

» THE 2005 WORLD SUMMIT: AN OVERVIEW

The 2005 World Summit, to be held from 14 to 16 September at United Nations Headquarters in New York, is expected to bring together more than 170 Heads of State and Government: the largest gathering of world leaders in history. It is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take bold decisions in the areas of development, security, human rights and reform of the United Nations. The agenda is based on an achievable set of proposals outlined in March by Secretary-General Kofi Annan in his report *In Larger Freedom* (www.un.org/largerfreedom). These have since been reviewed by Governments in a series of informal consultations conducted by General Assembly President Jean Ping, who released on 5 August a third draft outcome document for the Summit. It is anticipated that another draft will be issued in late August. The latest version and additional details can be found at www.un.org/ga/59/hl60_plenarymeeting.

FREEDOM FROM WANT

Proposals in the area of development call for breakthroughs in debt relief and trade liberalization, and increases in aid to revitalize infrastructure and improve health and education services, in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), including cutting extreme poverty in half by 2015 (www.un.org/millenniumgoals). Developing countries are being asked to devise national strategies to meet the MDG targets and to facilitate transparent and accountable governance, while developed countries are being urged to increase aid and reduce trade barriers, debt and other burdens that hamper development. It has been proposed to set up an International Financing Facility that would make official development assistance (ODA) more predictable and accessible. Many donors are on track to meet the target of dedicating 0.7 per cent of gross national income to ODA by the year 2015. Others have promised to make substantial increases in ODA over the next ten years. Leaders meeting at the Group of 8 Summit in early July agreed to increase annual aid flows by at least \$50 billion as of 2010, with at least half of that increase to be directed at Africa, and to write off the debts of eighteen of the world's poorest countries.

FREEDOM FROM FEAR

Another major focus of the Summit agenda is to make the world safer by improving collective security arrangements. Proposals include initiatives to prevent catastrophic terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Member States are being urged to reach agreement on a universal definition of terrorism and to sign on to a comprehensive convention against terrorism. A comprehensive convention against nuclear terrorism has already been approved by the General Assembly and will be opened for signature at the World Summit. Another area under decision regards the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission that would support countries during their transitions from armed conflict to lasting peace and reduce the risks of war. Governments are also being asked to take action against organized crime, as well as to contain illicit trade in small arms and landmines.

FREEDOM TO LIVE IN DIGNITY

The three-pronged approach to collective action hinges on the idea that there can be no development without security, no security without development, and neither without the universal application and protection of human rights. The Secretary-General recently announced the creation of an independent and self-financing Democracy Fund to help Governments strengthen their democratic practices and institutions. Another key step calls for the acceptance of a universal principle of the responsibility to protect civilian populations from crimes against humanity when Governments are unwilling or unable to do so. In addition, the draft outcome document urges strengthening the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. Another proposal under consideration

would transform the largely discredited Human Rights Commission into a smaller standing body, a new Human Rights Council. Membership on the Council would be subject to approval by two-thirds of the General Assembly.

STRENGTHENING THE UNITED NATIONS

It is widely agreed that the United Nations must adapt itself to meet the needs of today's geopolitics and global challenges. Although the UN continues to streamline and renew its internal structure, efforts need to be intensified to make it more effective, transparent and accountable.

Key among the proposals is the expansion of the Security Council to make it more inclusive and representative of the UN's current membership. Two models for expanding the Council from 15 to 24 members are among those now on the table: one creates six new permanent seats and three new non-permanent ones; the other creates nine new non-permanent seats. Although consensus is desirable, it is not mandatory as long as two-thirds of UN Member States agree on the formula.

An invigorated role for the Economic and Social Council is also envisioned among the reform proposals. ECOSOC would play a more active role in coordinating system-wide development policies and hold high-level ministerial meetings biennially to assess progress and make recommendations about how to achieve the MDGs.

The General Assembly itself is also under scrutiny. Proposals for its renewal include measures to streamline its committee structure and speed up the deliberative process, as well as to rationalize the Assembly's lengthy agenda to give priority to the most critical issues of the day.

Other proposals include steps to realign the Secretariat's structure and staffing with the proposed reforms, including approval for a one-time staff buyout and a comprehensive review of budget and human resources. The changes aim to make the culture and organization of the Secretariat more efficient, open and accountable. For more information on Secretariat reform, visit: www.un.org/reform.

SUMMIT FORMAT AND OUTCOME

The 2005 World Summit will feature plenary meetings continuing over the three days, where Heads of State or Government and other senior officials will make statements. There will be a special meeting on Financing for Development on the morning of 14 September. The plenary meetings will be presided over by the Heads of State or Government of the home countries of the Presidents of the 59th and 60th sessions of the General Assembly — Gabon and Sweden, respectively. Four closed, interactive roundtables will also be held over the three days, each one covering the broad Summit agenda and chaired by two Heads of State or Government selected by regional groupings. Summaries of the discussions will be presented during a closing plenary meeting on 16 September. Selected Observers and members of non-governmental and regional organizations may also address the plenary. Member States are expected to adopt a final outcome document containing a number of decisions and recommendations for action. For more information, visit the Summit website at www.un.org/summit2005.