

Ministerial Declaration-2003

“Ministerial declaration Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development”

1. We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegations participating in the high-level segment of the substantive session of 2003 of the Economic and Social Council, held from 30 June to 2 July 2003:

(a) Having considered the theme .Promoting an integrated approach to rural development in developing countries for poverty eradication and sustainable development., the report of the Secretary-General on the subject¹ and the contribution of all the participants, including civil society, in the preparatory process of the high-level segment, held on 24 March and 30 April 2003;

(b) Recalling the Millennium Declaration² and the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences, summits and relevant special sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, including the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing in 1995, as well as the World Food Summit, held in Rome in 1996, and their five-year reviews, the International Conference on Financing for Development, held in Monterrey, Mexico, in 2002, and the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002;

(c) Taking note of the fact that rural areas of developing countries are home to three quarters of the world’s poor and that insufficient progress has been made in recent years in addressing the issues of poverty, hunger and malnutrition;

(d) Recalling the commitment to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration;

(e) Recalling also General Assembly resolution 57/270 B of 20 December 2002, entitled .Integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic and social fields.;

Have adopted the following declaration.

2. We are convinced that eradication of rural poverty and hunger is crucial for the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals, including those contained in the Millennium Declaration. Rural development should be an integral part of national and international development policies, including bilateral donor response strategies and the activities and programmes of the United Nations system.

3. We express our serious concern regarding the famine facing millions of people, especially in Africa. Recognizing that food security is a global concern, we are committed to respond to the internationally recognized emergency food aid needs and to improve famine prevention mechanisms and long-term food security.

4. Rural development should be pursued through an integrated approach, encompassing the economic, social and environmental dimensions, taking into account the gender perspective and consisting of mutually reinforcing policies and programmes. This approach should be balanced, targeted, situation specific, locally owned, include local synergies and initiatives and be responsive to the needs of rural populations.

5. Rural development is the responsibility of each country and is predicated on an enabling national environment. An enabling international economic environment is important to support effective national development efforts, including rural development efforts. An enabling environment combines effective and coherent policies, good governance and accountable institutions at national and international levels as well as the promotion of gender equality and the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development. Robust, broad-based and equitable economic growth as well as human resource development are needed to fight rural poverty.

6. In this regard, despite serious efforts to achieve progress, important issues in the implementation of the Doha Ministerial Declaration of the World Trade Organization, adopted at Doha on 20 November 2001,³ are still outstanding, in particular regarding the commitments under the said declaration for, inter alia, comprehensive negotiations aimed at substantial improvements in market access. In the agricultural sector, without prejudging the outcome of negotiations, reductions of, with a view to phasing out, all forms of export subsidies, substantial reduction in trade-distorting domestic

and differential treatment, and to make a success of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization to be held in Cancun, Mexico, in September 2003.

9. We invite members of the World Trade Organization to implement the commitments regarding trade-related technical assistance and capacity-building for developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, so that they can benefit from liberalized trade opportunities and adopt measures to reduce supply-side constraints, including by improving productivity and product diversification and enhancing competitiveness and community-based entrepreneurial capacity. We urge them to facilitate the accession of developing countries to the Organization, in particular the least developed countries and countries with economies in transition, taking into account the individual level of development of each country that applies for membership. In this regard, we welcome the recent agreement of the Organization to facilitate the accession of the least developed countries.

10. We recognize the vulnerability of the commodity-dependent developing countries, in particular the low-income countries, to market fluctuations and stress the need to support their efforts for the diversification of exports as a means of increasing export earnings and improving terms of trade and to address the impact of the instability of commodity prices. In this context, it is very important to empower commodity producers in developing countries to insure themselves against risk. We underscore the need for reforming the existing facilities to respond to the needs of the rural poor.

11. We urge developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product as official development assistance to developing countries and 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national product of developed countries to least developed countries, as reconfirmed at the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries, and we encourage developing countries to build on progress achieved in ensuring that official development assistance is used effectively to help achieve development goals and targets. We acknowledge the efforts of all donors, commend those donors whose official development assistance contributions exceed, reach or are increasing towards the targets, and underline the importance of undertaking to examine the means and time frames for achieving the targets and goals.

12. Food security, rural and agricultural development must be adequately addressed in the context of national development and poverty eradication as well as in multilateral and bilateral donor response strategies. To that end, we deem it necessary to increase productive investment in rural and agricultural development to achieve lasting food security. We take note with satisfaction of the undertakings made by the members of the Group of Eight, as contained in the Action Plan against Famine, especially in Africa, adopted in Evian, France,

18. We further resolve to enhance the livelihood of the rural poor by aiming to ensure that they have access to adequate quantities of safe and nutritious food and by creating productive and remunerative on- and off-farm employment opportunities, including through the diversification of the rural economy and employment-generating strategies. In this regard, we will encourage South-South cooperation, including the sharing of experiences and best practices.

19. We reaffirm that sustainable agriculture and rural development are essential to the implementation of an integrated approach to food security and safety in an environmentally sustainable way. We recognize the important role of rural populations in sustainably managing natural resources, including biodiversity, and in combating desertification and land degradation. We pledge to promote environmentally sound and sustainable natural resources management, including the implementation of integrated land management, sustainable forest management programmes and water-use plans and the use of traditional and indigenous knowledge and practices as well as modern technologies of sustainable resour

modern technologies, natural resources management and capacity-building. We also call for measures to enhance and expand access to information and communication technologies in the rural areas of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

24. We recognize the crucial importance of enhanced access of the rural poor, women and men, to productive assets, in particular land and water, and stress that priority attention should be given to the adoption of policies and the implementation of laws that guarantee well-defined and enforceable land- and water-use rights and promote legal security of tenure, recognizing the existence of different national laws and/or systems of land access and tenure.

25. We also call for enhanced access to social services for poor people in rural and remote areas. We are committed to improving access to quality education for the rural poor, especially the girl child, through increased investment and full utilization of modern techniques and technologies, including the establishment of remote education systems.

26. We recognize the critical link between

relationship with the land.

30. We reaffirm the goal of expanding access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, particularly in the rural areas of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and express our resolve to the expeditious realization of that goal,

35. Recognizing also the special challenges in rural development faced by small island developing States, we reaffirm our commitment to the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and emphasize in this regard the importance of the international meeting to be held in Mauritius in 2004. Noting also that the geographical situation of the landlocked developing countries is an added constraint on their efforts to promote rural development, we call for the implementation of specific actions related to the particular needs of those countries.

36. We underline the importance of partnerships at the national and international levels to foster collaboration among actors in different sectors. At the national and local levels, we will encourage local authorities, civil society, the private sector and local communities to launch partnerships that support and promote rural development. At the international level, we will facilitate and nurture alliances of Governments, donors, non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector for the promotion of integrated rural development.

37. We welcome the work of the organizations of the United Nations system in eradicating rural poverty and promoting rural development and urge them to ensure that measures are implemented to simplify, harmonize and integrate assessment procedures and programming so as to reduce transaction costs and avoid additional procedural requirements for programme countries and enhance support for their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals, especially those contained in the Millennium Declaration. We emphasize that national and international poverty reduction strategies should target rural areas and households more systematically by integrating poverty eradication and food security as well as environmental objectives more firmly in poverty reduction strategy papers, where they exist, as well as in common country assessments and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. We urge the international and regional financial institutions to enhance their support for rural poverty eradication and rural development in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

38. We commit ourselves to the implementation of the present declaration and call upon civil society, the organizations of the United Nations system and other relevant actors and organizations to lend their full support to the realization of the objectives of integrated rural development for poverty eradication and sustainable development. We agree to review progress or lack thereof in the implementation of the present declaration at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council in 2005.

Notes

1 E/2003/51.

2 General Assembly resolution 55/2.

3 WT/MIN (01)/DEC/1.

4 WT/MIN (01)/DEC/2.

5 *Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August-4 September 2002* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.03.II.A.1 and corrigendum), chap. I, resolution 2, annex.