

Meeting humanitarian commitments

190. The past year was fraught with humanitarian disasters. The extraordinary rise in the number and scale of natural disasters was particularly striking. New armed conflicts broke out with enormous loss of life, massive forced displacement and human suffering in Eritrea, Ethiopia and the southern Balkans, while protracted emergencies continued in Afghanistan, Angola, Sierra Leone, the Sudan and elsewhere.

191. Timely humanitarian action in many countries continued to be compromised by the deliberate targeting of civilians and humanitarian workers and denial of access to humanitarian assistance. Responding to this unacceptable flouting of humanitarian norms, the Security Council initiated a series of open debates on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

Coordinating humanitarian action

192. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has continued to strengthen its three core functions: coordination of humanitarian action, policy development and humanitarian advocacy.

193. Coordination efforts focused on improving the environment for humanitarian action in a number of ways, including negotiation with parties to conflicts over access and security; reinforcement of the principles of humanitarian action; and advocacy with the Security Council and other bodies. The need for greater respect

for, adherence to and application of international laws and norms relating to the rights of civilians has been a central focus in this year of the fiftieth anniversary of the Geneva Conventions. In January and February 1999, the Security Council held two open sessions on this issue. The resulting presidential statement requested that I submit a report on the protection of civilians to the Security Council in September 1999, identifying innovative ways in which the Council, acting within its mandate, could strengthen its capacity to ensure the protection of civilians in conflict.

194. For the first time, the consolidated inter-agency appeals were launched simultaneously (in December 1998 for 1999). As at 31 July, the response to the appeals was about 49 per cent of the amount sought. Excluding south-eastern Europe, however, the response was 31.6 per cent, only marginally better than in 1998. The geographical and sectoral commitment of funds has been extremely uneven, meaning that not even minimum levels of assistance could be guaranteed in certain sectors and that some countries were left critically underfunded. The poor response to crises in Africa, at a time when many donor countries are enjoying a period of prolonged prosperity, was particularly distressing.

195. Effective coordination is particularly important in designing the inter-agency response to the needs of internally displaced persons, since there is no single international lead agency. Work carried out jointly by my Special Representative for internally displaced persons, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has formed the basis for a policy paper of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which will soon be finalized, on protection of internally displaced persons. It identifies

ways of ensuring that protection responsibilities are discharged effectively and sets out a system that can rapidly assign responsibilities to different agencies in emergency situations. Other initiatives during the past year included the undertaking of a review of country situations affected by internal displacement, the preparation of a compendium of good field practice and the development of a global database of internally displaced persons.

196. As the number of major natural and environmental disasters has increased, efforts to enhance the coordination of United Nations responses to them have included the launch of three major inter-agency appeals—for hurricane Mitch and for the floods in Bangladesh and China. In addition, 17 United Nations disaster assessment and coordination teams were dispatched during the year. Situation reports on over 60 natural disasters were disseminated. Twenty-eight international appeals were launched, and over \$1 billion was raised. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and UNDP jointly organized an international disaster management workshop in Beijing in June 1999 to examine ways of enhancing response-preparedness and capacity-building and bridging the gap between emergency relief and early recovery. Regional workshops and seminars were also held. These focused on the development of contingency plans and the strengthening of disaster assessment and coordination teams in disaster-prone regions.

197. A series of thematic events and regional conferences was organized to mark the end of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. This culminated in a programme forum, held at Geneva in July 1999 and involving all partners in the Framework of Action for the Decade. A comprehensive disaster reduction strategy for the twenty-first century was adopted by the forum, and reviewed

by the Economic and Social Council. The latter evaluated the achievements of the Decade and adopted a resolution to ensure continuation of United Nations multisectoral and concerted disaster reduction activities in the future.

198. The Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs, under the chairmanship of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, has achieved greater synergy in dealing with issues that have strong security, peacekeeping and political implications for humanitarian assistance. FAO and WHO have recently been invited to participate in the meetings of the Executive Committee. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee remained the principal forum for inter-agency coordination, consultation and decision-making on humanitarian issues.

199. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee has set up working groups on a number of issues. These include natural disasters, improving the consolidated appeal process, human rights and humanitarian action, internally displaced persons, gender and humanitarian response, training, small arms, assistance to countries in the Commonwealth of Independent States, post-conflict reintegration and millennium initiatives. The admission of the World Bank as a member in March 1999 has further strengthened the effectiveness of the Committee. Major priority has also been given to strengthening the systems for coordination in the field, particularly the capacity of humanitarian coordinators, through, for example, the joint consultation of resident and humanitarian coordinators that was held in December 1998. Generic guidelines for strategic frameworks have also been developed from work piloted in Afghanistan.

Delivering humanitarian services

200. In the past year, the United Nations assisted countries and regions affected by over 60 natural disasters, as well as by man-made emergencies. These included Afghanistan, Angola, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Georgia, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, the Russian Federation, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, the Sudan, Tajikistan, Uganda, the former Yugoslavia and the Great Lakes region of Africa. This assistance has often involved innovative joint initiatives. Some examples are the collaboration on health issues between the Pan American Health Organization and UNICEF against cholera in Central America; initiatives undertaken by UNHCR and UNICEF in West Africa on child soldiers and unaccompanied children; and initiatives on gender by UNICEF and WFP.

201. Attacks on humanitarian personnel continued to pose major problems. In 1998, 22 United Nations staff members and many more local and international personnel from non-governmental organizations involved in complex emergencies lost their lives. The loss of humanitarian personnel in several direct attacks in Angola and Somalia illustrated the growing extent of this problem. The World Food Programme lost 12 staff members in 1998. As a result, it has sought to improve staff security by providing at least three days of basic security awareness training for all agency personnel and making key improvements in the security of field facilities.

202. Disbursements of food aid increased in 1998. WFP assisted nearly 75 million people, with contributions amounting to \$1.7 billion in 1998, a 33 per cent increase over 1997. In recognition of the challenges posed by its in-

creased involvement in relief assistance, WFP established the Protracted Relief and Recovery Operation, a programme aimed at ensuring a seamless transition from emergency relief and life-saving activities to post-crisis recovery.

203. The health assistance programmes of WHO focused on assessing the health needs of those affected by emergencies and disasters, providing health information, assisting in health sector coordination and planning and implementing priority programmes in areas such as mental health, control of epidemics, immunization, pharmaceuticals and nutrition. Priority was given to strengthening the coordination between national health authorities and the international community, as well as to bridging the gap between recovery, rehabilitation and health development activities. Special efforts were made to eradicate polio and to control malaria in countries affected by emergencies, to improve health systems in the Palestinian self-rule areas, and to observe the equitable distribution of commodities imported under Security Council resolution 986 (1995) and the rehabilitation of health services in Iraq.

204. Humanitarian conventions are increasingly flouted in modern warfare, and children are major victims. In addressing the needs of children in conflict, UNICEF has continued to press for commitments from Governments and military bodies to act more effectively to protect children. It has urged an end to the use of child soldiers and the universal adoption of the global ban on anti-personnel landmines. Its in-country programmes to protect children in conflict zones have included mine-awareness programmes, and the negotiation of ceasefire agreements to allow the provision of food or immunization to those in need.

205. My Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict has been working to increase global awareness of the impact of conflict on children and to mobilize the political support of both Governments and civil society to strengthen the protection, rights and welfare of children in armed conflict and its aftermath. At the country level, he undertook a series of visits to countries in, or affected by, armed conflict and sought to obtain commitments from the parties to conflicts and other key actors to providing better protection and welfare for children. Efforts are also under way to promote the inclusion of the protection and needs of children in peace processes, targeting several countries that are undergoing peace-building efforts. In August 1999, the Security Council adopted a resolution stressing the need for greater and more effective efforts to protect children in armed conflicts.

206. In recognizing children and women as bearers of rights who may play a central role in peace-building efforts, UNICEF has contributed to developing and conducting children's rights and gender awareness training for peacekeeping forces. As disasters and crises can affect women and men differently, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee has also developed a common policy on the integration of a gender perspective into humanitarian assistance programmes.

207. The majority of those affected by disasters live in the countryside. Here, FAO has played an important role in assessing damage to local production capacities, providing early warning of impending food emergencies, producing information on crop and food supplies and rendering technical advice to the numerous actors involved in agricultural emergency assistance. FAO has also provided considerable support to disaster-stricken farmers, helping to bridge the gap between relief and rehabilitation.

208. Many of today's gravest humanitarian crises are exacerbated by the use of mines, which in many areas continue to pose deadly threats to civilians long after hostilities have ceased. Responding to the threats posed by landmines, the Mine Action Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has coordinated a number of inter-agency assessment missions, which have defined the problems and challenges facing individual countries and communities and proposed common and comprehensive responses. In addition, it has worked with its partners to develop and implement programmes in mine awareness, victim assistance, mine clearance and advocacy. These and other activities have been strongly supported by Member States, both through contributions to the Voluntary Trust Fund for Mine Action and through the many ratifications of the Ottawa Convention, which allowed it to enter into force on 1 March 1999.

209. The humanitarian community increasingly recognizes that it is part of its responsibility to ensure that relief programmes pave the way for sustainable development. UNDP and humanitarian agencies are working together to ensure that a concern for long-term sustainable human development informs relief operations. Programmes for the demobilization of former combatants, comprehensive mine action, the return and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons and the restoration of the institutions of good governance reflect this concern.

210. The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) combines humanitarian and development objectives in providing relief and social services to approximately 3.6 million Palestine refugees. A special feature of the Agency's operations has been its ability to maintain essential services, often on an

emergency basis, in war and conflict situations. However, the Agency's continuing financial deficit, which reached \$70 million against its 1999 budget of \$322 million, has inevitably had a negative effect on the level and standard of services.

Assisting refugees

211. By the end of 1998, there were 21.4 million refugees and persons of concern to UNHCR compared with 22.3 million in 1997. Just over half (11.4 million) were refugees; the remainder comprised internally displaced persons, returnees, asylum-seekers and stateless people. The vast majority of refugees and persons of concern were in Africa, Asia and Europe.

212. In contrast to previous years, there were no large refugee movements in 1998 or in the beginning of 1999. Though numerous, the emergencies the humanitarian community dealt with were relatively small in size and of low visibility. This pattern changed dramatically in the last week of March 1999. From then, over the next three months, 850,000 Kosovar Albanians were forced from their homes—one of the largest and most rapid refugee exoduses of modern times. UNHCR and its partners, with the logistical support of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, mounted a huge relief operation to assist those who streamed into Albania, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Montenegro. More than 90,000 refugees were moved to countries in Europe and beyond under the auspices of the humanitarian evacuation programme. When peace was restored to Kosovo, the refugees returned almost as suddenly and in as large numbers as they had

left. In just two weeks, more than 400,000 refugees crossed back into Kosovo.

213. The Kosovo crisis provides a graphic example of the close relationship between human rights abuses, war and refugee flows. The humanitarian and human rights communities both increasingly accept that responses to humanitarian crises must also tackle human rights failings. In Kosovo, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights broke new ground by dispatching envoys to gather information about human rights violations and establishing field offices expressly for this purpose.

214. Africa provides many more tragic examples. The crises in Guinea-Bissau and Sierra Leone forced hundreds of thousands to flee their homes. Renewed fighting in the Democratic Republic of the Congo not only provoked new movements of refugees and displaced persons, but also made it extremely hazardous for humanitarian agencies to continue to provide relief. Late in 1998, the armed conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia led to a new spate of displacement and mass expulsions in the Horn of Africa, while the internal war in the Republic of the Congo impelled 25,000 Congolese refugees from the Pool region to cross into Bas-Congo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

215. There was only limited voluntary repatriation in 1998. Ethiopian refugees were able to return from the Sudan; refugees returned from Ethiopia to north-west Somalia, indicating the restoration of some degree of peace and stability to at least parts of the Horn of Africa. In West Africa, the repatriation of Tuareg refugees to Mali and the Niger was completed, while sizeable numbers of Liberians returned home, either spontaneously (160,000 refugees) or with UNHCR assistance (110,000 since 1997). In Central America, long-standing Guatemalan refugee problems

moved towards a successful conclusion thanks to a combination of voluntary repatriation and local integration in Mexico.

216. In other situations, however, continuing violence or a breakdown in political negotiations disrupted plans for refugees to return, leading in extreme cases to further exoduses. This was notably the case in Angola, where renewed hostilities caused a new wave of refugees and generated even greater numbers of internally displaced persons, forcing UNHCR to suspend its repatriation programme. Armed conflict in southern Sudan ruled out plans for the voluntary repatriation of some 240,000 refugees from Ethiopia and Uganda; some 124,000 Somali refugees in Kenya were likewise unable to return to their country of origin; around 120,000 Sahrawi refugees continued to live in exile, waiting for a successful conclusion to negotiations on Western Sahara; refugees from Burundi, numbering some 270,000, had to remain in the United Republic of Tanzania, where their presence was a major source of tension between the two States.

217. Solutions proved equally elusive in other parts of the world. In May 1998, internal conflict again broke out in Georgia, prompting 40,000 people to flee from the Gali area. Many were being displaced for the second time. The repatriation of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and the Islamic Republic of Iran was impeded by continuing instability in Afghanistan, where the reintegration and rehabilitation activities of UNHCR came to a virtual halt. The repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Tamil refugees to Sri Lanka from India proved impossible as a result of the intensity of the Sri Lankan civil war. UNHCR urged the Governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar to accelerate the voluntary repatriation of the estimated 20,000 Muslim

refugees who remain in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The repatriation programme resumed in November 1998.

218. The challenges facing UNHCR in these volatile and often stalemated situations are compounded by the fact that safe refuge in neighbouring States, or in countries further afield, is becoming increasingly difficult to secure for victims of war or human rights abuses. Countries in both the developing and the industrialized world are increasingly reluctant to accept the basic obligations of refugee protection. Poor countries argue that they have had to bear a disproportionate burden of the global refugee problem for too long.

219. Responding to these and other concerns, UNHCR has intensified its efforts under its protection mandate, giving prominence to advocacy activities such as the global campaign to promote States' accession to international instruments for the protection of refugees and to the conventions on statelessness. At the same time, it has taken steps to ensure that protection needs are better integrated into assistance programmes.

Engaging with globalization

220. Globalization is a summary term for the increasingly complex interactions between individuals, enterprises, institutions and markets across national borders. The manifold challenges it poses, challenges that cannot successfully be addressed by nation States acting on their own, provide the most immediate and obvious reason for strengthening multilateral cooperation. Globalization is manifest in the growth in trade, technology and financial flows; in the continuing growth and increasing influence of international civil society actors; in the global operations of transnational corporations; in the vast increase in transboundary communication and information exchanges, most notably via the Internet; in transboundary transmission of disease and ecological impact; and in the increased internationalization of certain types of criminal activity. Its benefits and risks are distributed unequally, and the growth and prosperity it provides for many are offset by the increasing vulnerability and marginalization of others—and by the growth of “uncivil society”. During the past year, the United Nations has been examining the various dimensions of globalization—economic, social, environmental and gender—in some detail.

Economic and social dimensions

221. Only a year ago, a worldwide global recession was seen as a distinct possibility. Fortunately, such an outcome has thus far been avoided. Two years of crisis-

induced international financial turbulence have nonetheless reduced global economic growth substantially. Other than Japan, the developed economies—conventionally viewed as the engines of growth in the world economy—have barely been affected, but the vast majority of developing and transition economies have experienced at the very least a slowdown—and in some cases a reversal—in economic growth, with its concomitant setbacks in social progress. The more favourable trends of the pre-crisis era may well be restored, but this will take time, and the losses of 1998 and 1999 can never be made up. Meanwhile, the world remains vulnerable to similar disruptions in the future, underlining the need for action to prevent such a possibility.

222. In the majority of countries, growth for the foreseeable future will fall short of what is necessary to reduce the number of people living in poverty. In developing countries as a whole, 1.5 billion people continue to live on less than \$1 per day. Unfortunately, the commitment of the international community to the eradication of poverty has yet to produce results.

223. During the year, the United Nations provided a valuable platform for dialogue on the financial crisis, the persistence of poverty, the marginalization of Africa and the least developed countries and other dimensions of globalization.

224. At the intergovernmental level, the General Assembly is increasingly engaged with globalization issues. In September 1998, the Assembly held a two-day high-level dialogue on the theme of the social and economic impact of globalization. This innovative process, which involved ministerial round tables and panels, drew together perspectives from Governments, civil society, the private sector and the United Nations system and demonstrated the

unique ability of the United Nations to engage a broad range of stakeholders on issues of critical importance to the international community.

225. Recognizing both the challenges and opportunities that today's globalized financial markets present, particularly for developing and transition economies, the General Assembly decided in 1997 to consider convening a high-level international intergovernmental forum on financing for development, not later than 2001. In the first half of 1999, the Working Group of the General Assembly on Financing for Development agreed that the forum would address national, international and systemic issues relating to financing for development in a holistic manner in the context of globalization and interdependence. The Working Group proposed that the forum involve all relevant stakeholders, including IMF and the World Bank. In this regard, the Economic and Social Council has recommended setting up a joint task force of United Nations and Bretton Woods institutions to facilitate the further involvement of those institutions in the finance for development process launched by the General Assembly.

226. The Economic and Social Council conducted a number of internal debates on the socio-economic dimensions of globalization during the year, and is working more and more with its counterparts in the Bretton Woods institutions in tackling these broad issues. The second special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions was held in 1999 and was complemented by a number of exchanges between the Council and the Executive Directors of the World Bank and IMF. A further visit to the Council in the autumn of 1999 by the Executive Directors of the Bank and IMF, following their annual meetings, is being arranged. The Development Committee recommended that the United Nations

further refine the principles and good practice in social policy prepared by the World Bank as follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development.

227. The functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council—those addressing social development, the advancement of women and population and development—continued their work on the follow-up to United Nations conferences. Each of these broad issues is profoundly affected by globalization. Major achievements were the finalization of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the five-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development, conducted at a special session of the General Assembly in June/July 1999. At its substantive session of 1999 the Economic and Social Council focused on the related issues of poverty, employment and gender equality, and the development of Africa.

228. The impact of globalization on gender in the world of work is both important and complex. It is the focus of a major study, the *1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development*, which has involved ILO, UNCTAD, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the World Bank, and which I will submit to the General Assembly.

229. The Commission for Social Development considered the impact of globalization on access to social services and recommended greater international coordination in the planning and financing of such services. The Commission on Population and Development considered the relationship between population growth, structure and distribution and sustained economic growth and sustainable development. The deliberations of that Commission highlighted how demographic challenges are affected by

globalization, particularly with respect to the international movement of people and the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV.

230. The Commission on Sustainable Development dealt with a number of important challenges posed by globalization, including the management of the oceans, tourism, which is one of the fastest growing industries in the world economy, and the development challenges confronting small island developing States. It has proposed, among other ideas, steps for strengthening the work of the General Assembly on ocean affairs and policy guidelines for sustainable tourism. It also looked at the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States for the review which is to take place in the General Assembly in September 1999.

231. The Commission on Human Rights, recognizing that the driving forces of globalization can have major implications for human rights, particularly in developing countries, requested all treaty bodies, special rapporteurs, independent experts and working groups to address the impact of globalization on human rights within their respective mandates. The Subcommission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights was asked to submit a comprehensive study on this issue to the Commission at its next session.

232. At Headquarters, the new management arrangements and other reforms have enabled the Secretariat and other bodies to contribute more effectively to the ongoing dialogue on globalization. The Deputy Secretary-General leads a task force of senior officials which is coordinating the United Nations response to a range of globalization issues. The Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs has issued reports on the need for the reform of the global financial architecture and on the debt problems of

developing countries. New reports are being prepared on development finance and the social dimensions of macro-economic policy as a contribution to the debate on socio-economic questions related to globalization.

233. One of the consequences of globalization has been the reaffirmation of regional identity. Addressing regional issues and enhancing cooperation with regional institutions via the regional commissions remains central to the work of the Organization. During the past year, the regional commissions have provided the vehicle for in-depth consultations involving Governments and civil society on the agenda of the Millennium Assembly. Globalization has also become a major research focus for the regionally dispersed campuses of the United Nations University and many of the other United Nations research institutes around the world.

234. The challenges of globalization are too great for Governments and international organizations to deal with on their own. Meeting in October 1998, the Administrative Committee on Coordination placed the challenges arising from globalization and the adverse effects of the financial crisis centrally on its agenda. Following that meeting, the United Nations Development Group was requested to develop an action plan for United Nations country teams to work together with national partners in response to the challenges of globalization and the financial crisis in East Asia. Drawing on existing strategies, the plan presented a range of specific options under four broad areas of activity: (1) monitoring the impact of the crisis, particularly on vulnerable groups; (2) assisting individual countries to carry out the necessary structural and institutional reforms; (3) helping to strengthen and build basic social services and safety nets for the least fortunate; and (4) forging closer links with the World Bank.

235. At the first regular session of 1999 of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, in April, the members concluded that, to meet the challenges of globalization, the United Nations system needed to cooperate more effectively with the private sector and civil society, as well as with Governments. Cooperation can be deepened through partnerships, and it was for this reason that I proposed at Davos that the power and reach of the corporate sector be engaged to further the goals of the Organization. At the second regular session, in October 1999, the members of the Committee will endeavour to reach some overall conclusions on the capacity of the United Nations system to respond flexibly and effectively to the challenges of globalization in the next century.

236. Despite the need to involve all stakeholders in devising responses to globalization, much of the responsibility for addressing its negative consequences rests with the world's most advanced economies. That is why I wrote to the leaders of the G-8 prior to their summit in Cologne in June 1999, urging them to act to prevent the majority of the world's population being left on the margins of the global economy. I urged them to boost their own economic growth, to provide additional official development assistance and debt relief and to bring the representatives of the developing countries and economies in transition into the deliberations on a new international financial system. Although some progress has been made in these areas, far more needs to be done.

237. Progress was made at the Cologne summit on the issue of relieving the debt burden of the heavily indebted poor countries. However, financial and operational details still need to be discussed by the Ministers of Finance at the next session of the Interim Committee, and in the Economic and Social Council this year emphasis was

placed on ensuring adequate financing for the full implementation of the G-7 decisions at Cologne. With regard to official development assistance the picture is bleak, however. Between 1990 and 1998, the share of GDP devoted to official development assistance in the developed economies fell from 0.33 per cent to 0.23 per cent.

238. Countries enter the global trading system from very different starting points, and globalization and liberalization affect them unevenly. There have been notable developing country successes where domestic reforms have provided increased dynamism to international trade and investment. Yet problems of access to markets, capital and technology remain pervasive, and many developing countries find it extremely difficult to make the institutional transformations necessary for a beneficial integration into the world economy. In November 1999, the third session of the Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organization will be held at Seattle, and it now seems likely that the Conference will launch a new round of multilateral trade negotiations. In the Economic and Social Council this year, the idea of making this round into a “development round” enjoyed considerable support. A new trade and development round could provide major opportunities for developing countries to negotiate their integration into the world economic system on the basis of a positive agenda. UNDP and UNCTAD are joining forces to help developing countries to formulate negotiating positions for the Conference.

Globalization and the environment

239. Changes in the global environment do not respect national boundaries and represent one of the most

critical challenges of globalization. Nowhere is this more evident than in the threats posed to the world's population by global warming. These threats can only be addressed by far-reaching multilateral agreement, but the political consensus necessary to achieve this has not been easy to obtain. The fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was held in Buenos Aires in November 1998 to begin the process of deciding the rules for implementation of the mechanisms agreed in Kyoto in 1997 and to adopt a two-year plan of action.

240. The Tenth Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer was held at Cairo in November 1998. Its agenda focused on strengthening international efforts to reverse the destruction of the Earth's protective ozone layer. For the first time, it took up the challenge of making policies to protect the ozone layer consistent with the ongoing efforts to reduce emissions of the greenhouse gases that cause climate change.

241. In February 1999, at Cartagena, the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity examined the risks that biotechnology may pose for biological diversity and human health, its socio-economic implications for developing countries and the relevance of biosafety concerns in developing a precautionary approach to risk prevention. The international community is pursuing a protocol on biosafety that, among other aims, seeks to ensure that living modified organisms are transported into countries only with their prior informed consent.

242. Headway continues to be made in the global chemical safety agenda. International consensus was finally reached on the need for a legally binding treaty to

promote chemical safety by preventing unwanted trade in hazardous chemicals and pesticides. In this regard, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade was opened for signature in September 1998. In January 1999, at the second negotiating session, solid progress was made in the drafting of a global treaty to reduce and eliminate environmental emissions and discharges of persistent organic pollutants. The Criteria Expert Group has now met. The third negotiating session will be held at Geneva in September 1999, and a series of regional workshops are planned.

243. The Global International Water Assessment, a major initiative led by UNEP and financed by the Global Environment Fund, was launched to assess key issues and problems facing the aquatic environment over the next four years. The Assessment focuses on the problems of shared, transboundary waters. It is designed not only to analyse current problems but also to develop scenarios for the future condition of the world's water resources. Policy options will be analysed with a view to providing sound scientific advice for decision makers and managers concerned with water resources.

244. At the European regional level, the third Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health was held in London in June 1999. The Protocol on Water and Health, attached to the United Nations/Economic Commission for Europe Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, was signed by 35 countries, including 16 countries in transition. The Conference built on foundations laid at previous environment and health conferences (Frankfurt, 1989, and Helsinki, 1994). It marked a new commitment to improving the environment and health in the twenty-first century

in view of the need for international cooperation to deal with transboundary problems, such as air pollution, the continuing lack of access to safe water and sanitation, and transport, where solutions have yet to be found to the adverse effects of increasing traffic levels on health and the environment.

245. Achieving effective, legally binding agreements to safeguard the environment remains a major challenge, particularly with respect to creating environmentally sensitive international trade regimes. UNEP, together with UNCTAD, is analysing the social and environmental impact of the economic trends associated with globalization. It is focusing in particular on clarifying potential areas of conflict and convergence between the global trade and environmental agendas. It is also assessing the value of using economic instruments to help to implement environmental agreements.

246. UNEP has pursued my call at the World Economic Forum at Davos for engagement with the private sector, for example through the adoption of the International Declaration on Cleaner Production. There has also been substantial progress in the work of UNEP with the financial services industry and the telecommunication and tourism sectors, including through a new initiative with tour operators.

“Uncivil society”

247. Globalization has brought many benefits but it has also been associated with the unrelenting growth of cross-border illegal activities, which have created a nether-world economy, running into the hundreds of billions of dollars, which threatens the institutions of the State and

civil society in many countries. Production, trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs and the spread of transnational organized crime are the main challenges faced by the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention, which consists of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the Centre for International Crime Prevention, in confronting “uncivil society”.

248. At the twentieth special session of the General Assembly, Member States made a historic commitment to eliminate, or significantly reduce, the illicit cultivation of the opium poppy, coca bush and cannabis by 2008. The critical importance of demand reduction in the campaign to curtail drug consumption within 10 years was also highlighted.

249. On the supply side, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme is playing a catalytic role in developing an overall strategy for eliminating illicit crops and drug trafficking. This strategy is predicated on the assumption that the drug problem needs to be addressed holistically, which in turn requires close cooperation between the Programme and its national and international partners, as well as the international financial institutions. Reducing incentives to cultivate illegal crops requires improving the overall quality of life in rural communities; this in turn means that greater attention must be paid to providing farmers with legal economic alternatives, including basic health, education and social services. On the demand side, the Programme has launched a new initiative to assist Governments in establishing an epidemiological database that will inform officials about the extent and type of drug abuse occurring within their borders. This will help them to develop more effective prevention, treatment and rehabilitation policies.

250. The Centre for International Crime Prevention has continued to promote efforts to address the growing challenges of transnational crime. In March 1999, it launched three global programmes against transnational organized crime, trafficking in human beings and corruption. The Ad Hoc Committee on the Elaboration of a Convention against Transnational Organized Crime has made considerable headway in drafting the convention and its three protocols on trafficking in human beings, migrants and firearms.

251. The rapid expansion of the global financial system and the Internet has increased the challenges posed by money-laundering. In response, the global programme against money-laundering of the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention is currently designing a global initiative, the United Nations Offshore Forum, to be launched early in 2000, to prevent the misuse of the offshore financial sector for the laundering of criminal proceeds. The wider objectives of this initiative are to improve transparency in international transactions and to stimulate greater international cooperation in dealing with transnational criminal activity involving offshore financial centres. The global programme against money-laundering will also continue to help Governments to meet the commitment they made at the twentieth special session of the General Assembly to adopt national money-laundering legislation and programmes by 2003.

Implications of globalization for security

252. Globalization has a number of implications for global and national security, some positive, some negative. Global market forces can generate wealth and spread

prosperity, but where development is uneven the result can be increased political tensions and risks of instability—as we have recently witnessed following the East Asian financial crisis. Ironically, the same crisis reduced defence spending in the region, checking what some had characterized as a regional arms race. In Western Europe, the logic of market forces has deepened European integration, giving all parties a clear vested interest in the peaceful resolution of inter-State disputes.

253. Many commentators see an important association between the spread of economic liberalism, which is one of the hallmarks of globalization, and the expansion of political liberalism. More than 60 per cent of the world's States now have some form of democratic government. Proponents of what has been called the “democratic peace thesis” point out that democracies almost never fight each other and have far lower levels of internal armed conflict than non-democracies. They argue that insofar as the expansion of market forces facilitates the emergence of democracy, globalization has a positive impact on global security.

254. Globalization also has a dark side. Global demand for particular commodities, such as timber, diamonds and drugs, has provided the funds that have allowed warring factions to sustain fighting over many years. The same Internet that has facilitated the spread of human rights and good governance norms has also been a conduit for propagating intolerance and has diffused information necessary for building weapons of terror.

255. Rising levels of industrial development also mean that more and more States have access to the basic technologies needed to make weapons of mass destruction, while the increasingly open global market makes controlling traffic in the precursors of weapons of mass destruction increasingly difficult.