

Agenda Item 48: Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa ,Statement by Mr. Bhagwant S. Bishnoi, Counsellor

on December 3, 2001

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Mr. President,

We thank the Secretary General for the document A/56/371 which reports on the progress of the implementation of the recommendations contained in his April 1998 report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa. We also thank the distinguished Permanent Representatives of Spain and Pakistan for their work as Co-Vice Chairmen of the Open Ended Ad hoc Working Group of the General Assembly and would like to place on record our appreciation for the report (A/56/45) of the Group.

2. It has always been our conviction that Africa knows its own problems better than anybody else and that its understanding of the situation cannot be substituted by that of others. Africa also knows the solutions for its problems. These have been articulated clearly by it over the years; most recently in the New African Initiative, now re-named as the New Partnership for Africa's Development which was adopted in July 2001. What Africa requires, and what is incumbent on the international community, is to support it in the solutions which it has identified.

3. Section II of the Secretary General's report deals with the interventions of the UN system in peacekeeping, peace making and peace building. We support these interventions as long as they support Africa's own initiatives. We are aware that there is, at times, a temptation to micro-manage the affairs of others. This neither eliminates the real causes of conflict nor of arrested development and fails to satisfy both the donors and the recipients. It should be recognised that there is no one standard formula which can be applied to situations which have different economic, social and cultural complexities. Assistance should be untied not only with regard to the sources of goods and services but also with advice

4. Good governance is one of the two pillars of the Secretary General's report for promoting peace and sustainable development in Africa. We ourselves have great faith in good governance; in movement away from political, economic or social oppression when it springs from within a society that is developing and is in harmony with local cultures and values. External interventions to promote good governance, however, produce good results only in exceptional cases. They do, nearly always, result in a downgrading of the social welfare and economic growth agenda in the assistance package. They also have the paradoxical effect of reducing the capacity of recipient governments for policy making and implementation.

5. Economic growth has led to peace and sustainable development in other parts of the world. It would in Africa as well. If there is one standard formula which we believe can be applied to situations with different economic, social and cultural complexities; it is this. It is also a formula with which Africa and all developing countries of the world can identify completely with.

6. Economic growth requires capital accumulation. But countries which find it difficult to meet the basic needs of their peoples cannot realistically hope to increase their domestic savings rate. The solution, we are often told, lies in private capital flows. Experience, however, tells us that foreign direct investment follows rather than leading economic growth. Debt relief also cannot be a solution by itself. Even if all the countries in Sub Saharan Africa were brought under HIPC and granted full and immediate relief on their official debt, the amount released would be less than half of their external financing requirements. The inescapable conclusion is that ODA, in the form of long-term development assistance, remains vital for the renewal of the continent.

7. The international community does not need to re-invent the wheel for Africa. The priority sectors have been identified in the New Partnership for Africa's Development. A focus on these priorities - infrastructure, health, education, agriculture and diversification of production and exports - is essential if Africa is to achieve the agreed international development goals.

8. India has always attached the highest priority to her cooperation with Africa. A principal instrument of our technical cooperation with Africa is the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation Programme. About 20,000 foreign nominees, primarily from Africa, have received training in India in diverse fields including banking, foreign trade, hydrology and water resources, communications, electronics, satellite imaging, agriculture, small and medium industries, software, renewable energy sources and other areas. We provide a total of 1350 training slots every year in some of our best educational institutions; of these nearly 60% are for nominees from African countries. India has always believed that the gains obtained by its pursuit of economic, scientific and technological self-reliance should be shared with its developing country partners, particularly those in Africa.

9. India has also participated in each and every UN Peacekeeping Operation established in Africa, including in some of the most difficult ones in the Congo, Somalia, Angola, Sierra Leone and now in the DRC. This is proof of our commitment to peace in Africa. We also support all initiatives to strengthen African peacekeeping capacity and have contributed to this through bilateral cooperation programmes. A large number of African military officers attend professional courses in Staff Colleges and other training institutions in India, including in the recently established Centre for UN Peacekeeping in New Delhi.

10. Africa is the birthplace of humanity and the cradle of civilization. It has served humanity for centuries as a resource base. Its resources have contributed to the economic development of the rest of the world. Colonialism, however, kept Africa itself economically impoverished for centuries. Subsequently, shortcomings in the international trading and financial environment have not allowed the continent to realise its own potential. There can be no doubt about the moral obligations of the international community. Globalisation has created the opportunity for lifting millions out of poverty. It is now for the international community to guide the globalisation agenda so that its benefits are spread more equitably and for the cause of economic growth, sustainable development and peace in Africa