

Statement
by
Mr. Vladimir Petrovsky
Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations
Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva
at the presentation of the 1998 Human Development Report
Palais des Nations, 4 September in Salle VIII @ 15:00

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honor and a privilege to be chairing the information session dedicated to the presentation of the 1998 Human Development Report published under the auspices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

This year's report examines consumption patterns from the human development perspective. The choice of this issue could not have been more appropriate nor more timely with the indisputable and substantial social and economic impact of globalization. The Secretary-General emphasized this same concern this week at the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in South Africa when he stated: "Globalization has raised living standards for many, but its volatility has made life more difficult for many others, whose lives have been dislocated by change. Moreover, it threatens to leave a large part of the world behind."

Although there has been a huge increase in consumption, which has reached US\$24 trillion in 1998, as per this year's report, more than one billion poor people have been left out of this global growth and are not able to meet even their basic needs. There can clearly be neither human dignity nor social justice when basic human needs go unanswered. As the Secretary-General of the Conference on

Disarmament, I cannot but mention that while global military expenditures have been estimated this year at US\$780 billion, the annual and substantially lower cost towards the achievement of universal access to basic social services remains largely unaddressed. The attainment of basic education for all, would require US\$6 billion, water and sanitation for all-US\$9 billion and basic health and nutrition for all US\$13 billion- pittance when compared with the ~~US\$780~~⁶⁰⁰ figure for military expenditures.

More humane patterns of consumption towards a more human development require a strong commitment from Member States in their domestic policies, as well as the concerted action of the international community, non-governmental and community organizations. Accordingly, humanitarian considerations should be introduced into the economic decision-making process both on the national and international levels. Human development dictates that the well-being of the individual must be at the center of the development process with an emphasis on its ends rather than its means. The aim is the eradication of poverty and the creation of an enabling environment for people to enjoy healthy and creative lives and as this year's report stresses: " a sustainable consumption for human development".

The process of globalization coupled with the imperative for sustainable human development confers an analytically new character to global interdependence and imply a necessary change in the paradigm of human existence. It is clearly possible for both States and peoples to benefit from this interdependence and openness, provided the adverse effects of the same can be

checked. In the recent words of the Secretary-General: "...While the processes of global change cannot be fought, they can and must be managed. The groups and individuals who stand to lose from change need protection - not against competition, but against its social consequences."

On the one hand, the benefits of globalization and trade liberalization seem to elude least developed countries. Last year, the Secretary-General, told participants of the World Economic Forum in Davos that "eighty per cent of direct foreign investment in the developing world goes to only a dozen countries", while just 1 per cent goes to the 48 least developed countries. Yet on the other hand, some developing countries have been able to take full advantage of globalization increase consumption for human development and reduce poverty and in the process.

The newly released Human Development Report makes it quite clear that globalization offers great opportunities, but only if it is managed carefully and with more concern for global equity. The problem is so serious that it demands efforts at all levels; national, regional and global. The Report states that the "human consequences of current consumption patterns are unacceptably high and recommends an agenda for action to create a more enabling environment for a more humane consumption. The Report also finds that gross inequalities in consumption opportunities have excluded over 1 billion people who fail to meet even their basic consumption requirements.

This year's report is yet more evidence that what each of us does can and does effect other members of our human family in other parts of our increasingly inter-connected world. It makes clear that what is consumed in one country may have major ramifications in another.

In the words of our Secretary-General: " We need global answers to global questions. Our response to global economics must be...global politics." Let us hope that this year's report and appeal will be heard by all actors of the political, social and economic scene. Through concerted actions of governmental structures, private sector partners and civil society acting as a whole, globalization of consumption can yield globalization of well-being, which alongside with peace and stability, is the major aim of the United Nations.