STATEMENT BY MR. NITIN DESAI
UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL
DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS
UNITED NATIONS

SIXTY-THIRD MEETING
WASHINGTON, D.C. – APRIL 30, 2001
Following extensive intergovernmental discussions and consultations, the United Nations General Assembly has decided to convene at the highest political level, an International Conference on Financing for Development in Mexico in March 2002. The objective will be to agree on concrete measures on each of the six topics included in the substantive agenda.

The preparatory processes for this event have already fostered unprecedented dialogue on financing for development among international institutions and with the private sector and “civil society”. Although based in New York, the process has also involved stakeholders in all major regions of the world economy. Activities have been particularly intense in the past six months.

In January 2001, the Secretary-General of the United Nations presented as a starting point for discussion in the Preparatory Committee, a set of recommendations on each of the six items on the substantive agenda of the Conference. This report was prepared by a team drawn from all relevant parts of the United Nations and from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organization (WTO). In addition, each of the regional commissions of the United Nations, in cooperation with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, and with the participation of the regional development banks, the Bretton Woods institutions and non-state stakeholders, undertook regional consultations, that led to reports for the preparatory process. The Preparatory Committee also held hearings in New York with world business leaders and with civil society representatives.

Members of the Bureau of the Preparatory Committee met with the Executive Boards of the World Bank and IMF in early February 2001. Thereafter, there was a meeting of the Preparatory Committee in which senior officials of the IMF, the World Bank and WTO have participated actively. At this meeting, a large number of Governments included representatives of their finance ministries, central banks or development cooperation ministries among their participants in the discussions.

The special high-level meeting of the Economic and Social Council with the Bretton Woods institutions on 1 May will address some of the subjects on the proposed agenda for the Conference. For its next meeting on 2 May, the additional inputs available to the Preparatory Committee will include the outcome of these discussions, a compilation of proposals submitted by Governments and a working paper prepared by the intergovernmental Facilitator to focus the Committee’s substantive work.

As a complement to these intergovernmental discussions, the Secretary-General has appointed a panel of senior experts on Financing for Development, headed by the former

---

1 The report of the Secretary-General (A/AC.257/12), the reports of the regional consultations (A/AC.257/13-17), and summaries of the hearings (A/AC.257/18-19) may be downloaded from the FfD website (http://www.un.org/esa/ffd/) or obtained from the United Nations.

2 For the outcome of the discussions, see “Joint Statement of the Co-Chairmen at the Conclusion of the Second Substantive Session of Preparatory Committee on Financing for Development, 23 February 2001,” on the FfD web site.

3 Both the compilation and the working paper are available on the web site and will be available in all official languages at the Preparatory Committee meeting.
President Zedillo of Mexico. In addition, the Trade and Development Committee of WTO is preparing a contribution to the preparatory process.

When the Preparatory Committee reconvenes in October 2001, it should be able to identify a select number of proposals for consideration and action by the Conference the following March. Consultations among stakeholders to refine these proposals for the Conference are expected to take place during the second half of 2001 and early 2002.

World Summit on Sustainable Development

The World Summit on Sustainable Development will be held in 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa. The main objectives of the Summit are to reinvigorate the global commitment to, and achieve a higher level of international solidarity and partnership in, the promotion of sustainable development. The Summit is expected to provide the strategic blueprint for continuing efforts to pursue sustainable development, including specific and time-bound commitments for achieving sustainable development goals and objectives, to be reinforced by the supplemental commitments from other stakeholders, such as civil society and the private sector.

Since UNCED, significant progress has been made in formulating and disseminating the concept and theoretical underpinnings of sustainable development. However, the international community has not made sufficient progress in translating the concept of sustainable development into working practices, i.e., in giving an operational focus to the integration of economic, social and environmental components of sustainable development on a scale significant enough to bring about lasting changes in production and consumption patterns and in economic growth paths.

The emphasis on implementation will invariably highlight the resource and capacity constraints facing developing countries. The Summit is expected to build on the International Conference on Financing for Development and strengthen the effort to mobilize substantial, new and additional financial resources for sustainable development. The Summit may also address the strengthening of international institutions that deal with the most crucial elements of sustainable development, particularly those that have broad spectrum operational responsibilities for environment and development.

Within this operational focus it is expected that the Summit will focus on the consequences of globalization, the poverty-environment nexus, risk-management and disaster prevention, the prospects of finance for sustainable development, technology transfer, the ethics of global responsibility and related institutional issues.