

Sixth Meeting of the Open Ended Informal Consultations on the Millennium Summit: Report of the Secretary General

Statement by Mr. Kamallesh Sharma, PR, on May 23, 2000

Mr. President,

At the outset, we would like to place on record our appreciation for your continued guidance and the efforts of Ambassador Powles and Ambassador Rosenthal, who have greatly facilitated our preparations for the Millennium Summit. We also take this opportunity of thanking the Secretary General for his comprehensive, incisive, interesting and forward looking report to the Millennium Summit, as also for his remarks this morning.

With our meeting today, we enter into the most intense and engaged phase of our preparations, that would be crucial for ensuring the success of the Millennium Summit and which, in many ways, would influence the framework and content of international cooperation for many years to come. We have always stressed that any outcome of a Summit should be inter-governmentally negotiated, before the Summit, though learning from past experience and without weighing down the process, in a transparent manner, with effective participation of all countries, especially the developing countries, in order to ensure its collective ownership. We have also underlined that the outcome should have a concrete, action oriented and forward looking focus. At the same time, it should add value through a resounding affirmation at the highest level of the absolute imperative and logic of enlightened multilateralism in effectively addressing the extensive global agenda of the twenty first century and in lending our collective political weight behind the principal organ of the world community, which is the United Nations, in advancing it. This challenge cannot be met if it is divorced from the democratic, ethical and moral weight which only this institution can bring. Equity has to be the basis of the striving and the foundation of this house. We believe that the report presented by the Secretary-General provides a real and very helpful basis for negotiating such an outcome, which will guide our further work in the Millennium Assembly and beyond. I am sure we are all most appreciative of this important input from the Secretary General. Since the time available before us is limited, we feel that the Summit Declaration should be in the nature of a compact framework document outlining the seminal goals and objectives before the international community, along the lines of Chapter VII of the Report of the Secretary-General entitled 'For Consideration by the Summit'. Specific ways and means to achieve those objectives could be discussed during the Millennium Assembly or in any other relevant forum, such as the Committees of the UN, ECOSOC, international financial institutions and the World Trade Organization.

While we do not have any formal proposals at this stage, there are a few issues which we would like to specially highlight in any outcome based on the above Chapter.

First, the need to stress the continuing and increased relevance and critical importance of multilateral development cooperation -- faith in which appears to be declining, if ODA levels are any indication -- in an increasingly globalising and interdependent world. This would be in keeping with the rightful recognition being given to the centrality of the social agenda, whose components do not attract private capital and

which cannot be done justice to by domestic resource mobilisation, no matter how efficiently generated or allocated.

Second, most of the developing countries are now looking to trade as an engine for their growth and development. It would be essential, if the outcome is to be credible, for the international community to pronounce itself on issues such as the need for substantial enlargement of market access in developed country markets through removal of barriers, freer movement of all factors of production such as natural persons and not only capital, incorporation of agricultural sector within normal WTO rules, taking into account the needs of large predominantly agrarian economies and to ensure that the developing countries can fully benefit from their bio-diversity wealth, including through harmonising the TRIPS Agreements with the provisions of Convention on Biological Diversity.

Third, mobilisation of the vast scientific and technological capacities and resources in the North for the conquest of disease worldwide through innovative mechanisms. While a focus on making HIV related drugs more readily accessible in developing countries is welcome, there is also an urgent economic and, more than that, a human obligation, to take decisive steps for developing and popularising the use of vaccines for other communicable diseases, such as tuberculosis and malaria. We must build on the successes achieved with small pox and polio.

Fourth, while democracy and open societies have generally gained ground in the last few decades, totalitarianism and obscurantism being on the wane, other forces of global crime, notably those of terrorism and drug trafficking and their nefarious inter-linkages have emerged to which open societies are particularly vulnerable. There is a need for the international community to defeat this menace through effective and concerted actions. There is no place for such non-civilizational forces in the global society we envisage for ourselves in this century.

Fifth, we have always underlined, since 1997, when the Secretary General presented his reform proposals, that while chemical and biological weapons had been outlawed under the respective Conventions, no progress had been made with regard to the last remaining weapon of mass destruction, namely nuclear weapons. This call for a Nuclear Weapon Convention has been reiterated by us in the context of the Millennium Summit on all occasions. The Secretary General has clearly analysed the situation in paragraph 249 that the main problem is the insistence by the nuclear weapon states that these weapons in their hands enhance security, while in the hands of others they are a threat to world peace. Such disengenuities cannot contribute to a secure world order. We support the proposal of the Secretary General for convening a major international conference to identify ways of eliminating nuclear dangers, which, we trust, would be the harbinger of a nuclear weapon free world, which has been our goal for decades. The time is now at hand to ring the death knell of such weapons globally.

Apart from these specific ideas for the outcome, we have some preliminary, very selective, views on the report itself. We support the Secretary General's assertion in several paragraphs, especially paragraph 42, that the need of the day is not to conjure up a world government of centralised bureaucratic behemoths, trampling on the rights of states and

people. We agree that weak states are one of the main impediments to effective governance and that, therefore, we must help to strengthen those states and not undermine them further. We believe that there is no viable substitute to sovereign states. Even globalisation can only work through state intermediaries. To diminish, marginalise or set aside the state would be self-defeating because the weaker a state is, the less shall it be able to promote and protect the interests of its citizens. Besides, as our External Affairs Minister said during the General Debate of the 54th session, "A United Nations of weak nation states can only be a weak United Nations".

Mr. President, as a democracy, India has always supported the concept of people-centred development and participation by people and civil society organisations in decision making. We would be supportive of proposals that seek to provide a voice to such organizations in all areas of work of the United Nations, from human rights to disarmament and international financial institutions.

References have been made in the report to India, which takes full advantage of the modern revolution in information technology and knowledge industry while still grappling with challenges of age old poverty such as ensuring universal primary education, further improvements of the conditions of the girl child, primary health care and nutrition. There is only apparent contradiction in these conflicting images reflecting the vast challenges of development which confront societies like ours that have emerged only in the last five decades from the legacy of colonialism. The achievements within this time in diverse fields give us ground for optimism, though we acknowledge that a long road lies ahead of us. We are, Mr. President, committed to working towards the goal we have set for ourselves.

We fully share the concern of the Secretary-General, expressed in paragraph 175 that labour, environmental standards or human rights should not become a pretext for protectionism in the trade sphere. This is especially important as the developing countries are seeking to utilise the opportunities of greater international trade for growth and developmental purposes.

We strongly subscribe to the stress on sustained growth and youth employment, without which our economic and social goals will remain beyond our grasp.

We look forward to the recommendations of the High-Level Panel constituted by the Secretary General to review the difficult and sensitive area of peacekeeping operations. We believe that these recommendations should be studied in depth by the relevant Committee of the General Assembly before being considered by the Millennium Assembly.

On targeted sanctions, we have said so before, and continue to believe, that reasonable proposals put forward by UNICEF for enforceable exemptions in favour of children must be a part of any sanctions regime.

I would like to briefly refer to Chapter V of the Secretary General's report on 'Sustaining Our Future'. It is clear that, essentially, environmental problems have been created by unsustainable patterns of production and consumption in the developed countries, which must change. The provision of financial resources and transfer of

environmentally sound technology to developing countries, despite the agreements of Rio, remains a chimera. We trust that these issues would be at the top of the agenda of the Rio + 10 process.

Mr. President,

These are some of the issues contained in the comprehensive report that we wished to highlight at this stage. Of course, it is our understanding that other opportunities would be available to consider the report of the Secretary General, which would remain before the Millennium Summit and Assembly