



United Nations

# Press Release Secretary-General

SG Statements  
Agenda for Development

Department of Public Information • News Coverage and Accreditation Service • New York

SG/SM/6409  
GA/EF/2802  
1 December 1997

SUCCESS IN IMPLEMENTING AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT DEPENDS ON TACKLING ITS SCOPE  
AND COMPLEXITY, POLITICAL WILL AND REFORM, SECRETARY-GENERAL STATES

In Address to Assembly's Second Committee, Kofi Annan Stresses  
Business Sector and Civil Society's Contributions to Development Effort

Following is the statement of Secretary-General Kofi Annan to the General Assembly's Second Committee (Economic and Financial) today on the implementation of the Agenda for Development:

It is with great pleasure that I respond to Ambassador Oscar de Rojas' (Venezuela) invitation to brief the Second Committee on the implementation of the Agenda for Development. As you know, I consider the promotion of development a crucial objective of the Organization; I also see it as a key test of the efficacy of the reform programme I have launched.

I am pleased with the progress made by this Assembly so far in acting on that programme. I want to urge Member States to maintain this momentum.

After a protracted and sometimes frustrating negotiation process, the Agenda for Development was adopted almost sotto voce; but its adoption is a very significant accomplishment -- both politically and substantively.

Politically, it means that all groups of countries, notwithstanding their differences, are united in wishing to provide the international community with a common framework that would serve two purposes: to reaffirm the centrality of development on the international agenda; and to guide a renewed effort to spread and share the benefits of development.

Substantively, the adoption of the agenda is significant for several reasons.

First, it reflects an emerging consensus on what constitutes development in the new international environment.

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Second, it recognizes that international development is based on solidarity and partnership, rather than on competing interests. It makes the case that, while individual countries are ultimately responsible for their own development, their efforts can only succeed within an effective multilateral framework that spreads the benefits of globalization as wide as possible and minimizes its risks and costs.

The Agenda is notable for its unprecedented scope and high complexity.

The policies and measures it embodies cover the whole spectrum of economic development and social development; they encompass participatory approaches as well as rights-based approaches; and they span the links between humanitarian interventions and development.

The Agenda is also rooted in a more profound recognition that development requires a comprehensive and integrated approach: it must be tackled on many fronts, all of which need to be pursued simultaneously.

After all, what is the significance of economic growth if it benefits only the rich? Who can sustain creative energy under conditions of instability or corrupt institutions? What is the point of international development cooperation in the face of increasing barriers to trade and declining commodity prices?

The Agenda encompasses policies and measures for action by governments, both individually and collectively, and by the international community, including the United Nations system. It thereby highlights the interactions and synergies between national policies and the international environment most conducive to growth and sustainable development.

These characteristics also define the main challenges before us in the implementation of the Agenda. I should like to highlight three of them.

First, at both the national and international levels, selectivity and priority setting must be reconciled with the need to pursue simultaneous actions on several fronts.

At the national level, it is the prerogative of each country to set its own priorities and to choose its own path. But this must be done through full strategic awareness of the internal and external forces that impact such priorities, and that are critical to their success.

It must also be done with a sense of responsibility as to the effects on others and on the international environment which, in a globalizing world, ultimately affects the destinies of all.

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At the level of the United Nations system, this challenge implies a new approach to inter-agency coordination; one which places a premium on a more clear-cut division of labour. But this improved distribution of responsibilities must stem from a clear common strategy and a clear perception of common challenges requiring mutually reinforcing interventions, concerted programming and joint initiatives.

The second related challenge is one of political will in sustaining the principles of partnership and solidarity. Growing interdependence in all spheres of human activity reinforces this imperative.

The future well-being of humankind rests increasingly on the courage and foresight of its leaders to realize the full meaning of interdependence, and to translate it into practical actions.

Solidarity remains a crucial pillar of international cooperation. As markets expand and deepen, we have an opportunity to give new meaning to solidarity by enlisting new allies. Preparing the ground for investment and growth while at the same time forging new alliances may unlock the potential to successful development. At the same time, we have to rebuild the moral foundation and purpose of solidarity.

What purpose could be more compelling than that of creating hope and opportunity for millions of people excluded from the global economy, who lack the opportunity to compete on a level playing field?

Our duty now is to renew our efforts to make the case for solidarity; to strengthen not only its economic but also its moral underpinning.

Reversing the decline in official development assistance (ODA) and exploring new ways of financing development are central to this endeavour.

At the same time, the Agenda for Development reminds us that we cannot afford to stand still. Global forces continue to impact humankind and institutions and thereby redefine the framework for international cooperation. Globalization is bringing both positive and negative consequences on a scale never experienced before. The boons of expanded trade and investment, and of higher standards of living for millions of people, contrast with the ills of widening income gaps, environmental degradation and illegal drug trafficking.

The international community's ability to muster the political will to respond to these changes will influence decisively the implementation of the Agenda for Development.

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We need effective supportive frameworks to spread more widely the benefits of globalization, and to avoid the transmission of disruptions and backlashes. We know that greater support is required for countries struggling to participate in global markets. We must also explore new alliances that cut across traditional lines. We must be prepared to experiment with new approaches, to build new partnerships. We must be ready to enlist the support of those actors who increasingly define prospects for development. None of this is beyond our reach, if we can muster the necessary political will.

As Secretary-General, I am keenly aware of my responsibility to provide the international community with proposals and advice. I will suggest ways to address in a comprehensive and far-sighted way the complexities inherent in the pursuit of development, and to sustain international partnership and solidarity in implementing the Agenda.

To this end, I will spare no effort vis a vis governments and the United Nations intergovernmental machinery. And I will work to bring to bear on the development effort the crucial contributions of the business sector and civil society. This is a new role for the Secretary-General that I intend to pursue to the fullest.

But sustaining the necessary political will in the implementation of the Agenda is ultimately a key function of this Assembly.

This brings me to the third challenge: the challenge of reform of the United Nations itself and of the broader United Nations system.

Reform must be based on a clear-headed process of assessing the patterns of change that impact the environment in which we operate; defining institutional strengths and building on them; and refining roles and refocusing activities around key priorities -- with the promotion of development foremost among them.

The challenges facing the Organization and the system in contributing to the implementation of the Agenda for Development are indeed very much the same challenges that are outlined in my overall reform programme.

The objectives of greater unity of purpose, coherence of efforts and agility that I set out in my reform programme are also the prerequisites for equipping the Organization to respond effectively to the demands of the Agenda for Development.

In defining the main institutional strengths of the Organization in my reform programme, I highlighted the universal character and comprehensive mandate that make the United Nations a unique and indispensable forum.

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The most encompassing manifestation of this strength lies in the Organization's normative capacity which, in the development sphere, is linked directly to assisting national policy and is further supported by the operational capacities of its funds and programmes.

Most of the actions and proposals embodied in my reform programme are directly related to the Organization's capacity to respond effectively to the requirements of the Agenda.

I referred earlier to the crucial role of the General Assembly. The reform proposals I have made with reference to the General Assembly are relevant to enhancing its capacity to steer the actions of governments and of the United Nations system in support of an effective implementation of the Agenda. They aim to refocus the Assembly's work on issues of the highest priority and incorporate in its methods of work the principal features of recent United Nations Conferences. And I have suggested, as you know, that a high-level segment of the Assembly should be devoted as a matter of priority to the issue of "International Financing for Development", which goes to the core of the Agenda for Development.

These recommendations dovetail well with the Second Committee's own proposals concerning the renewal of dialogue on strengthening international cooperation for development based on partnership, which is one of the principal vehicles for follow-up to the Agenda for Development.

The new leadership and management structure I have introduced is based on the concept of a single Secretariat encompassing secretariat departments as well as the secretariats of the programmes and funds. It is articulated around four sectoral committees -- two of which are devoted to economic and social affairs and development cooperation and are thus directly geared to guiding the Organization's response to the requirements of the Agenda. The functions envisaged for the new proposed post of Deputy Secretary-General and the establishment of a strategic planning unit in my Executive Office are also highly relevant.

The consolidation of different Secretariat entities in the economic and social fields into a single Department of Economic and Social Affairs; the establishment of a substantive Economic and Social Council secretariat headed at the senior level; and a better division of labour between the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs -- all of these actions should enable the United Nations to act more effectively in support of macroeconomic coordination and development.

I want to take this opportunity to inform you that one of the outcomes of the review I have launched of the respective roles of the new department and of UNCTAD in the macroeconomic area will be the issuance, beginning in January 1999,

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of a single report -- a single United Nations statement -- of the world's economic situation and prospects. It will draw on the combined capacities available to the Organization in both New York and Geneva.

Flagship publications of the various United Nations entities -- the World Economic and Social Survey, the Trade and Development Report and others -- will elaborate from different perspectives on this single statement. The Agenda for Development will obviously provide a common framework for this renewed effort to strengthen the Organization's impact on policy development.

The effort to contribute through the new Department and UNCTAD to spreading the benefits of globalization is being accompanied by a renewed effort, through a strengthening of the United Nations Office at Vienna, to combat the negative effects of globalization -- from drug trafficking to transnational crime. As you know, I am also working to strengthen the Organization's capacity to help redress environmental degradation and support sustainability in relation to both the natural environment and human settlements.

To no small extent, successful implementation of the Agenda for Development depends on how effective we are in translating intergovernmental agreements, norms and standards into practical results in the field. In this regard, my actions to establish the United Nations Development Group and to promote the formulation of a single United Nations Development Assistance Framework should contribute to bringing different activities at the field level into a coherent and mutually supportive whole.

In addition, the actions of making all funds and programmes part of a single United Nations office under the Resident Coordinator, and of establishing common premises of the United Nations at the country level, are in keeping with the Agenda's call for sharing administrative systems and services.

Furthermore, my recommendation on a new system of core resources as well as the establishment of an Office for Development Financing should contribute to the Agenda's call for a substantial increase in resources for operational activities. The "Development Dividend" I am introducing is also geared to strengthening the Organization's capacity to support directly countries in their development efforts.

Concerning the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary machinery, I have made a number of recommendations which I hope will assist Member States in the various review processes they have undertaken. For example, the Agenda calls upon the Economic and Social Council to fully exercise its role as the overall coordinating body of all United Nations development funds and programmes. My recommendation to enhance the operational activities segment of the Council should contribute to this objective.

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I am fully committed to assisting the Council in reasserting its role as envisaged under the Charter.

I fully support the important contribution that civil society can make to the implementation of the Agenda for Development. The growing practice in the Second Committee and also in the Economic and Social Council to engage civil society in intergovernmental deliberations should be built on.

Efforts are also under way to concert the reform processes in the various organizations of the system, so that the new orientations and structures that are emerging are mutually reinforcing and strengthen the overall capacity of the system as a coherent force for the implementation of the Agenda.

The proposal I have put forward to establish a high-level commission to review the constitutional instruments of the specialized agencies, as part of the preparation for the "Millennium Assembly", is informed by the same objectives. The special attention I am giving to cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions is an important part of efforts to enhance the system's ability to respond to the Agenda.

It has been less than six months since the General Assembly adopted the Agenda for Development. Its implementation has just begun and will require strenuous efforts from all of us for a long time to come. I have sketched for you the three challenges that I see have to be met if we are to be successful in the Agenda's implementation: dealing effectively with the scope and complexity of the Agenda, political will, and reform.

I have attempted to indicate some ways in which we can meet these challenges. My reform proposals only set the stage. Now it is up to us to act upon it.

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