

# Cooperating for development

## Overview

127. In an increasingly interdependent world, the challenges of development can be met only through well-planned, coordinated and adequately funded international action. The United Nations and its partners have extraordinary capacities in the development field. The challenge is to use them more effectively and synergistically. In the reform programme I initiated in 1997, the United Nations Development Group was created to help meet this challenge. During the past year, the Group has been developing and implementing the new modes of collaboration necessary to meet our development goals.

### *Reform tools: common country assessment and United Nations Development Assistance Framework*

128. Through the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), the United Nations has for the first time the tools needed to provide strategic and coordinated support for the development goals of national Governments. The common country assessment provides a common analysis for use by the United Nations, donors and other institutions, so that all have a shared understanding of the challenges and potential risks they face. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework is the planning

and programming mechanism that coordinates the United Nations response to meeting these challenges.

129. We are also taking steps to ensure that those United Nations programmes, funds and agencies, including the regional commissions, that do not have a presence in the field are fully involved in the preparation and implementation of United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and common country assessments. Since 1997, some 60 countries have initiated common country assessments; 18 countries participated in the UNDAF pilot project started in 1997, and 19 more are expected to commence an UNDAF before the end of 1999.

*Strengthening leadership: the resident coordinator system*

130. Throughout the last year, the United Nations Development Group has intensified efforts to improve the resident coordinator system. These have included new selection procedures for resident coordinators to broaden the basis for recruitment and improve the gender balance; performance appraisals of resident coordinators and country teams; improved annual reporting procedures for resident coordinators and a review of lessons learned; and greater support from Headquarters, including better training for resident coordinators and country teams.

*Maximizing resources: harmonization and United Nations Houses*

131. In response to a call by the General Assembly for greater harmonization and simplification of the policies and procedures used by United Nations bodies, 100 country teams have now planned to have their individual pro-

gramming cycles begin at the same time, and all country programmes will have harmonized cycles by 2004.

132. The housing of United Nations entities in common premises (United Nations Houses) will foster a greater sense of community and common purpose. To date, some 36 United Nations Houses have been designated around the world; the establishment of 20 more is being considered in 1999. In a number of countries, we are promoting “virtual” United Nations Houses that will connect separate offices via an in-country intranet and thus improve the sharing of information, practices and expertise.

*Improving impact: inter-agency support*

133. The United Nations Development Group has set up a number of inter-agency groups to provide support to country teams. The Working Group on the Right to Development reviewed the provisional UNDAF guidelines and made specific proposals on how better to incorporate respect for human rights. The Working Group prepared a guidance note for all resident coordinators and will develop a human rights training module. The Group will also disseminate examples of good practice to help country teams learn from each other.

134. The Sub-Group on Gender, formed in June 1998, reviewed the pilot United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks and made recommendations for more effective incorporation of gender perspectives into the core indicators of the common country assessments and the final UNDAF guidelines.

135. Ad hoc task forces and working groups have pooled knowledge gained by the United Nations Development Group on specific topics for the benefit of country teams. In 1998/99, these included the Working Groups on

poverty and girls' education, and the Task Forces on globalization, sector programmes and collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions.

*Working together: building partnerships for development*

136. During the past year, the United Nations placed greater emphasis on communicating its research, publications and debates to its various partners—nationally, regionally and internationally. This has contributed to greater understanding and awareness of key development issues and to more innovative development thinking. In addition, a database set up jointly by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNDP has deepened mutual understanding and provided valuable input for civil society organizations. A survey carried out by the World Food Programme (WFP) in 1998 found that WFP is collaborating with more than 1,100 non-governmental organizations worldwide, of which three quarters are national and local groups.

137. In response to my statement to business leaders at the World Economic Forum at Davos in 1999, the United Nations Development Group has explored private sector partnerships on a range of development issues. UNDP, for example, has joined with Internet giant Cisco Systems in creating NetAid, a multi-city concert to be broadcast over the Internet to raise public awareness and generate financial support for reducing poverty in developing countries. UNICEF's partnerships with the private sector include a global campaign that has succeeded in eliminating polio in many parts of the world.

138. The United Nations has also made concerted efforts to increase collaboration with the international financial institutions. In February 1999, the Economic and Social Council held a high-level meeting with the Executive Board members of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Top World Bank officials, including President Wolfensohn and 11 Vice-Presidents, have participated in other exchanges, in the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and various open meetings. Discussions have also been held with World Bank officials on the Comprehensive Development Framework and other areas for cooperation, such as the common country assessment and UNDAF. Within the United Nations, including the specialized agencies, there have been a number of discussions on how to make United Nations engagement with the World Bank more effective. The United Nations has also collaborated actively with the regional development banks, particularly in regard to the financial crises in East Asia and elsewhere. Similarly, there has been practical collaboration at the country level and in following up UNDAF/Country Assistance Strategy pilots in Mali and Viet Nam.

139. The United Nations has continued to stress that governance grounded in democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights is the best foundation for sustainable development. Cooperation has increased markedly between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, UNDP, the international financial institutions and the specialized agencies on integrating human rights norms into the development process. The next stage will be to draw upon the practical experiences of Governments throughout the world to identify where, and what sort of, assistance is most needed.

### *The link between relief and development*

140. Inter-agency task forces engaged in post-conflict peace-building have become increasingly common in the 1990s as the number of comprehensive peace agreements has grown. This development has highlighted the need to ensure that emergency relief and recovery assistance programmes are linked effectively to longer-term development initiatives. Recognizing the importance of this linkage, we have initiated a dialogue between the principal actors in the humanitarian, human rights, security and development fields; its goal is to facilitate more effective interdepartmental and inter-agency cooperation. The first meeting of the Executive Committees on Peace and Security, Political Affairs and the United Nations Development Group in November 1998 was an important step in this process.

### *Capacity-building in statistics*

141. In May 1998, the Economic and Social Council, recognizing the importance of statistics and indicators, requested the United Nations Secretariat, bilateral funding agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions to work together to provide support for national statistical capacity-building in Member States. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs, in collaboration with UNFPA, has undertaken various initiatives to implement the 2000 world population and housing census. The Department has also supported regional approaches for census-taking in Central Asia, the Southern African Development Community and the Pacific. Intraregional cooperation among organizations responsible for collecting national and regional statistics is also being supported.

## Eradication of poverty

*142.* Despite improvements over the past 50 years in nutrition, health, education and life expectancy and in reducing material poverty, we still have far to travel: over 1.5 billion people live on less than \$1 a day; almost 1 billion adults—a majority of them women—are unable to read or write; 830 million people are malnourished; and 750 million people have no access to adequate shelter or health care. Gender inequalities continue to hamper economic growth and well-being.

*143.* Increased natural disasters, the hangover from the East Asian economic crisis, the continuing economic decline of the former Soviet Union, the growing toll of AIDS, especially in Africa, and new outbreaks of war have exacerbated poverty in many parts of the world in 1998.

*144.* The eradication of poverty is one of the central goals of the United Nations and its agencies, but its achievement remains elusive. While declining aid flows are part of the problem, increasing aid is not a panacea. In some cases, aid has made a real difference in reducing poverty; in others, it has made little or no impact. What makes the difference is how the aid is used. Where foreign assistance is misused, it is of little benefit to those in need.

*145.* The United Nations has long recognized that development policy is about more than economics narrowly defined. Development cannot occur in a vacuum. It requires that minimal levels of human security are met and that there is inclusive political participation and respect for human rights. As the only international organization with a mandate that embraces security, development and human rights, the United Nations is uniquely well placed to tackle the eradication of poverty in a holistic manner. This requires broad inter-agency cooperation, which is increas-

ingly common practice in today's United Nations. For example, work carried out jointly by the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, UNDP, the World Bank and IMF formed the basis for my report to the Economic and Social Council in July 1999 on the role of employment and work in poverty eradication: the empowerment and advancement of women.

146. Better poverty eradication policy requires improved risk assessment and early warning strategies—as have been developed jointly by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, FAO and WFP. More generally over the past year, the United Nations has been working with its partners to produce more holistic development policies. The Administrative Committee on Coordination sent an action plan, entitled “Freedom from poverty” and based on its statement on poverty of March 1998, to all United Nations resident coordinators and country teams in October 1998. The plan forms the basis for a new initiative, led by the United Nations Development Group, to help programme countries to meet the goal of halving absolute poverty by 2015.

147. In December 1998, the United Nations Development Group developed an action plan for country-level responses to the challenges of globalization and the financial crisis in East Asia. Seventy-eight countries have either developed a separate strategy for poverty reduction (43 countries) or dedicated part of their overall development plan to poverty reduction (35 countries). United Nations country teams have established inter-agency thematic working groups on gender (in 58 countries), food security (in 48 countries) and a range of other issues related to poverty eradication. In 1998, the Economic and Social Commission



for Western Asia (ESCWA), drawing on studies carried out in 1996/97, began to develop poverty alleviation policies.

148. By the end of 1998, the Poverty Strategies Initiative of UNDP had provided support to over 100 countries in the area of poverty analysis, mapping and monitoring and developing national poverty reduction strategies. This initiative involved extensive collaboration at the country level with the World Bank, the regional commissions, ILO, UNICEF, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and UNFPA.

149. The United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) and UNDP initiated a global knowledge network designed to help produce effective pro-poor budgets that were also sensitive to gender and environmental concerns. WFP assisted almost 75 million people, more than half of them women and children, helping to build sustainable food security assets for the poor and responding to their needs in emergency situations. A UNFPA study in South-East Asia on the effects of the financial crisis revealed increasing poverty in the region, and recommended specific policy responses.

150. In May 1999, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) and the World Bank launched the Cities Alliance to coordinate their support for cities in the developing world. The Alliance focuses in particular on urban squatters, upgrading slums and improving urban governance and management systems. UNDP, with support from Habitat, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), launched the World Alliance of Cities against Poverty as follow-up to the Habitat II process.

151. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme has helped Governments in Latin America and Asia develop “business plans” to reduce incentives for the cultivation of illicit drugs and promote alternative development activities. Meanwhile, United Nations agencies have continued their collaboration with civil society organizations with a view to achieving one of the goals of the Microcredit Summit, namely, to provide 100 million of the poorest families with access to credit and other financial services.

## Social development

152. One of the most significant achievements of the international conferences on social development issues convened by the United Nations during the 1990s has been the consensus on the need for people-centred approaches to both social and economic problems. In 1999, the five-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development, held at Cairo in 1994, was conducted in New York. Preparatory work also began for the five-year reviews, to be held in 2000, of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit for Social Development, and of Habitat II, which will occur in 2001.

153. The review process of the Cairo Conference culminated in a special session of the General Assembly, held from 30 June to 2 July 1999, at which the Assembly adopted key actions for the further implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. This drew on reports prepared by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs on the basis of several technical workshops and symposia, and an on-the-ground assessment of progress made in 114 developing countries and 18 developed countries since the Cairo

Conference. The document adopted by the General Assembly focused on population and development concerns; gender equity and the empowerment of women; reproductive health and rights; partnerships and collaborations. It also called for a greater effort by all countries to address the shortfall in resources needed to implement the commitments made at Cairo.

154. At the country level, inter-agency working groups have been established to assist with the integrated follow-up to the conferences. The 1998 annual reports of resident coordinators indicated that 573 thematic groups were functioning around the world. Many of these groups deal with social development concerns, such as basic social services (16 groups), health and nutrition (29), education (24), population and development (7), reproductive health (5), drugs (6) and human rights (15).

155. The use of new information technologies has assisted public information outreach on social development issues. For example, in March 1999 the UNIFEM inter-agency global videoconference, *A World Free of Violence against Women*, linked Member States, United Nations bodies and activists around the world.

156. In addition, ESCWA is implementing a project to provide an integrated regional follow-up by the Arab States to the United Nations conferences, which was launched in October 1998. The project addresses issues related to the themes of the major conferences, including women, population, human settlements and social development. The project also builds on the experiences of UNICEF, UNFPA and UNIFEM.

157. Four particular areas of activity are highlighted below.

### *A new initiative for girls' education*

158. Led by UNICEF, the United Nations Development Group is planning to launch a new 10-year initiative for girls' education. The initiative will bring together a broad coalition of actors, including those outside the United Nations system, to support enhanced provision of girls' education at country level. The Conferences on Population and Development and on Women, and the Social Summit, have demonstrated widespread recognition of the benefits that enhancing the education of girls confers, including increased family incomes, later marriages and reduced fertility rates, reduced infant and maternal mortality rates, better nourished and healthier children, greater opportunities and choices for more women, and greater participation of women in development and in political and economic decision-making.

### *Focus on youth*

159. Contributing to young people's development has important implications for human development and human rights, including strengthening democratic processes and decreasing gender and ethnic discrimination and disparities. The United Nations has continued to build partnerships and strengthen its commitment to supporting young people around the world. In 10 United Nations country teams, inter-agency working groups have been established on children, youth and adolescents.

160. The United Nations International Drug Control Programme sponsored a Youth Vision Drug Abuse Forum bringing together young people from around the world to exchange ideas on tackling drug-related problems. The General Assembly at its special session on the world drug

problem agreed on the importance of reducing the demand for drugs as well as cutting off the supply. The World AIDS Campaign focused on young people in both 1998 and 1999.

161. UNIFEM, UNFPA, UNDP and UNESCO, in partnership with civil society organizations, sponsored the Global Meeting of Generations initiative that fosters dialogue between generations to further human development in the twenty-first century. UNICEF, with the support of the Rockefeller Foundation and the United Nations Foundation, collaborated with a number of United Nations and non-governmental organization partners to develop and support interregional dialogues aimed at formulating policies and programmes which take account of the needs of young people. UNFPA continued to foster regional and national cooperation in adolescent reproductive health by sponsoring a number of events in the Caribbean, sub-Saharan Africa, Asia and the Arab States.

*Advocating higher and more focused  
social spending*

162. The 20/20 initiative, by which recipient countries agree to dedicate 20 per cent of their national budgets—and donors give 20 per cent of their development assistance—to social development spending, has drawn attention to the need to increase spending on social development priorities and has stimulated debate on donor and in-country policies. UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and the World Bank collaborated both at the international level and in specific countries on this issue over the past year, building on work begun after the Social Summit.

163. Thirty-five social sector expenditure reviews have been completed to date. In October 1998, at the sec-

ond international meeting on the 20/20 initiative, representatives from 48 countries adopted the Hanoi consensus, which emphasizes the need for increased investment in social services.

*United Nations collaboration in the fight against HIV/AIDS*

164. The challenge posed by the global AIDS epidemic is growing increasingly serious. By the end of 1998, over 30 million people were infected by HIV/AIDS and almost 14 million had succumbed to the disease. Half of the 6 million new cases of HIV infection in 1998 were young people aged 15 to 24. According to the *World Health Report 1999*, AIDS is now the most deadly infectious disease in the world, killing even more people than tuberculosis.

165. In a number of poor countries, HIV/AIDS is having a major negative impact on progress towards achieving social development goals. For example, according to a report produced by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs in 1998, the nine countries most affected by AIDS will have experienced a 10-year reduction in life expectancy by the year 2000, and a 16-year reduction by 2010-2015. By 2005-2010, infant mortality in the most affected countries could be 28 per cent higher than it would have been in the absence of AIDS, and mortality under age 5 could be 51 per cent higher. Social and economic losses create a downward spiral, reversing hard-won development gains and depriving those infected of any chance of a decent livelihood.

166. In 1998, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme became the seventh sponsor of the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), joining UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA,

UNESCO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank. UNAIDS achievements include the production of a series of guides to the strategic planning process for national responses to HIV/AIDS (with UNAIDS support, 13 countries in Asia and Africa have now completed their strategic plans); the publication of over 100 guides to best practices, which include advocacy material, technical updates and case studies; preparations for a new International Partnership against HIV/AIDS in Africa; the establishment of an inter-agency working group on HIV/AIDS with the participation of 115 United Nations country teams; and the launch of a joint initiative by UNAIDS, UNIFEM and UNFPA to build the capacity of women's organizations and Governments to address the challenges of HIV/AIDS.

## Sustainable development

*167.* The seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999 attracted a record number of ministerial participants, confirming the role of the Commission as the main high-level intergovernmental forum on sustainable development. Participants agreed to address the most pressing problems of sustainable development and management of the world's oceans and seas; to promote sustainable development in tourism; and to encourage further action to achieve more sustainable production and consumption. In addition, the five-year review of progress on the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, which represent more than one fifth of the membership of the United Nations, will be held in September 1999.

*168.* The United Nations Development Group and other bodies in the United Nations system have continued

to work together on sustainable development and environmental issues. In January 1999, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and Habitat, in collaboration with UNDP and the World Bank, launched a joint regional initiative to improve water management in African cities. The Office to Combat Desertification and Drought continues to provide assistance to a number of countries. To date, 49 countries have benefited.

169. The United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration promoted environment-friendly mining activities in Mozambique and Suriname and distributed guidebooks on CD-ROM to over 50 countries. In 1998, UNDP completed 75 conversion projects in 19 countries under the Montreal Protocol, which supports the conversion of contaminated industrial sites into usable, safe land. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and WFP together identified sustainable environmental management practices in areas hosting large numbers of refugees. ESCWA continued to work towards developing environmental indicators for the Arab region.

170. In 1998, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the World Energy Council and UNDP jointly launched the world energy assessment to provide background scientific and technical data for bodies involved in furthering the work of Agenda 21. Through their partnership in the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP, UNEP and the World Bank have helped 138 countries to prepare national strategies to implement their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

171. Reform of the United Nations Secretariat has improved user access to the analytical and technical work of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This in



turn will help ensure that the results of policy deliberations in intergovernmental forums, particularly the Commission on Sustainable Development, contribute more effectively to United Nations support for national sustainable development policies.

## Africa

172. Working with national and regional partners to improve the lives of people in Africa remains a priority for the United Nations Development Group. The challenges are clear. An estimated 44 per cent of Africans, and 51 per cent of those in sub-Saharan Africa, are living in absolute poverty. Of the 30 million people infected by HIV/AIDS in the world, 23 million live in sub-Saharan Africa; 91 per cent of all AIDS deaths in the world have occurred in 34 countries—29 of which are in Africa. If Africa is to reach the Social Summit's target of halving absolute poverty by 2015, annual GDP must rise by at least 7 per cent until 2015. Growth is currently around 3 per cent and is expected to reach 3.5 per cent in 2000. Africa's debt burden increased from \$344 billion in 1997 to \$350 billion in 1998, a sum equivalent to 300 per cent of exports of goods and services. Africa received less than \$5 billion in foreign direct investment, a mere 3 per cent of global flows.

### *Enhancing United Nations collaboration for the development of Africa*

173. I presented my report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa to the Economic and Social Council at its substantive session of 1999. It highlighted the need for

substantial and sustained economic growth and social development to meet the challenges faced by African countries. Against this background, the United Nations Development Group, with some of the Executive Committees, has developed an action plan to identify common activities and the most appropriate contributions from individual agencies.

174. The Administrative Committee on Coordination continues to stress the need to tie United Nations initiatives in Africa—the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and its implementing arm, the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative—into other development undertakings, such as the Tokyo International Conference on African Development, the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative, the Alliance for African Industrialization and the coordinated follow-up to the United Nations conferences. The first annual regional coordination meeting of the United Nations system in Africa was held at Nairobi in March 1999, chaired by the Deputy Secretary-General. It adopted the System-wide Special Initiative and the New Agenda as the framework for coordinating the United Nations approach to the development of Africa.

175. Under the auspices of the United Nations Development Group, 10 African countries have participated in the UNDAF pilot phase. Ten more UNDAFs are expected in Africa by the end of 1999 in preparation for the programme cycles beginning in 2001.

### *Tackling the challenges of poverty in Africa*

176. The Jobs for Africa programme is an integral part of the System-wide Special Initiative and meets commitments made at the Social Summit. It aims to develop and strengthen the capacity of national and regional institutions

and networks in 10 participating countries to combat poverty by generating productive employment. Following up on the Summit and taking on the fight against poverty was also the topic for a subregional meeting organized by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in March 1999.

177. The United Nations Development Programme has sponsored a number of long-term national studies to enable Governments to define objectives for poverty eradication, taking into account the effects of globalization and investment flows. A regional decision-making information system was set up in Zimbabwe in 1999 with outreach to other African countries. The programme has benefited 14 countries to date, and another 30 have made formal requests for support.

178. The Africa 2000 initiative of UNDP, providing support to rural women in Africa for sustainable development activities, had sponsored over 700 projects by the end of 1998. At a cost of \$1.5 billion, WFP is providing assistance to approximately 21 million people in Africa through 100 projects. In southern Africa, WFP has been working with national partners through its vulnerability analysis and mapping units to promote the use of vulnerability monitoring and analysis to develop contingency plans for tackling regional natural disasters.

179. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements established the African Forum on Urban Poverty in September 1998. Its Urban Management Programme, supported by UNDP and the World Bank, already covers 26 African countries. The Sustainable Cities Programme, implemented jointly with UNEP, operates in eight African countries.

### *Focusing on health and education for Africa*

180. Led by UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank, education activities under the Special Initiative focused during the year on improving primary education in 16 countries where primary school enrolment is low. United Nations agencies were also involved in improving the quality of education in Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Malawi, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania.

181. UNAIDS, together with its sponsors (UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA, UNESCO, WHO, the World Bank and the United Nations International Drug Control Programme), intensified its campaign against HIV and AIDS in Africa. Seeking as broad a base as possible for its campaign, UNAIDS has brought together Governments, regional bodies, bilateral development agencies, multilateral organizations and the corporate sector, with commitments from large pharmaceutical corporations, the entertainment industry and the Global Business Council on AIDS, as well as civil society organizations.

182. Africa, whose peoples are major victims of malaria, is a principal beneficiary of the WHO-led Roll Back Malaria campaign, which aims to cut deaths from malaria by 50 per cent by 2010 and 75 per cent by 2015. Other United Nations initiatives, such as National Immunization Days, have also helped women and children in many African countries.

183. The work of UNFPA in assisting countries in Africa to implement the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development has led to concrete improvement in reproductive health care in 19 countries. Four countries have introduced legislation outlawing the practice of female genital mutilation.

184. A major focus of the development activities of WFP is on enhancing women's capacity to increase household food security.

*Building national capacity for good governance and trade*

185. Collaboration with national, regional and international partners in Africa is central to the United Nations efforts to strengthen national capacity for good governance and trade. The Special Initiative governance group established the Africa Governance Forum and is creating comprehensive databases to analyse government practices. The Forum met in June 1999 in Mali to examine the link between governance and conflict management. In addition, UNIFEM's programme on governance and leadership is promoting greater gender balance in decision-making by voters, candidates and elected representatives in Africa.

186. UNDP, together with UNCTAD, UNIDO, UNESCO, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the African Development Bank, OAU and ECA, organized a forum in March 1999 to consider how to create a positive environment for investment and to enhance competitiveness.

187. The Special Initiative trade group, led by UNCTAD in collaboration with WTO and the International Trade Centre, has developed an integrated framework for trade-related technical assistance. The UNCTAD Asia-Africa Business Networking Forum (March 1999) is itself an example of the continuing United Nations support for South-South cooperation.

## United Nations Fund for International Partnerships

188. Since the establishment of the United Nations Fund for International Partnerships in March 1998, four funding rounds have been completed and almost \$140 million awarded to 79 projects covering population and women (33 projects), children's health (15 projects), environment (20 projects) and selected United Nations causes (11 projects) which include the provision of support to the Secretary-General's reform programme. Funds have also been earmarked for emergency assistance relief efforts to the Kosovo region.

189. At the beginning of 1999, a more streamlined and efficient funding process was launched. Separate "programme framework groups" were established to provide guidance for the preparation of specific projects. The groups include population and women, focusing particularly on adolescent girls and the quality of reproductive health services; children's health, focusing particularly on decreasing childhood mortality and reducing smoking; and the environment, focusing particularly on biodiversity and energy and climate change.