights violations or breaches of international humanitarian law. The UN Programme of Action on small arms already includes a commitment to this effect. The Summit should therefore include a clear recommendation on the need for an international instrument for strict controls on arms transfers based on human rights and international humanitarian law, as well as legally binding agreements on arms brokering and the marking and tracing of arms and ammunition.”⁸⁷

“Decisions on the disarmament of all weapons, including small arms and light weapons and nuclear weapons, should be carried out in the framework of human security. In light of this and consistent with the provisions of SC Resolution 1325, gender analysis of all situations of armed conflict should be performed as an integral part of all disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and small arms intervention planning,

implementation and monitoring. Further, the participation of women's groups should be ensured in disarmament initiatives and should be supported in formal peace and security reform processes."⁸⁸

"Member States should commit themselves to the least diversion of the world's resources to weapons and military capacities (Art. 26, UN Charter), directing resources to development and programmes to promote sustainable peace. They should agree and comply with a proposed arms trade treaty for conventional weapons, fully implement the programme of action on small arms and light weapons and other measures for practical disarmament, and make significant progress in eliminating weapons of mass destruction."⁸⁹

"In order to bring light weapons properly into focus we suggest rating all weapons on the number of deaths attributable to each weapon. This would make light weapons a more serious threat to life than weapons of mass destruction and they should be treated accordingly."⁹⁰

Noting that their volunteers had witnessed first hand the trauma to children that violent conflict brings, one NGO stressed:

"It is common sense that it would be far better to strengthen systems of prevention and efforts at peacebuilding rather than having to face the aftermath and the devastating affects of violence on the soul and psyche of children.... We also affirm that facing threats will inevitably involve Member States seeking and achieving consensus on a vision of collective security as well as an understanding of the nature of threats faced by the world's citizens. We urge the appropriate UN bodies to clarify what constitutes threats to safety and security and prioritize threats, strengthen monitoring, and take action to prevent their occurrence and spread."⁹¹

The same NGO proposed a peace ritual between people of formerly hostile nations, as well as in multicultural, multiracial contexts, to provide an opportunity for individuals from very different backgrounds and circumstances to meet one on one through a ceremony of forgiveness and reconciliation:

"[W]e offer this simple Bridge of Peace Ceremony to the larger UN and world community as a tool of social engineering to open doors and hearts between parties who are hostile to one another, whether representatives of Member States, or parties to tensions that could erupt into violent conflict. In order to be more effective at prevention, we believe that the UN and Member States must increase their 'arsenal' of tools for effecting prevention."⁹²

"The proposed Peacebuilding Commission should address all stages of complex conflict situations from conflict prevention to post-conflict peacebuilding. Its mandate would be incomplete without a strong commitment to conflict prevention and monitoring potential conflicts. The membership of the Commission must involve civil society organizations, and in particular, grassroots groups, including women's groups, in addressing specific crises. Such a Commission should be adequately staffed, funded and have clear reporting lines."⁹³

“While we affirm the development of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission and Peacebuilding support office within the UN Secretariat, we strongly recommend that it not only report to the Security Council and ECOSOC, but that it also report to the new proposed Human Rights Council.”⁹⁴

“The failure to include crucial elements such as peace, human rights and gender-based violence as part of the Goals is a key concern. Conflicts have very different impacts on women and men. There is often an increase in gender-based violence in conflict areas. It is crucial that such issues be taken into consideration when targeting development questions during and after conflict. Violence against women in everyday life is a major obstacle to the achievement of peace. Under and after conflicts violence against women escalates. It is therefore necessary to protect women from sexual abuse and exploitation. The UN and the Member States ought to take all necessary measures to put a stop to this violence. Women working for peace use many forms of non-violent techniques, acts and strategies. Their work is often transpolitical and transnational. It is therefore necessary to secure women’s representation both with regard to offer them a seat at the negotiating table, and to fund and empower women so that they are able to participate. More concrete actions have to be taken to implement the SC Resolution 1325. Sustainable peace and development will not take place if women are excluded. We suggest that all peace negotiations include the equal participation of women.”⁹⁵

“A Peacebuilding Commission would best serve the cause of peace if it had a focus on prevention of conflict and serve as an early warning of emerging conflicts. There will only be success in this if broad consultation and cooperation with civil society, in particular women peacemakers, is built into the mandate of such a Commission. Furthermore, gender must be mainstreamed through the peace and security work of the Commission, as required in ECOSOC Resolution 1997/2 and 2004/4, and called for in UN SCR 1325 on women, peace and security. The Commission could also provide a venue for long-term peace strategies to be built through hearings with all actors involved in the provocation and maintenance of conflicts, including State actors, international financial institutions, the private sector, arms suppliers and manufacturers, and those who are involved in the extraction and selling of local natural resources. Lastly, any Peacebuilding Commission that is created must be resourced, and not impinge, or detract resources from the entities within the Secretariat already devoted to peace support operations.”⁹⁶

The same NGO said they envisioned the Commission as a forum for the consideration of conflicts that are not on the Security Council’s agenda.

Also supporting the Secretary-General’s proposal for the Peacebuilding Commission, another NGO suggested:

“The Commission should have mechanisms to fully and systematically consult with relevant CSOs—especially those from affected communities—to ensure that strategies are responsive to the long-term needs of the society, in fulfilment of international norms.

“The peacebuilding support office should have a dedicated staff of highly qualified men and women with extensive practical experience in working with conflict, including in facilitating dialogue. It should have close cooperation with the operational agencies of

*the UN, including in the development and human rights fields, and regional organisations. It should engage proactively with CSOs, especially those from the society to which peacebuilding support is offered, and develop partnership agreements where relevant. The work of the office should interlink with the range of other regional and in-country institutional mechanisms for conflict-related matters.*⁹⁷

Use of force

A number of NGOs commented on the proposed definition on the use of force [Paragraphs 122-126], with one noting that adequate steps to solve primary global problems had not been taken, and another suggesting that caution should be exercised in this area:

“The United Nations has made many significant contributions to peace and security over the past 60 years; however to date the UN has had two primary failings. The first is a failing to comply with the mandate of its Charter; and the second is a failure to take adequate steps to solve our primary global problems. Both of these failings derive from the failure of the Member States to implement the commitments and agreements which they repeatedly make.

“The Charter is as clear as clear can be: The UN shall ‘take effective collective measures to prevent and remove threats to the peace. All members shall likewise settle their international disputes by peaceful means’ and ‘shall refrain from the threat or use of force.’ And yet we have had repeated wars carried out by UN Member States, while the other States have stood by and let it happen. In addition, the UN is mandated to promote and the Member States to take ‘joint and separate action to achieve: higher standards of living; full employment; solutions of international economic, social, and health problems; and universal respect and observance of human rights.’

“The UN must thus become much more inclusive of the people, and of civil society, in terms of its actual decision-making processes so that it may deal more adequately with the real global problems that we all face.”⁹⁸

“Any reform on defining the use of force should preserve the principles of the Charter of the UN and limit itself to rationalizing methods of functioning of the Security Council, in particular in the exercise of its prerogative to authorize or not the use of force.”⁹⁹

“[T]he report addresses the highly controversial issue of under what conditions States and the United Nations are authorized to resort to applying military force. In the Secretary-General’s words, Article 51 of the UN Charter covers the right of States to defend themselves in the event of imminent threats. But how an imminent threat is to be identified remains unclear. In addition, the Secretary-General stresses the Security Council’s right to take preventive military action in the case of latent dangers to world peace and international security. But it remains unclear under what conditions this is supposed to apply, leaving the issue as controversial as before with the possibilities for arbitrary and highly selective decisions. For this reason, the Secretary-General proposes that the Security Council be called upon to adopt a resolution defining the principles for

the application of force. However, leaving a decision of such importance solely to the exclusive circle of the Security Council members would be highly problematic. While concrete resolutions on each case should be taken by the Security Council, it should be up to the General Assembly to define the principles."¹⁰⁰

*"In considering whether to authorize or endorse the use of military force, the Security Council should always address – whatever other considerations it may take into account – at least the following five basic criteria of legitimacy: seriousness of threat, proper purpose, last resort, proportional means, and balance of consequences. Under all circumstances, the use of force must not inflict suffering on civilians or damage to civilian infrastructure that is disproportionate to its military purpose, as already set out in international humanitarian law. These guidelines for authorizing the use of force should be embodied in declaratory resolutions of the Security Council and General Assembly."*¹⁰¹

IV. Freedom to live in dignity

The section on Freedom to live in dignity deals with rule of law, human rights and democracy. A large number of NGOs provided comments on these subjects.

“In the chapter Freedom to live in dignity, adequate measures should be taken to enable the poorest to practice their religions, know their roots, learn to read and write in their own languages and, more generally, see that their cultures are respected. Heading the list of measures to be taken by the governments in this chapter should figure, once again, the admission that great poverty is a blatant violation of human rights.”¹⁰²

“We would like to express the view that equality is the handmaiden to dignity and a requisite to social peace. A culture in stress will not be at peace within itself or with its neighbours. Of all the progenitors of cultural stress, inequality will not only be the most prominent but also the most amenable to change. Examining some common inequalities illustrates both the gains available and the possible difficulties involved.

“While many cultural inequalities tend to attenuate with time, one persists and amplifies. That one is the inequality of wealth. The world’s resources, always inequitably distributed, are increasingly concentrated within an ever-shrinking group who, of themselves, now form a culture of wealth. The stress engendered by the poverty end of this wealth spectrum spawns frustration, anger, migration and, ultimately, violence. The stress of the deprived comes to stress the wealthy. Such a society, at war within itself, will carry war to others.”¹⁰³

Rule of law

Responding to the text on Rule of law [Paragraphs 133-139], one NGO suggested that assistance should be offered to strengthen domestic mechanisms to implement international standards and to promote rule of law in general, including by building on the work of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and through the proposed Rule of Law Unit in a peacebuilding support office.¹⁰⁴

Another responded to the Secretary-General’s text on States’ collective responsibility to protect:

“The Secretary-General supports in very clear terms the approach of the States’ collective ‘responsibility to protect’ in cases of genocide, so-called ethnic cleansing and other crimes against humanity. While he sees primary responsibility for protecting the population in the hands of national governments, he stresses the international community’s duty to take action – up to the level of military force legitimized by the Security Council – if these governments are not capable of, or willing to, provide this protection. These proposals are highly controversial. One of the disputed issues is whether the United Nations also has the right and the duty to resort to military intervention in the case of a latent danger of genocide, so-called ethnic cleansing or other crimes against humanity. Similar to the above mentioned issues, the Security Council

could interpret this right selectively and only in the interest of its powerful members, thus increasing the danger of geopolitically or economically motivated interventions being legitimized under the pretext of the responsibility to protect."¹⁰⁵

A number of NGOs supported the proposal to create a dedicated Rule of Law Assistance Unit [Paragraph 137]. One of them saw the Unit as not only assisting in conflict and post-conflict societies, but also working to strengthen the rule of law across all societies by exercising oversight over existing and new laws in Member States, and also by publishing an annual report on the status of rule of law. Also strongly endorsed was the Secretary-General's call to Member States to cooperate fully with the International Criminal Court and other international or mixed war crimes tribunals, seen as imperative to the existence of rule of law in the international sphere.¹⁰⁶

Also strongly welcomed was the proposal that Member States embrace 'The Responsibility to Protect' as a basis for collective action. One NGO suggested:

*"[B]y agreeing governments' responsibilities to protect civilians, and clear criteria for UN-authorized military intervention as a last resort, the international community could make significant strides towards ending the obscene levels of civilian suffering in today's conflict zones. From Rwanda to Darfur, the United Nations system has again and again failed to mobilize the political will and financial resources necessary to protect civilians in times of extraordinary humanitarian crisis. The UN Security Council's statements on the protection of civilians in armed conflicts have not resulted in timely, effective action in many conflicts. If the mantra of 'never again' is to have any meaning at all, the United Nations, and particularly the Security Council, must make a fundamental institutional commitment to the protection of civilians."*¹⁰⁷

Human Rights

Human rights issues were taken up in Paragraphs 140-147, and again in the last section—Strengthening the United Nations—where the proposed Human Rights Council is unveiled. Responding to text in Paragraphs 140-147, one NGO suggested that the UN human rights system needed to be strengthened in order to promote fulfilment of international norms and standards.¹⁰⁸

Another NGO mentioned the need to address minority issues:

"If ever there was an issue that must lie at the heart of any strategy to address security, development and human rights in an integrated way, it is minority rights. Minorities suffer disproportionately from human rights abuses and violent conflict, and are often marginalized from State-driven development processes, or even suffer negatively from them.

"Yet the United Nations has failed, over the years, to recognize that it needs to build up and mainstream expertise on minority issues in all areas of the organization. At present, for example, only one full-time permanent staff member is devoted to minority issues within the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva. Furthermore, the In Larger Freedom report barely mentions minority issues.

“Now we are beginning to see a sea change, with the United Nations in the past year creating two important new mechanisms with great relevance to minorities: the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, and the Independent Expert of the Commission on Human Rights on Minority Issues.”¹⁰⁹

The same NGO suggested that the United Nations should build minority rights expertise into in-country activities such as peace-keeping operations, Action II initiatives, and into the Framework for Coordination Mechanism for countries in crisis; ensure that the new mechanisms (Special Adviser and Independent Expert) are adequately staffed and resourced; and create a mechanism that brings together the many specialized early warning and monitoring systems within the UN system and to ensure that such a mechanism be sensitive to violations of the human rights of minorities, as these are all too often the precursor of violent conflict.

V. Strengthening the United Nations

Several comments were received on Section V. for specific reform and support for many of the Secretary-General's proposals was expressed. Reform of the Security Council received the most of all comments.

General Assembly

In Larger Freedom calls for a comprehensive package of reforms to revitalize the General Assembly with the aim of rationalizing work, streamlining the agenda and enhancing the role of the General Assembly's President. Additionally the report suggests that mechanisms ought to be established enabling the Assembly to "engage fully and systematically" with civil society. A number of comments were received on General Assembly reform, including a call to introduce other actors, such as national parliaments and local authorities, who could help strengthen the UN system and its outreach.¹¹⁰ Another NGO called for worldwide social movements to be given institutional space at the UN.¹¹¹

*"In Paragraph 162, the Secretary-General states, 'The General Assembly should act on these recommendations and establish mechanisms enabling it to engage fully and systematically with civil society.' Establishing a civil society parliamentary assembly as an advisory committee under the General Assembly would be an excellent way to disburse the workload of the General Assembly and for it to receive more comprehensive information from which to make decisions. This has been proposed by the Swiss National Parliament and National Council. The two and a half million young people in the Peaceways-Young General Assembly enthusiastically believe a civil society assembly will do more to strengthen the United Nations than any other action proposed in In Larger Freedom: Towards Security, Development and Human Rights for All."*¹¹²

The Councils

Paragraph 165 of *In Larger Freedom* begins by noting that over time, the division of responsibilities between the three Councils (Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Trusteeship Council) has become less and less balanced: "the Security Council has increasingly asserted its authority and, especially since the end of the cold war, has enjoyed greater unity of purpose among its permanent members but has seen that authority questioned on the grounds that its composition is anachronistic or insufficiently representative; the Economic and Social Council has been too often relegated to the margins of global economic and social governance; and the Trusteeship Council, having successfully carried out its functions, is now reduced to a purely formal existence." The Secretary-General stresses the need to restore the balance and to have more effective operational structures.

Security Council

Many NGOs were vocal in their criticism of the Security Council and its need to be restructured:

"While the UN has been indispensable and has made great strides forward in many areas, it is equally true that it has not lived up to its promise and what it could achieve. One of the primary reasons that this has occurred is because the United Nations has

essentially become a club of individual sovereign nations which have insisted that, outside of the Security Council, all must agree before any binding and enforceable actions are taken. Thus those States which most need to agree to, and abide by, international law are the very ones which have been the most likely to block it."¹¹³

*"Some governments and several NGOs correctly point to the Secretary-General's reform proposals falling short of the mark since they mainly focus on the enlargement of the Security Council, whereas a real reform and a 'democratization' of the Council could only be achieved by generally abolishing the right to veto and the permanent membership of individual countries, and by creating more openness in the way the Council works as well as greater transparency in the decision-making procedures. However, such consistent reforms will be impossible to implement in the foreseeable future since they would generally be rejected by the P5."*¹¹⁴

*"We acknowledge the need for urgent reform of the Security Council. The proposals in the report, however, do not ultimately address the democracy deficit and relentless politicization of the Security Council, which thwart the execution of its duties and undermine the trust and respect it needs to exercise its mandate. To address these deficits, the United Nations must boldly and intelligently move towards adopting a procedure for eventually eliminating permanent membership and veto power."*¹¹⁵

Noting that the question of Security Council enlargement would be the most divisive issue within the UN reform debate leading up to the high-level plenary meeting of the 60th session of the General Assembly, one NGO provided extensive comments:

*"[T]he debate about reform of the Council should not be confined to that of numbers and types of seats, but just as importantly it must address the issues of the Council's working methods to ensure a more democratic, more effective, more transparent and accountable Council."*¹¹⁶

The same NGO suggested that Model B *"offers the best option for a democratic solution with fairer and equitable representation of UN Member States. By increasing the number of elected members from 10 to 19, Model B presents greater inclusiveness and thus adds a more democratic dimension to Council. In addition, the proposed new type of Council membership in form of four-year renewable seats provides the elected members with greater political weight vis-à-vis the permanent members by the mere fact that they will serve longer and thus bring greater expertise, resources and political influence to the Council."*

However, the NGO strongly opposed Model A, which calls for the addition of six new members, viewing this *"as a retrograde step that would condemn the Council to greater inefficiency and less accountability. Per definition, permanent members risk no democratic elective repercussions for failures or misconduct as Council members. As has been evident throughout the history of the Council, this imbalanced structure with permanent members has allowed for individual national political agendas to influence, and even obstruct, the maintenance of international peace and security."*

"Therefore, if the Council is to establish and advance its legitimacy and credibility, a more democratic structure with mechanisms to make the current permanent members

more accountable needs to be set in place. An enhanced system of elected membership...is the most efficient method to improve accountability. Council members should be subject to a performance evaluation at the end of their terms. The mix of two and four-year renewable seats provide such a mechanism and could ensure a more democratic rotation of equitable memberships with means for evaluation of members.”

Noting that transparent decision-making procedures are a further prerequisite for accountability, the NGO said it “*supports, in principle, the establishment of a system of ‘indicative voting.’*”

The NGO also stressed, “*Ensuring fairer representation of all regions on the Council is a main argument for enlargement of the Council. A ‘regional mode’ of participation in the Council should thus be developed to ensure that the regional interests, above national interests, are represented. Accordingly, serious consideration needs to be given to the development of modalities that would allow and enable such regional representation. The challenge in establishing such a ‘regional mode’ lies not only in creating a common consensus of regional interests but also in defining the composition of the regions, agreeing on nomination of regional candidates, criteria for elections and the number of possible consecutive re-elections.*”¹¹⁷

A number of comments were also received recommending that the Arria Formula of the Security Council be formalized and used on a more regular basis, and that statements and documents from these meetings become part of the official UN record. “*The Security Council should invite the countries involved in Council decisions to address the council, and NGOs with expertise or experience in a particular issue should also be invited when appropriate.*”¹¹⁸

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Quite a large number of NGOs responded to the issue of reform of the Economic and Social Council.

*“ECOSOC remains the hidden partner within the report. There is talk of strengthening and reforming the Security Council and of creating a Human Rights Council. The Economic and Social Council, where the lion’s share of the work of the UN agenda is done, is not strengthened. In the attempt to make the Secretariat leaner and more adapted to the present needs of the UN, it is important that it is resourced with sufficient analytical, research and coordinating skills in order to fulfil the tasks given to it.”*¹¹⁹

“The UN not only is a guardian of a development agenda, but also of the universal instruments on human rights that all States, in becoming members, have committed to respect and protect. The simultaneous reform of the human rights bodies (as promoted by the report, Paragraphs 142-147) and governance structures, should be the occasion for ensuring that mechanisms for the design of economic policies on trade and financial areas are subordinated to the achievement of human rights for all. This reinforces the need for a stronger UN with a mandate on economic and social policy issues.

“The General Assembly, as the main deliberative and policy-making body of the UN, has an important role to play also in economic policy, not least through its role as a forum for one of the tracks of the follow up process to the International Conference on Financing

for Development (see Monterrey Consensus, Paragraph 69.c). The call for streamlining the substantive agenda of the General Assembly should not be the excuse for stripping it from the important role it is called to play in international economic policy dialogue.

“We strongly support the recommendations to operationalize an enhanced coordinating and convening power for ECOSOC (175/6) and, very especially, the call to establishing an Executive Committee with a regionally balanced composition. We believe such a committee stands to significantly enhance the standing of ECOSOC in economic policy matters.”¹²⁰

Proposed Human Rights Council

A number of NGOs echoed the Secretary-General’s concern that the capacity of the Commission on Human Rights to undertake its work “has been increasingly undermined by its declining credibility and professionalism.” [Paragraph 182]

One NGO suggested that the “erosion of credibility of the Commission on Human Rights lies in the absence of political will of the Member States to integrate a human rights framework into national level legislation and law, not in the structure and architecture of the institution. Further, we are concerned that due to current political realities, the proposed Human Rights Council would focus on civil and political rights while potentially ignoring economic, social and cultural rights.”¹²¹ The same NGO also suggested that “instead of creating a new mechanism, Member States instead work to fully implement the goals and objectives of the Economic and Social Council, which includes encouraging universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.”¹²²

Another NGO stressed:

“[A] Human Rights Council must build on the strengths of the the Commission on Human Rights, the UN's principal human rights body. These strengths, some of them specifically acknowledged by the Secretary-General in his report, must be maintained and include: the system of independent human rights experts and rapporteurs who make a unique contribution to the advancement of human rights as thematic or country experts; the rights and customary activities that NGO's enjoy under the NGO ECOSOC Consultative Status and which do not exist elsewhere in the UN system. They must be preserved because they enable NGO's to make that crucial contribution to the activities of the Commission on Human Rights without which the Commission on Human Rights would not have made the substantive progress in human rights promotion and protection that it has achieved; the mandate to take political action on country situations where serious violations of human rights occur.”¹²³

The same NGO further stressed that a human rights council should be shaped following a comprehensive review of the strengths and weaknesses of the existing UN bodies dealing with human rights.

“It should include the following characteristics: be in session throughout the year and thus be able to meet in more frequent focused sittings and be capable of convening rapidly to deal with human rights crises; consist of members demonstrably committed to the protection and promotion of human rights; and regular scheduled review of the

human rights accomplishments, shortcomings and capacity building needs of all countries in respect of all human rights based on an impartial, transparent and objective assessment of the human rights situation in each country. This assessment could be made under the authority of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with the assistance of independent expertise....”¹²⁴

“For years NGOs have been exposing the shortcomings of the UN’s main human rights body, including its inability to address many situations of gross and systematic human rights violations around the world.

“Any reform must result in a stronger UN human rights system. Reform must lead to the principal UN human rights body addressing systematically and effectively all human rights violations in all countries on the basis of expert and independent information, including from treaty bodies, Special Procedures, UN country teams and the Office of the High Commissioner. Non-governmental organizations and human rights defenders supplement official sources, through their knowledge and experience working with and for victims. The human rights system must draw on all these sources of information.

“The effectiveness and legitimacy of any human rights body depends in large part on its members’ demonstrated human rights commitment, their readiness to be held accountable for their human rights obligations and their effective cooperation with human rights mechanisms. By cooperation, we mean responding fully and promptly to communications, facilitating visits by Special Procedures including through the issuance of standing invitations, by implementing their recommendations and by submitting timely reports to the treaty bodies.

“We welcome this opportunity to examine the achievements and the failures of the Commission and to establish a system that responds swiftly to the needs of victims of human rights violations and their defenders.

“NGOs make a crucial contribution to the activities of all parts of the UN human rights system. Non-governmental organizations must have full opportunity to participate in the work of the new human rights body, at least at the same level and on the same basis as in the present Commission.

“Special Procedures, including country and thematic Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups, have emerged as one of the most creative and practical tools of the Commission. The system of Special Procedures is an integral part of any UN human rights system and should be not only maintained, but significantly strengthened in any new body.

“Victims also rely on the growing impact of the human rights treaty monitoring bodies. Yet especially with the increasing ratification of human rights treaties, these expert bodies face a severe overload. States Parties and the Secretary-General must work in concert with NGOs and other stakeholders to strengthen the treaty bodies to function as a strong,

professional and unified system, with members that clearly have the highest competence, independence and commitment.”¹²⁵

Another NGO provided detailed comments on issues to be addressed.

“Vital issues, including the new Council’s composition, operating rules and procedures, its role vis-à-vis other organs of the UN system and its relationship with non-state actors and civil society bodies are under consideration among stakeholders. Most importantly, how the rights of the individuals and communities will be protected and safeguarded in the face of the most egregious violations whether by democracies or autocracies.

“At the heart of the reform process, civil, political social, economic and cultural rights must find appropriate balance. Preferring one or the other based on State power constitutes a negation of the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights.

“While it is difficult to make definitive judgments on the merits of the proposals, it is clear that these issues must be addressed satisfactorily if the reform process is to meet the test of legitimacy and credibility.

1. The proposed Human Rights Council must be representative of UN Member States to ensure credibility. The election process for selecting its members must ensure this.

2. The human rights credentials and professionalism of representatives on the Council must be ensured.

3. In carrying out its responsibilities the Council must be inclusive of all stakeholders—the voice of Member States as well as non-state actors and civil society bodies, including NGOs, must be heard. The Council’s rules of procedure must provide for this. This should include the proposed ‘peer review’ of the human rights record of all Member States.

4. The Council’s operating procedures must be such that the culture of confrontation and politicization with respect to human rights issues is minimized and constructive dialogue encouraged.

5. The priority of the Council must be to promote and facilitate, in all States, the implementation of human rights conventions, treaties, norms and standards that have been promulgated over the past years. Its work programme should be geared to this objective. This would include assistance for building up institutional capacity for human rights at country as well as regional levels.

6. The Council should have the capacity to initiate preventive action in case of serious threats of human rights violations and to address new emerging problems e.g. human rights in violent conflict situations. This should be the forum of first recourse, not the Security Council.

7. In defining the operating mechanisms of the Council, it should be noted that the Special Procedures of the existing Commission on Human Rights have proved to be effective and could serve the Council as well.

8. Since inputs from civil society bodies, including NGOs, are indispensable to the work of the Council, the most effective way in which their inputs should be channeled must be determined, in order to avoid the current shortcomings of civil society participation in the Commission on Human Rights. The human rights bodies, public and private, in developing countries must be supported and equipped to play effective roles in national

and regional jurisdictions. The access of civil society bodies to the Council would be facilitated if the Council's main base is sited in Geneva, where civil society bodies have easy access and a number of them have offices.

9. The Council should hold sessions on a regular basis in regions and sub-regions and they should be open to the public and the media.

10. The reforms should result in the upgrading of the status of the Council in the UN system and the consequent 'mainstreaming' of human rights in all the programmes of the UN and its specialized agencies."¹²⁶

One NGO voiced concern over the role of civil society in the proposed Human Rights Council:

"However, we are concerned about omissions in this proposal concerning the role of non-governmental organizations. While in Paragraph 181 the Secretary-General's report advises, 'The Commission's close engagement with hundreds of civil society organizations provides an opportunity for working with civil society that does not exist elsewhere.' In Paragraph 183 the report states that 'Member States would need to decide if they want the Human Rights Council to be a principal organ of the United Nations or a subsidiary body of the General Assembly.' Because non-governmental organizations are restricted from active participation in the General Assembly in any other capacity, we are concerned that the creation of a Human Rights Council as a subsidiary of the General Assembly would hinder the essential role of NGOs in their vital work concerning Human Rights. The role of civil society has historically been integral to the Human Rights Commission and should be secured and strengthened in the proposed Human Rights Council.

*"United Nations reform, and the creation of a Human Rights Council should move human rights issues more to the center of the agenda of the UN, integrating these issues into security and development. If United Nations reform is to be more effective in its action toward all of these ends, it must be open to civil society and draw from the human rights work of non-governmental organizations."*¹²⁷

Another NGO expressed a different opinion:

*"We cannot see organizational manipulations or a name change to be particularly helpful in promoting the cause of human rights. No State should be seated at the Human Rights Commission/Council who has not signed and ratified all human rights instruments of the UN. The suitability of any aspirant to a seat at the Commission/Council should be amenable to a challenge at the ICC."*¹²⁸

"The process of UN reform, which may include substantial changes to the UN human rights machineries, is of great interest to the women's human rights, and general human rights communities. It is significant also that these reforms are recommended within a political context of attacks on the human rights framework by conservative actors both within the UN and in national arenas. As evidenced in many recent negotiations, certain States claim limitations to 'what human rights mean' and vociferously argue that 'no new rights' are implied in interpretations of and evolving standards in human rights. These claims are often made in relation to women's human rights, which are indeed frequently the battleground for criticism of human rights.

“Overall, there is danger as well as opportunity in the UN reform process. Collectively, our goal must be to use it to strengthen the human rights system and simultaneously minimize the very real risks of some governments seeking to dismantle those aspects of the system that have been effective in raising human rights issues to greater visibility. Many States will have political agendas in the process, and regional blocs and States in other types of alliances will undoubtedly engage in behind the scenes deal-making that could put the UN human rights system at risk, even in the name of reform.

“The Commission on Human Rights (CHR) has not been the body we all wish it was in various ways, but it is important to note that there have been considerable advances made in expanding the parameters of human rights discussion through the Commission, the Sub-commission and its special procedures, particularly in areas of violence against women, sexual rights, indigenous peoples and minority rights, the right to education, health, access to medicine and other areas of economic, social and cultural rights, and in the recent enhanced focus on non-state actors.

“In some instances, more ‘marginal’ human rights issues have been taken on by CHR special procedures, who have made important contributions to the interpretation and development of human rights standards in areas where the rights implications had been previously neglected. It is often in these areas where States attack special procedures for creating what they see as ‘new rights.’ We also note the risk that these contributions will be overlooked in criticism of the CHR, and as a result, groundbreaking work in such areas will be allowed to disappear. This runs the danger of inadvertently once again entrenching the discourse of civil and political rights as taking priority over economic, social and cultural rights.

“While a stated goal of the reform is to make the human rights bodies less ‘politicized,’ it is not clear to us why a Council would be less political than the Commission. However, we support efforts to strengthen the entire human rights system, and are eager to follow detail about the Council as it emerges.”¹²⁹

“The Commission on Human Rights has built a comprehensive system of human rights instruments. The standard-setting role of the Commission must be preserved. Special Procedures, (including country and thematic Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts and Working Groups) have proved to be one of the most creative and effective tools of the Commission. The system of Special Procedures is an integral part of any UN human rights system and should not only be maintained, but significantly strengthened in any new body.”¹³⁰

Another comment suggested that *“the United Nations has to emphasize and/or enhance the defense of human rights of the indigenous peoples of the world and respect its culture and connection to nature.”¹³¹*

System Coherence

Humanitarian Response System

Paragraphs 202-211 on System Coherence detail the humanitarian response system, the ever-growing demands placed on it, and the need for more adequate funding. The report calls for progress to be made on a number of fronts, and stresses the growing problem of internally

displaced persons (IDPs) and their lack of protection by established minimum standards. Noting that the report calls for system-wide coherence, one NGO said it supported:

“these calls and understands from first hand experience the need for Member States to protect humanitarian space under all circumstances, ensuring that humanitarian workers have safe and unimpeded access to populations in need of protection and assistance. We also fully endorse the call to support the Secretary-General’s efforts to strengthen the inter-agency and country-level responses to the needs of internally displaced persons. There is an urgent need for greater clarity on mandates given, or lacking, on which UN agencies, programmes and/or bodies can or should act on the needs of IDPs.”¹³²

“Every child, woman and man has an equal right to such a dignified life. Yet there is grossly unequal international commitment to addressing crises in different parts of the world. This inequality is manifested in the vast difference in the provision of humanitarian aid between one crisis and another. Reforms of the humanitarian system must therefore be aimed both at increasing the scale and efficiency of the international response to people in need, and at putting an end to this inequality.”¹³³

Strongly agreeing with the Secretary-General’s call for improvements to international responses to all humanitarian emergencies and endorsing the Secretary-General’s call to make rapid progress on several fronts, the same NGO stressed that further action should include:

“Predictable funding: Donor governments should contribute an additional US\$ 1 billion each year, to increase overall global humanitarian funding – and ensure that needs are met in every humanitarian crisis. This additional funding should be contributed either through the UN’s existing Central Emergency Revolving Fund (CERF), provided that its operations are suitably enhanced and improved, or into a new Humanitarian Trust Fund. Donor governments and the UN must determine which option is most likely to deliver humanitarian assistance to those in need, when they need it, wherever they are – in contrast to the under-funded, and unequally funded assistance of 2004 and every previous year. The UN Secretary-General should be accountable for the Fund which should be administered by the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator. To underpin this, a mechanism to objectively measure humanitarian need should be developed to compare one crisis with another and underpin the fairer allocation of humanitarian resources.

“Predictable response: [I]t is important to address the fact that there are ‘too often gaps ranging from the provision of water and sanitation to shelter and camp management’ and to strengthen inter-agency response to needs of internally displaced people. Essential to this will be strengthened coordination at the field level, including that ensuring that UN Country Teams are led by Humanitarian Coordinators of the highest caliber and that sufficient and flexible resources are immediately available to support these field structures.

“Effective coordination: [T]he UN Emergency Relief Coordinator should be given, and held to account for, greater authority over the direction of UN humanitarian operations in each crisis. The ERC should appoint UN Humanitarian Coordinators, reporting to him or her, with the capacity - and authority - to direct the operations of other UN agencies. These should be the best people for the job, not necessarily the UN Resident Coordinator in place before the crisis. In these cases, the Humanitarian Coordinator – cooperating

with the national government – should have authority to decide on the assessment of needs, the strategy of the response, and the allocation of responsibilities and their consequent resources.

“In Larger Freedom emphasizes the role of integrated missions in strengthening UN coordination. ...UN integrated missions could help to improve coordination – if such missions could better manage the attendant risks. Combining the political and military objectives of UN peace operations with the UN’s humanitarian aims threatens the impartial, independent and civilian nature of humanitarian action. The UN’s review of its integrated missions must lead to new procedures to reduce the risks of integrated UN missions. Governments and aid agencies alike should preserve the impartial, independent and civilian nature of humanitarian aid. Without this, the risks increase both to humanitarian workers and to the women, men and children in need of aid.”¹³⁴

Updating the Charter

A number of NGOs agreed that it was time to update the Charter, specifically the view expressed by the Secretary-General in Paragraph 217 that “it is high time to eliminate the anachronistic ‘enemy’ clauses in Articles 53 and 107” of the Charter of the United Nations.

“The concept of a State considering another as an enemy and hence the peoples of that State as an enemy population is antagonistic to the very purposes of the United Nations. Such a notion is untenable in the interconnected and interdependent world that we live in today.”¹³⁵

Role of Civil Society

An overwhelming concentration of comments NGLS received centred on civil society in light of the Secretary-General’s proposals for reform. One of the recurring topics in many of the comments was civil society’s role in implementing UN decisions: whether catalyzing action, creating best practices, holding governments accountable, drawing attention to marginalized groups, providing technical expertise, support and advice to governments, and working with those who are most vulnerable.¹³⁶

“Civil society organizations already play a crucial role in international social and economic development. They are able to contribute their frontline experience to the design, implementation, and monitoring of development strategies and policies. However, we also see that civil society, as a useful resource and actor, has not been fully taken advantage of and its importance recognized. The United Nation’s reform policy should include the genuine involvement of civil society, such as the promotion of dialogue between civil society, government and the private sector.”¹³⁷

Several NGOs made reference to the June 2004 Cardoso Panel’s report, *We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance*, and called on governments to act on the Panel’s recommendations when they meet in September 2005. A specific comment called for the Panel’s proposals #1, 6, 12, 27, 29 and 30 to be implemented immediately, and for the President of the General Assembly to appoint a task force to ensure ongoing action on the remainder of the

report.¹³⁸ Others stressed the need to find mechanisms to help fund NGO representatives from the South; recommended structured space for active civil society participation in “the process towards larger freedom” that would include an inclusive, bottom-up approach; and the timely establishment of a mechanism that would allow the General Assembly to “engage fully and systematically with civil society,” as called for by the Secretary-General.

“It would appear that the Cardoso Report has sunk without trace. This is a cause of dismay. Behind the increasing rhetoric of the importance to the UN of civil society, there appears, in practice, to be a narrowing of opportunities for NGOs to be given access and to exercise the ‘partnership’ with Member States that is proclaimed as a goal.

“When it comes to the implementation of the decisions made at the Summit, Member States will expect civil society to play an active role in working and using our considerable worldwide resources to implement the outcomes of the Summit and the Millennium Development Goals. You cannot expect civil society to come help with implementation if they are not able to participate in the process. There is real disquiet within the NGO community about such a possibility.

“Experience from other UN international conferences has shown that it is possible to enable real rather than token participation of NGOs within the constraints of the numbers and security regulations for UN buildings.”¹³⁹

A number of NGOs acknowledged the role of civil society in efforts to achieve the MDGs, several of them suggesting that civil society has placed more importance on the Goals than some governments themselves.

“Achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and the goals and principles of the UN more generally, is not possible without the full engagement of civil society.”¹⁴⁰

Another concern that surfaced repeatedly in the comments was the lack of civil society participation in the run up to the high-level meeting in September and how it could “threaten the legitimacy of the process.”¹⁴¹

“[I]n the lead up to this Summit, we are dismayed to see that very limited space has been provided for civil society participation. The official civil society inputs have been limited to three occasions including a day in January, two days with the General Assembly in June, and a few ‘chosen representatives’ to represent six billion at the September Summit. This is a far cry from the norm of integrated civil society involvement in the UN conferences and summits of the 1990s.”¹⁴²

Another comment suggested that “clear mechanisms representing the diversity of the NGOs and structuring their participation are indispensable.”¹⁴³

“The past decade demonstrates that the presence of civil society in open and transparent intergovernmental processes leads to improved policy outcomes and greater accountability for implementation. The active and systematic participation of civil society in the United Nations distinguishes it from other global governance institutions, and

enhances its credibility throughout the world. We want to join with you in mobilizing political will to take bold actions at the Summit.”¹⁴⁴

A number of specific proposals concerning effective civil society participation prior to and during the Millennium Summit+5 were made, including a call for open and transparent meetings where NGOs are permitted access to observe the meetings, to receive copies of documents under consideration and discussion, and to distribute NGO views (papers) to the participants; the possibility of a meeting in September prior to the Summit that would allow civil society to mobilize and engage in dialogue with Member States; and NGO participation at the Summit itself, which could include allowing a small but diverse group of NGOs to participate in the roundtables with Heads of State.¹⁴⁵

Several NGOs also stressed the importance of meaningful civil society participation at the national level:

*“While, we urge the UN to include civil society in the international process, we also urge our governments to include civil society in the national consultations during the preparations for the September Summit.”*¹⁴⁶

Another NGO observed that the report did not address civil society’s contribution to nation building and the need for civil society to have its own representative structures at the global level.¹⁴⁷

Civil Society and the Private Sector

In reaction to Paragraph 20 of *In Larger Freedom*, which says, “States, however, cannot do the job alone. We need an active civil society and a dynamic private sector,” a number of NGOs voiced their concern over civil society being put on the same level as the private sector.

*“[T]he perspectives of ‘civil society’ do not go hand-in-hand in many developing countries since both have by and large divergent views on development.”*¹⁴⁸

Another suggested that the term “private sector” should be replaced with “commercial, profit oriented business,” calling for the text to read instead, *“We need an active civil society working with a dynamic and responsible commercial business sector.”*¹⁴⁹

Another comment noted that the report had failed to suggest concrete steps for advancing the accountability of the private sector, especially in relation to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) held in 2002 where governments agreed to actively promote corporate responsibility and accountability. *“[W]e urge the Secretary-General to take personal responsibility for the follow-through on the Johannesburg commitment on corporate accountability. Concretely, we expect the Secretary-General to ensure a discussion at this year’s Summit on how governments can collectively move from the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation promise to real and effective action.”*¹⁵⁰

General Comments and Support

Several NGOs expressed their overall support for the report and gratitude for the recognition the Secretary-General has given to the work of civil society:

“We support the Secretary-General’s efforts to increase transparency, efficiency and effectiveness within the UN system. We encourage the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council to cooperate with the Secretary-General in increasing and strengthening partnerships and coordination and sharing of knowledge and experience with and among civil society actors. We sincerely thank the Secretary-General for his understanding of the value and importance of the work and knowledge of the non-governmental organizations and civil society in striving to meet the Millennium Development Goals.”¹⁵¹

“May I in general express that the report is highly appreciated, and the invitation to civil society to participate in a dialogue on the report even more so.”¹⁵²

“The proposals of the Secretary-General certainly do not reflect what many NGOs hold to be necessary. Instead, they show what the Secretary-General believes is achievable in the short term, given the present situation in world politics. All in all, however, the implementation of these proposals would be a clear step into the right direction. Putting Kofi Annan’s reform plans into practice would represent a demonstrative act against unilateralism and would restore the United Nations’ credibility as well as its ability to take action.”¹⁵³

One NGO noted that it agreed in general with the objectives and statements proposed in the Secretary-General’s report.

“However, in many of the issues mentioned, liability, binding force, monitoring and sanctions are missing. At least, indicators allowing monitoring should be mentioned for most of the issues.”¹⁵⁴

Another NGO expressed concern over freedom of religion or belief:

“The Secretary-General’s report does not make mention of one of the central and most challenging issues shaping inter and intra-State relations today, namely the freedom of religion or belief. At a time when religious extremism, intolerance, and discrimination are threatening peace and security in many parts of the world, it is imperative for the United Nations to address this issue openly and earnestly. Until all people are free to openly practice and share their beliefs within the parameters of equally applied laws, as well as change their religion or belief system, development and peace will prove elusive.

“While the United Nations’ human rights machinery has been used to condemn religious intolerance and persecution, United Nations development policies and programmes have barely begun to address religious extremism as a major obstacle to peace and wellbeing. Hesitancy to acknowledge and forcefully condemn the religious extremism motivating terrorist acts weakens the effectiveness of the UN’s efforts to bring an end to international terrorism. Only by identifying and understanding the motivation behind such acts can they be effectively combated.”¹⁵⁵

“I would like to comment that the report speaks about education, development and information and notes that the benefits of ICT must be made available to people. But nowhere could I find (in this report) any statement about the right to be informed in a

*language that is understood by that person. Making use of content in local languages is crucial to meet the goal of bringing information to the people and thus enable them to democracy, development, knowledge of their (human and gender) rights, environment and health protection.*¹⁵⁶

Another NGO spoke on where it believes reform should begin:

*“In order for such reform to begin, I urge the reform to begin within your field offices because this is where business is. There will never be any achievements to these recorded goals if your field offices are not brought on board. They have to acknowledge the work done by local organizations, however small, they have to acknowledge their efforts because this is the only way UN offices will be able to measure impacts of their presence in the field. Field offices need to shift from report writing to more programme/project focus. Their focus should be result oriented.”*¹⁵⁷

One NGO summarized what it saw as priorities for the September Summit:

“The most important work of the September High Level meeting must be to revitalize the consensus on key priorities and turn those commitments into collective action which will lead to significant improvement in the lives of the billions of people who live in conditions of poverty, denied their human rights and human security.

“We applaud the Secretary-General for situating his report within the framework of the values upon which the United Nations was founded. Action if it is to be authentic and efficacious, must always flow from our commitment to common values which lie at the core of the perennial wisdom of the world’s great religions and philosophies and are enshrined in the documents of the United Nations. An action-agenda which seeks a world free from want, free from fear—where all are free to live in dignity must embody:

- *human dignity and human rights where all are valued in equal measure and where the measure of every institution, policy and action is whether it enhances or threatens human dignity;*
- *solidarity which acknowledges that we are one human family and that the common good must be the concern of each and all of us;*
- *democratic participation to create solutions and social conditions that allow all people to develop their full human potential;*
- *care for creation that acknowledges our essential kinship with all life;*
- *promotion of a culture of peace through work to establish a world where justice and right relationships flourish.”*¹⁵⁸

All of the comments received are available on the NGLS website:
(www.un-ngls.org/sg-report-NGOs-comment.htm).

Annex I

1. 2005: no more excuses!
2. NGO Committee for Social Development
3. Iniciativas de Economía Alternativa Y Solidaria (IDEAS)
4. People's Decade for Human Rights Education (PDHRE)
5. International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE)
6. Franciscans International
7. United Families International
8. School Sisters of Notre Dame
9. Social Watch
10. NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security
11. Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA)
12. MADRE
13. Oxfam International, NY Office
14. International Movement ATD Fourth World
15. Oxfam International, NY Office
16. Oxfam International, NY Office
17. Neighbourhood Community Network
18. Local Government International Bureau
19. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
20. Baha'i International Community
21. CIDSE, Caritas Internationalis
22. International Save the Children Alliance
23. School Sisters of Notre Dame
24. The International Save the Children Alliance, International Rescue Committee, Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies' Focal Point on Minimum Standards on Education in Emergencies and Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
25. The International Save the Children Alliance, International Rescue Committee, Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies' Focal Point on Minimum Standards on Education in Emergencies and Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children
26. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
27. Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)
28. The Netherlands Association for Women's Interests, Women's Work and Equal Citizenship (Vrouwenbelangen)
29. Centre for Gender Equality
30. Center for Women's Global Leadership
31. Population Action International
32. Catholic Family and Human Rights Institute
33. Coalition of Organizations working on Sexual and Reproductive Rights
34. NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security
35. Global Youth Action Network
36. NGO Committee on Ageing/Ageing Assembly, New York
37. Widows for Peace and Democracy
38. Seeds 4 African Relief
39. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

40. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
41. Center for Women's Global Leadership
42. Movement For Protection of The African Child (MOPOTAC)
43. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
44. CIDSE, Caritas Internationalis
45. International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation
46. Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA)
47. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
48. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
49. Iniciativas de Economía Alternativa Y Solidaria (IDEAS)
50. CIDSE, Caritas Internationalis
51. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
52. Consumers International
53. Consumers International
54. Consumers International
55. Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
56. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
57. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
58. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
59. Sustainability Watch
60. NGO Energy Caucus
61. NGO Energy Caucus
62. Solar Cookers International
63. Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
64. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
65. Tearfund
66. World Citizen
67. Greenpeace
68. CIDSE, Caritas Internationalis
69. Iniciativas de Economía Alternativa Y Solidaria (IDEAS)
70. International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation
71. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
72. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
73. UBUNTU
74. Global Partnership to Prevent Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
75. JEA – The Ecological Youth of Angola
76. Kootenay Region Branch of the United Nations Association in Canada
77. Centre for International Justice and Reconciliation - Youth With A Mission
78. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
79. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
80. Greenpeace
81. Greenpeace
82. Social Watch
83. Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies
84. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
85. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
86. Oxfam International

87. Oxfam International
88. NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security
89. Global Partnership to Prevent Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
90. Kootenay Region Branch of the United Nations Association in Canada
91. Women's Federation for World Peace International
92. Women's Federation for World Peace International
93. NGO Working Group on Women, Peace and Security
94. Centre for International Justice and Reconciliation - Youth With A Mission
95. Center for Gender Equality
96. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
97. Global Partnership to Prevent Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
98. World Citizen
99. International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples
100. Social Watch
101. Oxfam International
102. International Association of Charities
103. Kootenay Region Branch of the United Nations Association in Canada
104. Global Partnership to Prevent Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
105. Social Watch
106. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
107. Oxfam International
108. Global Partnership to Prevent Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
109. Minority Rights Group International
110. Iniciativas de Economía Alternativa Y Solidaria (IDEAS)
111. Ittijah-Union of Arab Community Based Associations
112. Peaceways-Young General Assembly
113. World Citizen
114. Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung – Global Policy Forum
115. Baha'i International Community
116. World Federalist Movement—Institute for Global Policy
117. World Federalist Movement—Institute for Global Policy
118. Franciscans International
119. Sisters of Mercy, Passionists International and the International Public Policy Institute and Congregation of the Mission
120. CIDSE, Caritas Internationalis
121. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
122. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
123. Amnesty International
124. Amnesty International
125. International Service for Human Rights
126. Reflexion Group (Geneva)
127. Congregations of the St. Joseph and Conscience and Peace Tax International
128. Kootenay Region Branch of the United Nations Association in Canada
129. Center for Women's Global Leadership
130. International Fédération Terre des Hommes
131. Frontiers Foundation
132. International Save the Children Alliance

133. Oxfam International
134. Oxfam International
135. Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative
136. Franciscans International
137. International Movement ATD Fourth World
138. Franciscans International
139. Sisters of Mercy, Passionists International and the International Public Policy Institute and Congregation of the Mission
140. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
141. Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA)
142. Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
143. International Association of Charities
144. Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA)
145. Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA)
146. Sustainability Watch
147. Neighbourhood Community Network
148. Neighbourhood Community Network
149. ActionAid International—Somaliland Team
150. Greenpeace
151. Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
152. Iniciativas de Economía Alternativa Y Solidaria (IDEAS)
153. Social Watch
154. International Association of Charities
155. Baha'i International Community
156. Infoterm
157. Rwanda Women's Network
158. School Sisters of Notre Dame

Annex II

2005 : plus d'excuses !

Action Aid-International - Somaliland team

Alianza Latinoamericana para la Familia

American Family Association of New York

Amnesty International

Asociación Nacional de Economistas de Cuba

Asociación Provida de Venezuela

Association for the Prevention of Torture

Baha'i International Community

Campaign Life Coalition

CamProtect, Cameroun

Catholic Family & Human Rights Institute

CEFIM

Concerned Women for America

Centre Europe-Tiers Monde (CETIM)

Centre for Gender Equality

Centre for International Justice and Reconciliation

Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies

Center for Women's Global Leadership

Centre of Islamic Ideology and Sufi-ism (PCCIIS INT'L), Bangladesh

Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions

CIDSE and Caritas Internationalis

Civil Society Organisation Network for Development (RESOCIDE), Burkina Faso

Coalition of Organizations working on Sexual and Reproductive Rights

Collectif Inter-Associatif pour la Réalisation des Activités Scientifiques et Techniques "jeunes" au Cameroun

Colombian Commission of Jurists

Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

Conference of NGOs in consultative relationship with the United Nations (CONGO)

Congregation of Sisters of the Good Shepherd

Congregations of the St. Joseph

Conscience and Peace Tax International

Consumers International

Coordination française pour le Lobby Européen des Femmes (CLEF)

Danuwar Development Committee (DDC), Nepal

Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)

Dominicans for Justice and Peace

Earth Television Foundation

Ecological Diversity For Agricultural Revament And Human Rights (FEEDAR & HR)

Ecological Youth of Angola

El Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas (CATA)

Endeavour Forum Inc.

Enseignement Supérieur du Maroc (ENSSUP)

European Life Network

Family Research Council

Federation of Environment And Ecological Diversity For Agricultural Revament And Human Rights (FEEDAR & HR)
 Fédération Internationale des Ligues de Droits de l'Homme
 Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches
 Forum for kvinner og utviklingspørsmål /Forum for Women and Development (FOKUS)
 Foundations for Subjective Experience and Research
 Franciscans International
 Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung
 Friends World Committee for Consultation (Quakers)
 Friendship Ambassadors Foundation
 Frontiers Foundation
 Global Marshall Plan International, Hamburg Germany
 Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC)
 Global Policy Forum
 Global Youth Action Network
 Greenpeace
 Heritage Resources Foundation, Nigeria
 Human Life International
 Human Rights Watch
 INFOTERM
 Iniciativas de Economía Alternativa Y Solidaria (IDEAS)
 Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
 Institute for Global Policy
 Institute for Theology and Ethics Federation of Swiss Protestant Churches
 Instituto Ethos de Empresas e Responsabilidade Social, Sao Paulo, Brazil
 Inter-agency Network on Education in Emergencies (INEE)
 Inter-European Parliamentary Forum on Population and Development (IEPPFD)
 International Alliance of Women (IAW/AIF)
 International Association for Volunteer Effort (IAVE)
 International Association of Charities
 International Association of Educators for World Peace (IAEWP)
 International Child Art Foundation, USA
 International Commission of Jurists
 International Committee Sociologists for Women in Society
 International Council of Jewish Women
 International Council of Women, Kenya
 International Fédération Terre des Hommes
 International Fellowship of Reconciliation
 International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA)
 International League for the Rights and Liberation of Peoples
 International Movement ATD Fourth World
 International Multiracial Shared Cultural Organization (IMSCO)
 International Network Secretariat (INS)
 International Presentation Association of the Sisters of the Presentation
 International Public Policy Institute and Congregation of the Mission
 International Rescue Committee (IRC)
 International Save the Children Alliance (Save)

International Service for Human Rights, Geneva, Switzerland
 International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
 International Union for Land Value Taxation
 Ittijah-Union of Arab Community Based Associations
 International Right to Life Federation
 International Service for Human Rights
 International Solidarity & Human Rights Institute
 Law Association for Asia and Pacific – LAWASIA
 Life Ethics Educational Association
 Local Government International Bureau
 Loretto Community
 Lutheran World Federation
 MADRE
 Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
 Masorti Synagogues
 Minority Rights Group International
 Movement for Democratic Change Zimbabwe
 Movement For Protection of The African Child (Mopotac)
 National Right To Life Educational Trust Fund
 Nature Kenya
 Neighbourhood Community Network (NCN)
 Netherlands Association for Women's Interests
 Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development (nrg4SD Secretariat)
 NGO Committee for Social Development (CONGO)
 NGO Committee on Ageing/NY
 NGO Energy Caucus
 Non-Aligned Students and Youth Organization (NASYO), Mauritius
 Normail University, China
 Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture
 Oxfam International
 Passionist International
 Peaceways
 People's Movement for Human Rights Learning (PDHRE)
 Philippine Rural Reconstruction Movement or (PRRM)
 Population Action International
 Praxis, Greece
 REAL Women of Canada
 Red Familia
 Rehabilitation and Development Organization for the Landless (RADOL), Bangladesh
 Rights Australia
 Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
 Rwanda Women's Network
 School Sisters of Notre Dame
 Seeds 4 African Relief (SARA)
 Service Centre for Development Cooperation (KEPA), Finland
 Sisters of Mercy
 Social Watch, Uruguay

Society for the Protection of Unborn Children
Solar Cookers International
Sustainability Watch Network Project, Uganda
Swiss Coalition of Development Organizations
Tearfund
Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO)
UBUNTU
UK Network for Civil Society Link with the UN General Assembly (UNGA-Link UK)
UN CSD Education Caucus
United Families International
United Methodist
United Nations Association in Canada (Kootenay Region Branch)
United Nations Association Mauritius
University of Vienna, Austria
US Council for International Business
Vienna NGO Committee, Austria
VIVAT International, New York
Widows for Peace and Democracy, United Kingdom
Womens Board (ECS)
Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (WCRWC)
Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)
Women's Federation for World Peace International
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF)
Women's World Summit Foundation, Switzerland
World Citizen
World Council of Conservative/Masorti Synagogues
World Family Policy Center
World Federalist Movement
World Press Freedom Committee
World Union of Catholic Women's Organizations
Young Farmers, Mauritius
Youth With A Mission, United Kingdom

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