



United Nations



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GENERAL ASSEMBLY PRESIDENT HAILS DOHA CONFERENCE

AS PAVING WAY FOR ‘PEOPLE-CENTRED DEVELOPMENT’

Stressing that the world was insisting on democratization of the United Nations and international decision-making processes, General Assembly President Miguel d’Escoto Brockmann said this evening that the successful conclusion of a development financing summit in Doha, Qatar, would pave the way for “people-centred development to replace profit-centred development”.

As he summed up the Follow-up International Conference on Financing for Development on the Implementation of the 2002 Monterrey Consensus, which opened on 29 November, Mr. d’Escoto said at a press briefing that the Conference’s concluding “Doha Declaration” stressed the need to maintain aid commitments despite global economic uncertainty, and called for the convening, “at the highest level”, of a summit under United Nations auspices to examine the impact of the crisis on development and review the international financial and monetary architecture.

He said he planned to make preparations for that summit a priority and to define its organizational structure by no later than March 2009. Further, he had convened a Commission of Experts on Reform of the Monetary and Financial System, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), in response to the current crises that were affecting all countries, large and small, rich and poor.

He said delegations recognized the need for the General Assembly to continue its efforts to bolster the role of the Economic and Social Council in monitoring multilateral financial institutions, their governance, decisions and the consequences of such decisions in order to assess their broader social and economic impacts on growth, employment and, in particular, poverty reduction. Those expanded responsibilities would require reforms in the relationship between the Assembly and the Bretton Woods institutions.

Responding to questions, the Assembly President said that, well ahead of the proposed summit, he planned to present political leaders with a proposal for a new financial architecture, adding that he expected participation at the highest political level, from all regions of the world, for a meeting that would be tantamount to the launching of a new Bretton Woods system.

He said the Doha Conference had not set out to establish alternatives to the Bretton Woods institutions. Stakeholders had come to review the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus and the state of the international development financing agenda. The Declaration recognized that the international context had changed profoundly over the past six years, and discussions during the Conference had evinced a “universal rejection” of the prevailing model that a few countries could make decisions for the entire world.

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Saying that the world had repudiated the notion of a Group of Seven (G-7), a Group of Eight (G-8) or even a G-20, he declared: "We believe the only relevant forum is the G-192 -- that is the entire membership of the United Nations General Assembly." The Conference marked the only time since Monterrey that systemic issues and reform of the global financial system had been discussed in a United Nations forum. Since Monterrey, the great Powers had been trying hard to move such issues outside the United Nations system, so the Conference had been a great advance.

There was also commitment to reactivate the Doha Round of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations. "We did not come to ask the rich to give charity but to stand by past commitments and the moral obligation to help countries that had consistently suffered because of marginalization and exclusion," he declared, adding that it was time to move from the logic of "I and me" to the logic of "we and ours", which was the way to ensure brotherhood, peace and justice.

Many people thought the Conference would not be a success, he noted. Sadly, right until the last minute, some had even been trying to sabotage negotiations, but the "spoilers" had, in the end, come round and decided not to be isolated. The international community had delivered its mandate in the Doha Declaration that the world was moving away from the dominant culture of greed towards democracy, cooperation and peace.

Asked if the Declaration was "mere pious rhetoric" and a restatement of the commitments made at Monterrey that had languished ever since, he said that after Doha, and the strongly stated position of the European Union, there would be greater pressure on those who had sat outside the development financing process.

Indeed, French President Nicolas Sarkozy had presented the European Union's firm decision to ensure that the bloc's Member States would reach the 0.7 per cent gross domestic product target for official development assistance (ODA) in 2015, he recalled. "Some had not wanted us even to mention the official development target here, but we will keep talking about it because it is a debt and a moral obligation," he said, adding that if some countries could find trillions of dollars to prop up their flagging, outmoded institutions, they must stand by their long-promised obligations.

Responding to another question, he said developing and middle-income countries should expand South-South cooperation, even as those countries pressed the richest nations to comply with their commitments. He highlighted the development efforts of Saudi Arabia and Cuba, as well as those of Qatar, but stressed that poverty and hunger were "ticking time bombs" that required the cooperation and political will of all nations. Such democracy was also required of the Bretton Woods institutions, which, since their creation, had slowly been twisted into possessions of the rich; hijacked by the so-called "Washington Consensus".

Expressing optimism that the United Nations was moving in the right direction, he said the world body had been "dragging its feet" in many areas of its mandate, but he had been heartened by the support he had received as he had presented his proposals on democratizing the Organization.