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UNIDO General Conference 10th Session – “An historical event”

In his final speech at the closing session of the 10th General Conference of UNIDO held in Vienna from 1st to 5th December 2003, the Director General Carlos Magariños expressed satisfaction at the great participation of high-level representatives from all over the world. More than 50 Ministers, four heads of State and Government and three Vice-Presidents attended deliberations. “An historical event for an agency like UNIDO which does not negotiate commercial agreements and does not have great budgetary resources to grant” said the Director General. “They came here not to discuss ideologies, but to find technical solutions to the very serious problems facing societies in developing countries”, he added.

On the various resolutions adopted, Magariños started with the African Productive Capacity Facility, a new body which will target small and medium sized enterprises. The Director General said that in his term of office UNIDO has already disbursed 100 million dollars in technical cooperation in Africa. Which he said, although not sufficient, was a large amount for an organization the size of UNIDO.

Other significant resolutions are the ones on the reduction of poverty in Latin America, where the situation has worsened in recent years, and the one concerning the preparation for the global meeting on biotechnology to be held in Concepción, Chile, next year.

At this point Carlos Magariños expressed his gratitude to the assembly for the fact that, in the resolution for the medium term programme for 2004-2007, he has been asked to prepare a vision for the next 10 or 15 years of UNIDO, a period well beyond his present and last mandate.

“You approved two very important resolutions” he added. “One on the Millennium Development Goals prospects and another on the role of UNIDO in countries that are emerging from political crisis”, he said. These will be the focal themes for the agency in the forthcoming years, since – as Magariños noted – one sixth of humanity has to cope with four fifths of the political crises throughout the world.

Then the Director General returned to a signature theme of the conference: that it's wrong to think that there is one agenda for security, another for economics and another for development. “We have one single agenda, and the actions taken by each of the agencies in the multilateral system must address this agenda” he said.

Stating that UN has been absent from the multilateral economic debate where sometimes “brilliant” discussions on injustice are heard, Magariños said that instead “we need to come up with practical solutions for people who are fighting poverty”. And he added: “UNIDO has shown in this general conference that it can be a forum for discussions and that these discussions can produce practical solutions”.

At this point he reminded delegates that during the conference the UNCTAD Secretary-General Rubens Ricupero said that his agency would be delighted to work more closely with UNIDO. “Let's move from proposals to actions, from words to deeds, ... I am not talking about minor bureaucratic tinkering. I am talking about matters of substance” Magariños said.

But, also, the agenda to fight poverty will need more resources. Concluding his speech, the Director General of UNIDO asked the donor countries to help to increase the funds devoted to the main actions of the agency, such as promoting investments and training, developing the private sector, disseminating technology and assisting small and medium sized enterprises.

More information on the 10th session of UNIDO's General Conference is at <http://www.unido.org/gc>.