

I. NEWNESS OF THE DOCUMENT AS AN OUTCOME OF A NEW PROCESS

The Declaration is clearly focussed on qualitative goals. However the qualitative goals are translated in the Programme of Action into quantitative targets.

With the acknowledgement of well known limits in resources and in the capacity of the earth to absorb the human activity, there is a new expression of care for people.

In a democracy, political will can only be expressed as an outcome of the aspirations of the alive forces in society. The commitments made by the Heads of State and of Government because of the massive presence of NGOs will be accountable to the civil society.

Emphasis is put on what really matters - well-being, survival and decency of life of all human beings.

But if people are first, means have to be put where they belong, goals have to be redirected to people, to the satisfaction of their needs, to the improvement of their quality of life.

The so much needed reversal of logic in dealing with the pressing needs of humankind is present here. At the heart of potential conflicts, it is not the so called hard sectors which count but rather those sectors that are considered soft sectors. In a lucid understanding of societal processes, peace starts there. Social development is indeed the hard sector of all public policies. It is there that courage, determination, capacity to risk, and true compassion are made manifest.

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II - UN PATH TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

For 4 decades the International development Strategies focussed on the economic growth, on improved conditions for agriculture and industry. They were in the path of almost exclusive material according to the main principles and convictions of the industrialization era.

growth

Obviously, these Strategies were aimed at the betterment of the human condition. They included references to "human development" (IIStrat.), or to "social development" (IIIStrat.) The main ingredients of such references have found their way to the Programme of Action presented to this Conference.

Until now 'social development' was well understood in its meaning: "Countries will pursue the objectives of the reduction of poverty, promotion of employment opportunities and the provision of the right to work through enhanced economic growth and measures to ensure a fair distribution of the benefits of development and institutional reform".

But the place given to it in the overall development plan or strategy would reduce it to a mere series of good intentions: "Each country will freely determine and implement appropriate policies for social development within the framework of its



development plan and priorities and in accordance with its cultural identity, socio-economic structure and stage of development".

But in spite of the "human" concern, it was taken for granted that those 'human/social' goals would be implemented in so far as the economic conditions would allow, in accordance of the socio-economic structure and stage of development. *with*

There is a 180degrees shift from these perspectives to the spirit of the present Summit. The Summit is undoubtedly geared towards a commitment "to a political, economic, ethical and spiritual vision for social development" (#22) which:

- 'will place people at the center of development'
- 'recognize that empowering people and to strenghten their own capacities is a main objective of development and its principal resource'
- 'ensure equity among generations *and*
- 'protect the integrity of the environment'
- 'recognize social development as national responsibility'
- 'outline a new and stenghtened approach to social development'.

How did the international community come to this strong and unparalleled position?

At different periods new concepts emerge to enrich the limited concept of development as equated most of all with economic growth. It must be kept in mind that this conviction was less an ideological one than the immediate 'reading' of the economic boom of the industrilaized countries.

When the process of development started to appear inadequateli focussed the United Nations system introduced the concept of 'beasic needs'.

Then there was a sense of priorities to be established so as to guarantee that each country would workout its own strategy. There were criticisms and resistances, though. In them the relationship between international community and national sovereignty was at stake.

In spite of the difficulties, the concept of 'basic needs' was giving attention to people in their real situations- social policies had to be analysed and eventually transformed.

To the 'danger' of a uniform pattern, felt by some of Third World countries, responded the concept of endogeneous development', elaborated mostly in the context of UNESCO in the late 70s.

Basically it conveyed the idea that development starts where people are, with their life-style, traditions, values, culture. Endogeneous development has attempted to put culture and people's identity at the center of the process of development.

None of these concepts was made operational. On the contrary.



While the UNO and its agencies went on with newer and more refined formulations the Bretton Woods institutions became stronger and stronger in their uniform approach to economic restructuring.

Meanwhile the awareness of the degradation of the environment and of the scarcity of basic resources led, through international meetings, ecological movement and the Bruntland report, to the concept of 'sustainable development'. It was a response to nature as a new actor in the economical equation and, therefore, in the political scene. 'Sustainability' was seen to replace 'economic growth' as a new criteria encompassing all societal and economic processes.

Still, development was not incorporating the main new elements that came into focus. Human development stressed the economic/social process had no sense if it was not aiming at the human person. New indicators came sharply into light and a huge amount of research was done around the world.

With the disappearance of the military threat from the Cold War, security ceased to be viewed only in terms of the collective safety but became as well the security of the individual human person.

Amazingly so, while in such a short time (from the mid 80's to the mid 90's) a search for paths for development was intensified, a totally new phenomena emerged from the evolution of all countries. The model of development followed by the North is followed by all countries. Alternatives even in theoretical terms seem to have vanished.

Moreover, having listened through Public Hearings to individuals from NGOs, scientific groups, public institutions, we have signs from every region that indicate that the practice is far from the concepts. Paralyzing conditionality, as well as a distorted market/prevent many countries from creating the conditions out of which social development could have evolved.

Is this the good way to proceed?

As one of my colleagues in the Independent Commission for Population and Quality of Life has clearly said:

"Whatever has worked up to now, in terms of development, is no longer working satisfactorily. (...the development paradigm in the North cannot be sustained and should not be emulated. The poverty in the South should not be sustained and should be corrected.

We haven't got it right, but we believe that on the basis of the humanness and of the humanness of humanity, we can get it right."