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General Secretariat
Social Affairs Sector
Development and Social Policies Department
The Technical Committee of Arab Social Affairs Ministers

Final Communiqué of the First Meeting of the Ministers in Charge of Development and Social Affairs in the Arab and South American Countries

Cairo: 2nd - 3rd May 2007

Final Communiqué of the First Meeting for the Ministers in Charge of Development and Social Affairs in the Arab and South American Countries

We, the Ministers in charge of Social Affairs and Development in the Arab and South American Countries attending the kind invitation from the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity - at the headquarters of the League of Arab States (LAS), 2nd - 3rd May 2007;

Based on our mutual belief that human being is the creator and the target of development, and that social progress and renaissance are linked to enlarging the scope of choices and welfare for individuals, Recalling the human values and culture of peoples of our regions, at the top of which human dignity, maintenance and protection of human rights, resources and security assurance;

Pursuant to Brasilia Declaration issued during the Arab - South America Summit, Brasilia 10 - 11 May 2005;

Realize that development, human and social security, peace and human rights are considered as prerequisite for achieving the comprehensive renaissance and modernizing the societal infrastructure,

Recognize the importance of having the appropriate environment to implement the development programs and promote social policies, in accordance with the applicable agreements of the two regions and the international instruments, especially The UN Millennium Summit Declaration, Agenda 21, Resolutions of World Summit on Development, Doha Declaration, UN Declaration on the Right to Development and all relevant international instruments.

Strengthen the importance of South - South cooperation and the pivotal role it plays in promoting solidarity among developing countries and achieving development and progress at all domains,

Recognize that the Arab and South American countries are able to abide by **their** commitments and overcome the challenges to achieve comprehensive objectives and goals of the social development and benefit from each other experiences,

Aware of the fact that globalization has not been able in itself to generate the necessary social changes to eradicate poverty and hunger in our societies;

Bear in mind propositions for regional social development cooperation suggested at the III Meeting of High Officials held at Cairo on 30 and 31 January 2007;

Adhere to mainstreaming social policies and developmental objectives into the national policies, plans and strategies and developing comprehensive developmental programs that focus on the social aspect.

Agree that the following initiatives constitute guidelines for a regional plan of action which can be a basis for future projects and programs to be developed bilaterally, regionally or in partnership with international organizations;

First: Working on Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Fight Against Hunger:

- 1- Activate national strategies in the two regions to alleviate poverty through enriching the applicable matrix of poverty indicators by including indicators pertaining to human poverty and deprivation, social exclusion along with other financial indicators.
- 2- Identify timetable for poverty reduction policies in the two regions and defining the implementation stages as a top priority to eliminate all forms of poverty as soon as possible because of their serious human impacts.
- 3- Mainstream programs and policies of clear priorities into poverty reduction strategies, establishing schemes for national aids aiming at providing direct financial support to the poor, extreme poor and people with disability, while creating micro credit and financing for income generation to help poor households create income-generating enterprises and paying special attention to monitoring the implementation of such programs and policies.
- 4- Develop necessary policies that guarantee the achievement of pro-poor economic growth by improving the investment climate in the two regions, enhancing empowerment of the poor and expanding their participation in the selection of development patterns, while creating the needed environment to develop preventive policies to protect those above the poverty line.

- 5- Maximize the utilization of local and foreign resources in an efficient and sustainable manner upon implementing the programs and policies of poverty reduction strategies.
- 6- Reinforce national policies for promotion of food and nutritional security through sharing experiences on programs and actions aimed at guarantying the human right to food as well as strengthening of small farmers production.
- 7- Promote social partnership to achieve social justice and supporting the role of civil society to contribute in comprehensive development. In this context, voluntary initiatives in the two regions that have effectively reduced poverty and lessons learned need to be exchanged.
- 8- Consider new forms of partnership to achieve comprehensive development working with other key actors, such as societal forces.
- 9- Develop sustainable social policies based on protecting human well being and putting an end to all forms of human poverty. Macro economic policies should be consistent with the prerequisites of social progress in order to help fight against all forms of human poverty.
- 10 - Pay more attention to small and medium enterprises and develop their working mechanisms, while creating the incubators and compounds that would allow for the development and integration of these projects and provide access to markets to effectively contribute in GDP components.
- 11 - Identify and strengthen mechanisms to reduce poverty and hunger, suitable to different realities such as urban and rural poverty;

Second: MDGs Implementation:

- 1- Reaffirm the adherence of the two groups to MDGs and mainstream the activities related to these goals, requirements and needs into the annual plans and programs of the sectorial institutions as an integral part of comprehensive economic and social developmental policy, as well as mainstream MDGs implementation in the two regions.
- 2- Link the MDGs to the goals of international human development - oriented conferences in a consistent manner that enhances the

commitment of the two regions and promote follow up mechanisms and monitor their implementation at the national and regional levels.

3- Develop know-how in different domains so as to enable the two groups to achieve the MDGs as well as other international commitments in the social area. These domains can include income sources, purchasing power parity, labor market and its fragility and regional particularities. Poverty reduction - driven policies and social justice achievement shall depend on firmer catalyst and new criteria.

4- Bridge the technological gap between the two groups on one hand and industrial countries on the other hand, is possible through human capacity building as well as research and development, to that end it is necessary to adjust the current applicable educational policies and increase the enrollment level of the primary and preparatory education and eliminate dropping out while increasing the school years and the vocational education graduates.

5- Improve the training quality of labor force regarding technological skills, promote research and development to instill technology in the two regions and develop them according to their conditions and needs.

6- Cope with state-art-technologies as a result of the transitional leap from the age of industrial revolution to the era of **information technology**. Efforts shall be accelerated in this regard through reconsidering the educational curricula and systems, the matter which will provide the coming generations with more understanding and comprehension of such new technology as a means of social awareness, communication and production.

7- Develop accurate estimations for the cost of achieving the MDGs based on crystal basics and exchange of information and expertise between the two groups while using data from the national sources upon preparing the MDGs reports.

8- The continuation of occupation hinders development, and in particular, the achievement of MDGs, for the Palestinian People, therefore they reaffirm the need to reach a just, durable and comprehensive peace in the Middle East on the basis of the principle of land for peace and relevant resolutions of the Security Council and of the General Assembly of the United Nations, in particular Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) of the Security Council, as well as the Madrid Framework and the "Arab Peace Initiative" that ensures the realization of security for all countries in the

region. They also highlight the necessity of the full implementation of the “Road Map”. Reaffirm the need for the materialization of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, and for the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1515 (2003), and the establishment of the independent Palestinian State, based on the 1967 lines, living side by side with the State of Israel, and the withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Arab territories to the lines of 4th of June 1967, and the dismantling of the Settlements including those in East Jerusalem. They duly take into account the advisory opinion rendered on 9th July 2004 by the International Court of Justice concerning the "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory", and call upon all parties concerned to comply with the said advisory opinion, and put an end to the blockade against the Palestinian people which is widening poverty among them.

9- Cooperate to develop specialized studies in the two regions of their MDGs achievement based on national statistics.

10- Create authentic, comparable and updatable databases and information systems to provide comprehensive view of different societies in the Arab and South American countries and develop statistics pertaining to MDGs.

11- Mainstream health policies as an important component of social development through a comprehensive framework based on community health and its relation with preventive health, while highlighting the horizontal and vertical roles of the state in this regard. Ensure universal access to health services for all individuals.

12- Both regions will collaborate and exchange experiences and coordinate their efforts in controlling and eliminating Malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS as a developmental and humanitarian priority.

13- The two regions will collaborate in promoting their experiences in providing accessible antenatal care of good quality as a key factor to have healthy births, reduce the number of underweight children and subsequently reducing early deaths. Postnatal breastfeeding experiences in both regions should be part of their collaboration because it plays a pivotal role in reducing mortality rates especially for new births which represent the largest portion of infant mortality rate. First health care initiatives for cooperation should also be expanded to include children diseases such as diarrhea and respiratory diseases.

14- Affirm the role of media in raising public awareness of the risks of spreading HIV/AIDS.

15- Exchange experiences on providing drinking water and sanitation for household usages as a prerequisite for clean and suitable environment, and to reduce the risk of infections, especially among children as a top priority to reduce infant mortality rate.

Third: Promotion of Human Development and Social Development Levels :

1- The two regions should cooperate to promote human development programs, to put an end to discrimination and violence against women and empowering them, create more job opportunities, and abolish obstacles that hinder the expansion of the non-official sector, give broader opportunities for small - sized enterprises through loaning services. Both regions will work towards identifying necessary reforms that allow for more equality and providing food security to achieve fair distribution of income and wealth and accelerating development and sustainability, while focusing on the participation of all components of civil society based on the important role they play in the welfare and prosperity of the society.

2- Set human development - oriented programs and projects and ensuring their sustainability and expansion of potential options and courses, the matter that would meet the human aspirations of better and fairer life where there are no dire needs or narrow horizons.

3- Cooperate to develop a concept for human development to reflect cultural values and developmental priorities in the two regions, while working on bridging the gap between the inclusiveness and broadness of the concept of human development on one hand and the limitation of measurement on the other hand. Efforts should be exerted to develop indicators and indices including composite ones to reflect development priorities in the two regions and meet the aspirations of their peoples as a starting point to more informed approach to measure the development in its broader sense which includes material and moral aspects.

4- Work together to prioritize action plans of national statistics systems, to provide success means to achieve balance between national, regional and international needs of statistical data and support and increase the efficiency of such systems in a manner that allow for broadening the

scope of priorities and response to the requirements of new data. Develop statistics for societal utility available and free for all at the national, regional and international levels.

5- Cooperate to develop and improve definitions of human and social indicators and their measurements, installing measurements and pushing forward regional and international efforts aiming at improving human development information and data in general and social gender and freedom issues in particular.

6- Share regional experiences in developing the applicable methodologies used in the national frameworks pertaining to analysis and measurement and use such data in anti-poverty and illiteracy programs in addition to health in general and reproductive health in particular.

7- Cooperate in the implementation of effective laws to abolish all forms of race, ethnic and gender discrimination, promote democracy and human rights in the two regions and increasing their participation in political, social, economic and developmental domains while supporting women access to legislative, executive and decision-making positions.

8- Work together for implementing Good Governance principles in accordance with the internal structures of each country and the partnership between the government institutions, civil society and the private sector while abiding to measurements of transparency and accountability and applying equality, justice and maintenance of social and human rights to expand the scope of options for the people..

9- Foster regular societal participation in human development and social development process through civil society organizations based on the fact that human development concept depends on enlarging the choices for the people. Those people shall have the right to participate in formulating the policies and decisions that affect their life. In this context, regular societal and political participation for the broadest public segment in identifying human development and development social priorities, policies and programs is determinant for the effectiveness of the human development itself.

10- Share experience on the implementation of social policies for biological needs and social vulnerable groups: children and youth, expecting mothers, persons with disabilities and the elderly;

11-Strengthen ongoing training programs, youth prequalification and rehabilitation, building their scientific and practical capacities, providing and polishing their skills to enable them undertaking key role in society building.

Fourth: In the Field of Financing Development:

- 1- Call upon the cancellation of the burden of debts from the heavily indebted poor countries and increase the support of developed industrial countries to the poor ones.
- 2- Affirm the resolutions of the 77 Group + China in Doha Declaration as for establishing special fund to help the poor countries develop programs and plans to timely achieve MDGs in the light of national plan of funding.
- 3- Strengthen efforts to overcome the negative impact of the prerequisites set by international funding institutions which lead to negative repercussions on economic growth and social development.
- 4- Stress the importance of South - South cooperation promoting synergy within the framework of international organizations.
- 5- Emphasize the importance of providing financial support and activate the World Solidarity Fund for Combating Poverty, which is a suitable mechanism for the reduction of poverty in developing countries
- 6- Coordinate their efforts for developing innovate mechanisms to finance, eradication of hunger and reduction of poverty, as well as establishing international social solidarity institutions for the development of the South.
- 7- Coordinate efforts for providing financing and logistical support for countries coming out of conflicts in order to sustain peace and help in resettlement and rehabilitation.

Fifth: Cooperation in the Field of Persons with Disabilities:

- 1- Apply and implement programs and policies pertaining to the disabled persons and successfully integrate them into their societies after developing their skills, rehabilitating, opening new work horizons and eliminate all forms of discrimination against them.

- 2- Activate the **Arab Decade on the Disabled persons and the Inter American Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Person with Disabilities**, in addition to the implementation of the obligations thereof and the coordination of programs and activities set forth in the two instruments.
- 3- Call upon signing **the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities** and bind the countries of the two groups to ratify it and coordinate together to implement its provisions through establishing ad hoc institutions that allow a proper enforcement of the convention. Formulate standard rules of equal opportunities for the disabled in which the national organizations and NGOs, especially those of the disabled shall play pivotal role.
- 4- Create in both regions suitable norms and standards to achieve equal opportunities while taking into consideration the considerable differences in the economic and technical levels in a manner that would reflect deep understanding of the cultural context of the two groups.
- 5- Pay special attention to persons with disabilities, those of special needs and their families in the field of combating poverty in preparation for integrating them into the society as producers through intensifying scientific studies and researches in this regard, in particular children and women with disabilities.
- 6- Activate the implementation of social protection for the people with disabilities along with necessary financial resources required for the social protection policies, different safety networks, micro credit, social integration packages and programs, poverty alleviation policies and ensuring equal utilization from retirement programs.

Sixth: Mechanisms Pertaining to Cooperation between the Two Regions in the Social and Developmental Domains:

- 1- In order to activate the cooperation relations between the regions in the social and developmental domains, we, hereby, decide to establish the necessary mechanism and committees responsible for considering the most relevant and pivotal issues that require prompt actions to cope with the social and developmental variables and conduct in-depth studies for such variables to conclude the learned lessons of the experiences and expertise of the two regions. Objective base shall be settled to develop experiences

and expertise and discover potentials to promote cooperation between the countries of the two groups regarding the issues of mutual interest on comprehensive social development and other relevant topics.

2- For this purpose, we establish an Arab - South American Ministerial Meetings and intercessional High Official meetings from social development ministries every two years, on social affairs and development to be alternatively hosted in one country of the two regions to take the necessary resolutions on cooperation and coordination, approve the agreed upon programs and follow up the taken measures in this regard.

3- Development and Social Polices Department - Technical Secretariat of Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs (CAMSA) along with the Americas Department at the LAS, the Co-Presidency of the Arab - South American Summit and the General Coordinator of South America shall together arrange and prepare documents and coordination of all relevant measures pertaining to convening the joint ministerial and high official meetings.

4- If necessary, Ministers may create technical committees to examine specific points for joint work.

5- Establish focal points from the two groups whose members from the Arab side shall be the CAMSA Committee of Coordination and Following Up, and top officials in the competent ministries responsible for social and developmental affairs from the South American side.

6- The focal points shall select topics and axes to be discussed by the Joint Ministerial Meeting and setting the draft agenda, timetable and recommendations related to the draft agenda.

7- The focal points shall submit periodical comprehensive report to the Joint Ministerial Meeting on its activities and achievements done, in addition to all actions undertaken by the focal points and its efforts to promote cooperation between the two groups.

8- Focal points shall be responsible for coordination between the two groups in the international events on social and developmental affairs and crystallize the stances and visions of the two groups on issues being discussed in these events whenever possible.

9- The Joint Ministerial Meeting shall periodically evaluate the work of the focal points and take whatever necessary to improve its performance,

activate its role and direct it to settle the pillars of cooperation between the two regions in the social and developmental domains.

10-The Ministerial Meeting shall, whenever necessary, form think tanks to consider specific matter or technical issues. The countries of the two groups shall inform the focal points about the cooperation programs and projects they organize at the bilateral or the sub-regional levels. The focal points shall prepare and submit reports in this respect to the Joint Ministerial Meeting.

11-We agreed on the creation of a web page for social affairs and development, to be hosted at the Arab South-American website. This page will serve as a means to exchange information and experiences as well as to follow up the ongoing cooperation.