



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
24 September 2002

Original: English

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## **Fifty-seventh session**

Agenda item 98

**Social development, including questions relating to the world social situation and to youth, ageing, disabled persons and the family**

## **International Year of Volunteers: outcomes and future perspectives\***

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The General Assembly, in its resolution 55/57, requested the Secretary-General to report to it at its fifty-seventh session on the outcome of the International Year of Volunteers and its follow-up. The present report describes the background to the Year, provides an overview of actions taken, presents conclusions and discusses the future.

The Year was successful by any account. One hundred and twenty-three National Committees and scores of local, regional and state committees were formed. The official web site received close to 9 million hits. A heightened recognition of the role of volunteerism in development resulted from the plethora of activities, including efforts to measure the contributions of volunteers, in every part of the world. There were marked improvements in legislative frameworks and national and local infrastructure for voluntary action, and networks were established among stakeholders from Governments, the United Nations system, civil society, the private sector and elsewhere. These should help sustain many of the advances resulting from the Year.

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\* The delay in the submission of the report was due to the time needed to gather information and obtain the necessary clearances.

The Year highlighted the relevance of volunteerism to achieving the goals set out at the Millennium Summit and at other major conferences and summits. It underlined the central role of United Nations Volunteers within the United Nations system in enhancing the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism, in collaboration with other stakeholders. Governments and the United Nations system, together with civil society and other actors, are urged to work together to ensure that more citizens from all societal groups are willing and able to volunteer time in ways that bring benefits to society and self-fulfilment to the individual volunteer.

## I. Background

“Neglecting to factor volunteering into the design and implementation of policies could entail the risk of overlooking a valuable asset and undermine traditions of cooperation that bind communities together” (General Assembly resolution 56/38, annex, para. 6).

1. By its resolution 52/17, the General Assembly proclaimed 2001 the International Year of Volunteers, in recognition of the valuable contribution of volunteerism to society and in the conviction that voluntary action was needed more than ever. It was felt that a year designed to enhance the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism could generate increased awareness of the achievements and further potential of volunteer activity, encourage more people to volunteer and channel resources to augment the effectiveness of this form of engagement.

2. Governments, the United Nations system and civil society were invited to collaborate in observing the Year. The United Nations Volunteers programme was designated the focal point for preparations, implementation and follow-up, in collaboration with other organizations of the United Nations system. By its resolutions 55/57 and 56/38, the General Assembly decided to devote two plenary meetings at the fifty-sixth session and two at the fifty-seventh session to the outcome and follow-up of the Year.

3. In 1999 the United Nations Volunteers programme assembled a small team from industrialized and developing countries, funded by Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the European Commission. Guidelines for all stakeholders were formulated, regional and national consultations were supported, promotional items were prepared and disseminated, and a global web site ([www.iyv2001.org](http://www.iyv2001.org)) was established. An extensive network at the international, regional, national and local levels, which included government officials, civil society representatives, research associates, media partners and private sector companies, was also developed.

4. The following principles were observed for the Year: it should focus on worldwide national and local observance, with governments and the public determining their own priorities within the overall agreed framework; it should involve all population

groups, including those not normally associated with the United Nations or with volunteer programmes; it should focus on all forms of volunteerism and take into account different manifestations among and between industrialized and developing countries; it should launch lasting improvements to voluntary action rather than constitute a one-time occasion; and, while national-level action should be the main focus, there should be supportive action at the international and regional levels, and national policies should be translated into concrete activities at the grass-roots level.

5. A little more than two months prior to the Year’s inauguration at the United Nations on 28 November 2000, the Millennium Declaration was adopted by all 189 Member States at the Millennium Summit. The centrality of the Declaration to the work of the United Nations lent further weight to the need to encourage a favourable environment for citizens to contribute to the Declaration’s goals.

## II. Overview of the International Year of Volunteers 2001

6. This section highlights a selection of initiatives through which countries, organizations and individuals articulated the four goals of the Year: enhancing the recognition, facilitation, networking and promotion of volunteerism. International and national activities are described, but the Year drew its strength and diversity from local initiatives and from the mobilization of large numbers of people, individually and through grass-roots organizations.

### A. Recognition

7. The Year’s first goal was greater acknowledgement of the diversity, value and richness of traditional and modern forms of volunteerism and of its contribution to society.

#### 1. Research, publications and the involvement of academia

##### (a) National

8. Research was key to enhancing recognition. Examples include studies of grass-roots volunteerism in Cambodia, traditional forms of volunteerism in

Ethiopia and Sri Lanka, volunteer mentoring in Northern Ireland, volunteering impact in Israel, and volunteer motivations in Mongolia. The Canadian Centre for Philanthropy, with federal Government funding, undertook 14 research projects on issues ranging from the value and benefits of volunteering to the impact of technology on volunteer management.

9. Valuable insights emerged from research. Singapore found that volunteer participation increased by 60 per cent between 2000 and 2002; studies in Norway indicated that volunteering accounts for more than 6 per cent of gross national product; a South Africa study revealed that volunteers constitute 43 per cent of the non-profit sector workforce; Finland determined that a third of the population would volunteer if given proper incentives; Albanian research underlined the need to engage less advantaged citizens as volunteers; and a United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-funded survey in Bulgaria revealed a limited organizational capacity to tap widespread willingness to volunteer.

10. Volunteerism's value was explored in other ways as well. Guatemala's University of San Carlos created a School of Social Volunteering, the University of Mali organized a volunteer conference to fight poverty, and the University of Jordan helped develop a volunteer management manual. National meetings on measuring the benefits of volunteering and on traditional forms of volunteering were organized in Botswana and the Niger, respectively. Books were published in Bhutan, Italy, Kuwait and the Netherlands. China established a Research Institute on Volunteering and Social Welfare to advise government officials on pro-volunteer policies.

#### **(b) Regional and international**

11. Researchers and practitioners from 10 countries pooled expertise to produce a toolkit for measuring volunteering, published by United Nations Volunteers and the research organization independent sector, aimed at influencing policy makers. Johns Hopkins University and the United Nations Statistics Division prepared a handbook on non-profit institutions and the system of national accounts, which assigns values to voluntary work. Research carried out by the Arab Network of non-governmental organizations in Egypt, Jordan and the occupied Palestinian territories yielded a recommendation on the need to establish volunteer programmes targeting young persons and women.

12. Other international research initiatives led by United Nations Volunteers included "Volunteering and social development", conducted with the Institute of Volunteering Research of the United Kingdom; "Below the waterline of public visibility", with the Institute for Cultural Action of Brazil; "Volunteering and the United Nations system"; and "The volume and economic value of volunteering in four countries of differing economic levels", with the Centre for Development Research, University of Bonn.

## **2. Recognition by institutions and organizations**

### **(a) National**

13. High-ranking officials gave recognition to volunteers. Examples included audiences with the President of Nigeria and the Prime Minister of Luxembourg; messages from the Presidents of Brazil and the United States of America; patronage of the Year by the President of Germany; inauguration of the National Committee by the Prime Minister of the Niger; references to volunteers by the Prime Minister of Canada at the opening of Parliament; and award presentations by the President of Mexico. Ministers, state secretaries, speakers and presidents of parliament, mayors, governors, religious leaders, royal family members and first ladies provided public visibility.

14. Volunteer awards were introduced in India, Jordan, Panama, Slovakia and the United Arab Emirates; volunteer recognition certificates were given to a fifth of Saint Helena's population; Long Island, New York, inaugurated a Volunteer Hall of Fame; and Switzerland developed an official Volunteer Certificate/ID. Members of Parliament in New Zealand and of the Assembly in Wales volunteered in their constituencies for a day, and Canadian parliamentarians received a tool kit to help recognize and promote volunteerism. The Nobel Prize laureate and Minister for Foreign Affairs of East Timor, José Ramos-Horta, presented a Distinguished Service Award in recognition of 3,000 United Nations Volunteers who served in the country.

### **(b) Regional and international**

15. The Secretary-General spoke about volunteerism at several key events, proposed a study on volunteering in the United Nations system and appointed a focal point for the Year in his office, at the Assistant Secretary-General level. The President of the General

Assembly and heads of United Nations agencies and programmes also paid tribute to volunteers. Several agencies and programmes devoted thematic days to volunteerism, such as the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) day of “Volunteers for weather, climate and water”; a ceremony recognizing volunteers on World Environment Day, hosted by the Small Grants Programme of the UNDP-managed Global Environment Facility and United Nations Volunteers; and a joint United Nations agency event on World AIDS Day, focused on volunteers’ contributions to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

16. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) recognized volunteerism and cultural heritage at its sixth International Forum and, with the World Health Organization and WMO, addressed volunteerism at the thirty-ninth session of the United Nations Commission for Social Development. Volunteering was the theme of United Nations Day in Geneva; the session of the UNDP/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) Executive Board included a special event marking the Year; the Universal Postal Union produced six commemorative stamps; and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) awarded the Nansen Medal to United Nations Volunteers. The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) produced a brochure entitled UNICEF Volunteers: In Step with Children.

17. The Year helped highlight volunteerism in sports. Volunteering was the theme of the annual European Sports Conference, held in Estonia. The President of the International Olympic Committee issued diplomas in recognition of deserving volunteers. The World Conference on Olympic and Sport Volunteerism recommended the introduction of annual volunteer awards. Special Olympics International, which engages individuals with mental retardation in sport, honoured its half million volunteers.

## **B. Facilitation**

18. This goal refers to the creation of incentives fostering, and the removal of obstacles hindering, volunteerism.

## **1. Policy and Legislation**

### **(a) National**

19. Many countries facilitated volunteerism by developing policies and enacting legislation. Legal frameworks were introduced in the Czech Republic, Colombia and Madagascar; existing laws were improved in France, Japan and Portugal. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guatemala and the Republic of Korea, legislative processes were to be put to parliamentary vote or considered for Government endorsement.

20. The Year enhanced information exchange between legislators and other stakeholders. Tunisia’s Parliament devoted a session to the International Day of Volunteers; Russian parliamentary hearings resulted in recommendations to facilitate volunteerism; and parliamentary meetings in Austria brought about the designation of focal points in all political parties for volunteering and a commitment from the Government to submit to Parliament a report on volunteering once during every legislature. A parliamentary commission was established in Germany on the future of civic activities, including volunteering, and in Kyrgyzstan a National Coordinating Council was established to oversee the adoption of the first law on volunteering. The Belarus Parliament proposed to the Council of Ministers periodic consultations with volunteer-involving organizations; the British Parliament recommended the establishment of formal mechanisms for discussing volunteer issues; and the Philippine House of Representatives adopted a resolution on consultations on volunteerism.

21. Governments encouraged consultations and developed policies to facilitate volunteerism. Saudi Arabia adopted a volunteer code outlining rights and responsibilities of civil defence volunteers; Greece produced a publication addressing each ministry’s role in support of citizens’ involvement; in Nepal’s tenth five-year national plan volunteering and its role in poverty alleviation will be referred to for the first time; Denmark and Estonia developed charters of interaction between public sector and volunteer associations; and Chile’s new plan for strengthening civil society commits Government to fostering volunteerism.

22. Measures to strengthen volunteerism were not confined to the national level. A law was passed in Washington, D.C., protecting volunteer firefighters;

three of Spain's autonomous communities adopted regional laws creating mechanisms for promoting volunteerism; and local governments in the Netherlands designed volunteer-support policies and earmarked funding for implementation. Norwegian local authorities developed strategies to further volunteerism through campaigns based on the old Nordic travelling "message stick" traditions.

23. UNDP and United Nations Volunteers proposed a conference to promote volunteerism in monitoring progress towards the United Nations millennium development goals in Uganda and, with UNHCR, fostered a national debate on civic service as an alternative to military service in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

#### **(b) Regional and international**

24. Landmark international policy pronouncements and legislation were adopted. General Assembly resolution 56/38, entitled "Recommendations on support for volunteering", drew on the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/56/288) and built on three other resolutions and four United Nations documents that include references to volunteering: the reports of the Ad Hoc Committees of the Whole of the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth special sessions of the General Assembly; the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010, adopted at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries; and the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, adopted in 2002.

25. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly adopted a recommendation entitled "Improving the status and role of volunteers"; the Inter-Parliamentary Council and the Central American Parliament adopted resolutions endorsing the Year; the Council of Arab Ministers for Social Affairs revised its Charter for Social Work in the Arab States to encourage volunteerism; and the report of the Council of the European Union on social inclusion included references to volunteerism.

26. The above-mentioned documents indicate a wider perception of volunteerism as a vital adjunct to governmental action in support of social and economic development, an acceptance by Governments of their responsibility to promote an environment favourable to volunteerism, and the need to strengthen partnerships

between governments and civil society by ensuring that they are built on trust and are flexible, action-oriented and mutually reinforcing.

27. From within civil society, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies introduced a global plan to encourage members to strengthen volunteer structures and management, and established a Volunteering Legal Committee to explore legal factors affecting volunteering. A consortium of European volunteer-involving organizations launched a joint campaign promoting pro-volunteer policies and the creation of a volunteer visa.

## **2. Infrastructure**

### **(a) National**

28. A key form of support for volunteerism was the establishment of volunteer centres and institutes providing information, training, education and matching services, as well as undertaking advocacy and research. Barbados, Brazil, Egypt, El Salvador, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Peru and Zambia launched national volunteer centres, agencies or offices. In Thailand, volunteer data centres were established in 75 provinces to coordinate research and training on volunteering. In Sri Lanka a decentralization initiative is under way to establish centres at district levels. Volunteer centres were set up at the provincial level in Poland and Ukraine.

29. Mechanisms were established to facilitate national programmes for volunteering. Pakistan's new National Commission for Human Development draws on volunteers at the grass-roots level to help meet development objectives; a Government-housed National Secretariat for Volunteering was set up in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and in Kuwait and Senegal, national bodies were created to follow up on the Year.

30. Capacities to deploy volunteers for specific tasks were enhanced. In India, a volunteer corps was established, covering 1,000 villages in the most vulnerable districts in the state of Orissa to enlist and train volunteers in disaster response. In El Salvador, the National Committee recruited volunteers to provide assistance following earthquakes in early 2001, and Ecuador launched training initiatives for volunteers in disaster prevention. As part of the Philippine Government's service programme, volunteer desks

were established to identify areas for volunteer involvement in public sector programmes and to undertake recruitment.

31. Infrastructure was introduced to ensure sustained communication among stakeholders. Malaysia created a permanent national forum on volunteerism chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister. Russia established a working group to facilitate dialogue between government and volunteer-involving organizations. In Austria, Croatia and Portugal, permanent national commissions were created as advisory boards to policy makers on volunteerism, and Belgium is establishing a federal High Council for volunteerism.

### **(b) Regional and international**

32. Transnational initiatives include a Mediterranean Observatory of Volunteerism to monitor information on volunteerism in the region, and there are plans to create subregional volunteer corps programmes in Senegal and South Africa.

## **3. General funding and private sector support**

### **(a) National**

33. A challenge for many countries was using the Year to mobilize additional financial resources. Support came from many public and private sources. The Governments of Australia and Canada provided significant funding for the Year, and in Scotland official funding for programmes related to the Year was extended beyond 2001. Governments lent support in other ways in the United Republic of Tanzania: facilities were provided for the National Committee secretariat; in Namibia the President led a fund-raising event; the ruler of Sharjah Emirate of the United Arab Emirates donated new premises for volunteer-involving organizations; and logistical support for the Year's closing ceremony was provided in Yemen.

34. Governments also increased funding for longer-term support. The Lesotho Government's 2002 budget included provision for volunteer promotion; the Governments of Canada, New Zealand and Spain announced significant voluntary sector investments; and the Tehran municipal government funded the creation of the Islamic Republic of Iran's largest volunteer centre.

35. Support came also from the private sector. In Mali, the Azar Libre Service funded the launching of

the Year; the Royal Bank of Trinidad and Tobago, Ltd., sponsored the booklet *How to Become a Caribbean Volunteer*; Consolidated Edison, Inc., New York Life Insurance, American Express and Merrill Lynch sponsored street banners in New York City; and General Electric Elfun Indonesia Chapter produced calendars commemorating volunteers. Nike, Inc., funded activities in several countries, as well as international events.

36. Private sector support came in many other ways. For example, companies were members of National Committees in the Gambia and South Africa; Citibank housed the National Committee secretariat in Turkey; the Netherlands telephone directory provided free advertising space; Telstra in Australia and Telefonica in Brazil and Venezuela, in conjunction with McCann-Erickson, released telephone calling cards recognizing volunteers. The Chinese Bank in Hong Kong added the International Year of Volunteers logo to its Visa credit card; and Condomi AG donated 100,000 condoms to promote the work of volunteers against HIV/AIDS in Africa.

37. Support also came from foundations, the United Nations system and international organizations. The Soros Foundation sponsored a regional conference on volunteering in Kyrgyzstan, and the Roi Baudoin, Kellogg and Friedrich Ebert Foundations supported research on volunteerism in Belgium, Bolivia and the Sudan, respectively. Many UNDP country offices sponsored or provided logistical support for events, convened stakeholders, delivered messages of support and assigned — and sometimes funded — focal points for promoting volunteerism. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR and the World Food Programme funded a volunteer recognition ceremony in Yemen; UNICEF was a member of the National Committees in Namibia, Indonesia and Guyana. Volunteer-involving organizations also supported the marking of the Year worldwide. Amnesty International was a member of the National Committee in Togo; HOPE worldwide organized more than 100 activities in 65 countries to mark the Year; and the Lions Club and the World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts organized volunteer activities in Sri Lanka with the National Committee.

### **(b) Regional and international**

38. The largest international donor, the Government of Japan, supported eight regional workshops (in Bangladesh, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, Suriname and Thailand), the production of promotional items and the participation of volunteers from the South in international conferences. The Government of Switzerland and the city of Geneva sponsored the International Symposium on Volunteering. The Government of the Netherlands funded the sixteenth International Association for Volunteer Effort World Volunteer Conference in Amsterdam; the Government of Belgium funded the Francophone Conference on Volunteering in Dakar; and the Government of Italy funded the development of an International Year of Volunteers web site in Arabic and an electronic newsletter for Arab States.

39. Some of these events and others were supported by international and intergovernmental bodies, such as the International Organization of la Francophonie, the European Commission, the European Economic and Social Committee, the International Olympic Committee, national Olympic Committees, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations such as Caritas Internationalis.

40. Private sector contributions included a Benetton promotional campaign (see para. 61 below) and the donation of the discussion software used on the Year's web site by the O'Reilly computer company.

## **4. Facilitating the participation of all social groups**

### **(a) National**

41. The Year offered an opportunity to reach out to those traditionally less likely to volunteer, such as children, youth, older persons, people with disabilities, members of minorities and immigrants, and people excluded for social, economic or other reasons.

42. Youth were a subject of special attention. Research was undertaken in Croatia, England and Norway on engaging young persons in volunteering; in some regions of the People's Republic of China legal protection was provided for youth to engage in volunteering; Peru held its first national gathering of young volunteers; a Volunteering Unit was established in the United Republic in Tanzania's Ministry of

Youth; and Bolivia established a National League of Young Volunteers. In Lesotho and Viet Nam, youth volunteers were mobilized for public health-care services; in Algeria, more than 50,000 young people volunteered in the areas of agriculture and sports; and environmental activities enjoyed a strong involvement of youth in Ethiopia, the Republic of Moldova, the Niger, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Youth were also the focus of several programmes supported by United Nations Volunteers, such as a youth volunteer-management unit in Azerbaijan, a youth volunteer corps in South Africa and a volunteer programme for university students in Costa Rica, Guatemala and Nicaragua.

43. The Year increased awareness of older persons' contributions through volunteerism. In Senegal a Senior Volunteer Corps was introduced; in Wales, older persons carried a "Flame of volunteering" in relay; in Hungary a programme for building intergenerational bridges through volunteering was expanded.

44. Attention was directed to ethnic minorities and displaced persons in the recognition that volunteerism can contribute to social and cultural integration. In Germany, research into enhancing the participation of immigrants in voluntary action was undertaken; in Guinea, initiatives were taken to involve refugees as volunteers; conference recommendations in Norway called for the country's multicultural character to be reflected in the creation of volunteer opportunities; and in New Zealand, the Government allocated funding to research volunteerism within ethnic communities.

45. The subject of strengthening access to volunteer opportunities for people with disabilities was also addressed. The National Committee in Bahrain held seminars and workshops to promote the social inclusion of older persons through volunteering, and India and the Netherlands launched special programmes for senior volunteers.

### **(b) Regional and international**

46. There were international gatherings on youth and volunteerism, such as the World Youth Volunteer Summit in Tokyo, and regional conferences in Belgium, Egypt and India organized by, respectively, the European Youth Forum, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Indian Government. The European Commission's European Voluntary Service funded the



placement of young volunteers to participate in promotional campaigns. International declarations on youth and volunteerism were issued, such as the Council of the European Union resolution on the added value of voluntary activity for young people, the European Commission's White Paper on Youth and the UNESCO Declaration on Youth and Volunteering. Volunteerism was the theme of Global Youth Service Day 2001.

47. The subject of volunteering and older persons was addressed at the Second World Assembly on Ageing and the World NGO Forum on Ageing; at Read Around the World, where older volunteers read with children in 26 countries; and through a joint international postcard campaign of the American Association of Retired Persons, the United Nations Programme on Ageing and United Nations Volunteers.

48. The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies developed strategies for the participation of displaced persons in voluntary action. The Volunteer Programme of the Manchester 2002 Commonwealth Games focused on enhancing the participation of members of communities at risk of social exclusion in volunteerism. International initiatives also focused on engaging persons living with HIV/AIDS as volunteers. People Living with HIV/AIDS, a United Nations Volunteers/joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS initiative that mobilizes HIV-positive people as volunteers, was expanded to additional countries, such as Burundi, Cambodia and Suriname. Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies stepped up efforts to recruit HIV-positive volunteers.

### C. Networking

49. The networking goal is to ensure more systematic sharing of information and best practices and to increase cooperation among stakeholders.

#### (a) National

50. Networking increased through a variety of mechanisms, including meetings, workshops, training courses, newsletters, web sites and electronic mailing lists. National conferences on volunteerism took place in Benin, Brazil, Cameroon, Chile, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Paraguay, Romania, Togo and Turkey. New Zealand and Romania set up permanent

associations of volunteer centres and organizations. Links were strengthened between domestic volunteers and international volunteer-sending organizations at a national conference hosted by Volunteering Australia and Australian Volunteers International; Italy's Federazione Organismi Cristiani Servizio Internazionale Volontario and the United States of America's Peace Corps were members of their countries' National Committees; Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, the German Deutsche Entwicklungsdienst and the United Kingdom's Voluntary Service Overseas were engaged actively in their host countries — Guatemala, Burkina Faso and Uganda, respectively. In Senegal, the Irish organization Agency for Personal Services Overseas helped bring Irish and Senegalese musicians together in 2001 events.

51. National Committees often showed the best articulation of networking among stakeholders. Membership was often very broad, including volunteer-involving organizations, government, academia, the private sector, members of parliament, faith groups, mass media, international organizations and foundations. In addition to the 123 National Committees, there were more than 500 local, regional and state committees in large metropolises, including Hong Kong, New York, Prague and Rio de Janeiro, and others in smaller towns and regions, such as Algeria's 48 district committees, Argentina's provincial committees, the almost 300 local committees in the Netherlands and 9 regional committees in Colombia.

#### (b) Regional and international

52. China hosted its first international conference on volunteerism. Volunteering was also a key theme of other global meetings, such as the World Assembly of the international alliance CIVICUS on the topic "Putting people at the centre: voluntary action shaping social and economic change", and the fifty-fourth Annual Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations associated with the United Nations Department of Public Information, on the topic "Diversity of the volunteering experience".

53. At the regional level, the first Young Asian Women Volunteers Congress took place in the Philippines; organizations from eight francophone African countries participated in a workshop on volunteering held in Tunisia; women from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia organized a symposium on

volunteering and the culture of peace; a regional conference in Nigeria explored volunteer contributions to education, health and income generation; and volunteers from seven southern African countries met in Johannesburg to consolidate a network of organizations.

54. National Committees also networked among themselves. Members of the Namibian National Committee visited their Swiss counterparts, and the latter hosted the Namibian web page. The only regional secretariat for the Year was in the Caribbean, based in Trinidad and Tobago, covering Barbados, Guyana, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Suriname. Links were also made among local and national administrations, such as volunteer-focused contacts between the Hungarian and Danish Governments and the cities of Bonn and Ulaanbaatar. Country-to-country links were also established between individual volunteer-involving organizations. In the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, organizations came together for the first time to develop joint strategies on volunteerism; and Wales and Japan established an exchange programme for volunteer managers.

55. United Nations Volunteers, the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies developed a partnership to raise the visibility of volunteerism at major global events, such as the Second World Assembly on Ageing in Madrid, the XIV International AIDS Conference in Barcelona and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg.

## **D. Promotion**

56. This goal involved creating a climate conducive to public and official opinion being more understanding and supportive of voluntary action.

### **1. Mass media**

#### **(a) National**

57. The Year encouraged more frequent and favourable coverage of volunteer issues by mass media. In some countries, mass media companies incorporated periodic features on volunteering, such as a national edition supplement in *The New York Times* and a focus on volunteers in the Gambia's *The*

*Observer*. Examples in the broadcast media include Georgia's radio broadcast of International Day of Volunteers activities; call-in shows on volunteering broadcast by local radio stations in the occupied Palestinian territories; a student debate on volunteerism and national development on Kazakhstan's national television channel; Hong Kong Radio's 10-month-long programme *Tuition for Volunteers*; and the broaching of volunteering issues in scenes in soap operas produced by Brazil's Globo television network. Public service announcements were produced, including the television campaign called Volunteers for a Better New York in New York City, and some were broadcast on a giant screen in Tokyo's Shibuya Square.

58. Some of Lebanon's largest-circulation newspapers acted as phone-based dissemination points on volunteer information; the British Broadcasting Corporation gave time off to staff to volunteer during 2001; and in the Republic of Korea the national campaign and volunteer hotline of KBS 2 television resulted in some 111,000 volunteer placements. In Egypt, Lebanon and the United Republic of Tanzania, mass media representatives were members of National Committees.

59. Initiatives to improve understanding between volunteer stakeholders and the mass media included a press dinner in Mali, university seminars for journalists in Spain and a journalism competition in Kazakhstan. In the Canadian province of Ontario, kits were created to guide volunteer-involving organizations in working with the media.

#### **(b) Regional and international**

60. A public service announcement produced by United Nations Volunteers featured more than 1,000 photos donated by volunteer-involving organizations and individuals around the world and a voiceover by the Secretary-General. It was broadcast to a vast audience through CNN International, CNBC Europe, CNBC Asia Pacific and the Community Channel.

61. ABC television produced two videos on a pro bono basis. One, entitled *I'm Also a Volunteer*, featured heads of United Nations agencies relating their experiences as volunteers. A communications campaign organized by Benetton in collaboration with United Nations Volunteers was seen in publications and on billboards in the world's major capitals, and an

issue of *Benetton's Colors* magazine was devoted entirely to the diversity of volunteerism.

## **2. Promotional tools, events and campaigns**

### **(a) National**

62. Promotional initiatives were diverse and creative. The Year's logo, or national adaptations of it, appeared on leaflets, posters, postcards, commemorative medals, coins, lottery tickets and more than 20 national postage stamps. In Bhutan, the stamp was the result of a nationwide competition, and in Australia personalized stamps allowed for the reproduction of an organization's logo.

63. Promotional campaigns were organized widely. In Mongolia, the slogan was "Giving your time whatever your time of life"; in Brazil, it was "Faça parte", or participate; in Germany, "What I can do is priceless"; in Singapore, "Bring out the volunteer in you"; in Finland, "Big and small moments"; in the Philippines, "Bayanihan: building locally, bonding globally"; and in England, "It's your time".

64. A space rocket was launched in Brazil carrying a message about volunteers, a month-long bicycle rally was held in Bangladesh and a volunteer torch relay circulated through the Republic of Korea. A square in Togo, a street in Mozambique and a bridge in Addis Ababa were named after volunteers. The theme of the Aga Khan Foundation's annual Partnership Walk, involving 21,500 people, was "Changing lives through voluntary action".

65. Countries promoted the Year with great artistic flair, some through artwork and songs. Competitions were held for photos and essays in Laos and Namibia, for designing golden ornaments in Bahrain, for posters in Colombia and for haiku in Japan. China produced its first film on the lives of volunteers, and Belgian university students edited television spots on volunteering. Countries often relied on long-standing traditions: in the United Republic of Tanzania, the Uhuru torch race saw the message of volunteerism carried through 123 districts, and in Denmark a bus inspired by the traditional caravan travelled through the country promoting volunteerism. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mongolia and the Syrian Arab Republic produced new versions of their traditional clothing incorporating volunteer symbols.

66. Promotional strategies included volunteer-day celebrations, often arranged to coincide with International Volunteers Day, 5 December, which proved a popular way to mark the Year's launching and closing dates. The Year's official web site listed details of 122 launch events in more than 60 countries. The Philippines declared December Volunteer Month and a permanent feature of the national calendar. South Africa and Thailand declared 2002 their national Year of Volunteering for Development.

67. Promotional campaigns were often based on practical activities. Volunteers were mobilized to take part in Armenia's first National Day of Good Deeds, to support post-flood and -hurricane reconstruction work in, respectively, Mozambique and Central America, and to promote the rejuvenation of the Yamuna River in India.

68. Promotion was often targeted at raising awareness with regard to a specific theme. In Mauritania, the focus was on children; in Kenya, on the eradication of malaria; and in the Gambia and Uganda, on blood collection campaigns. HIV/AIDS was often a key issue; it was the subject of special campaigns in Zimbabwe and of a "Race for life" in Ukraine.

### **(b) Regional and international**

69. International promotional tools developed for the Year included a compact disk containing 27 songs in nine languages on the theme of volunteerism, with contributions from 18 countries; the design and management of the official web site referred to in section E below; and the Year's official logo, designed by an Argentine volunteer.

70. The Year's official launching and closing ceremonies at United Nations Headquarters were important promotional events. The Year's opening, on 28 November 2000, was attended by the President of the General Assembly, the Secretary-General and other dignitaries. A special event was celebrated on 5 December 2001 in the General Assembly Hall, in conjunction with the plenary meetings devoted to volunteering. Other key days celebrated internationally incorporated volunteerism as a theme, such as World AIDS Day, World Red Cross and Red Crescent Day, the International Day of Families, German Reunification Day and World Thinking Day.

71. Promotional events were also organized through partnerships between National Committees such as the

New York/Amsterdam Volunteer Tulip Campaign, which resulted in the planting of 10,000 commemorative tulip bulbs throughout the two cities. Promotional work worldwide was often aided by United Nations Information Centres. The Centres played a key role in the publication of a book on volunteerism in Pakistan, in hosting National Committee meetings in Mexico and in organizing the launch and closing of the Year in Belgium.

### **3. People**

#### **(a) National**

72. Popular figures in the arts, music, literature, sport and other fields were active in promotional efforts. Performing artists such as Jamaican reggae singer Tony Rebel, the Singaporean pop band Dreamz FM, the Polish rock group Perfect and Uzbek singer Sevara Nazarkhan and disc jockey DJ Max lent visibility to the Year and its objectives in their countries. Five leading Irish poets, a renowned Vietnamese painter, famous actors in China, Miss Guatemala and Miss South Pacific, and leading cyclists in the Tour of the Netherlands also helped attract public attention.

#### **(b) Regional and international**

73. The Secretary-General invited Crown Prince Felipe of Spain, the former President of Ghana, Jerry Rawlings, the founder of the Body Shop, Anita Roddick, and former UNFPA Executive Director Nafis Sadik to serve as Eminent Persons to help publicize the Year.

74. Prince Felipe of Spain was especially active in the Spanish-speaking world and on the subject of youth. His work as an Eminent Person included addressing the official opening and closing ceremonies, meeting with volunteers in Geneva and Lima and acting as Honorary President of the Spanish National Committee.

75. Former President Rawlings focused on promoting volunteerism in the campaign against HIV/AIDS in Africa, visiting Botswana, Ethiopia, Guinea, Kenya, the United Republic of Tanzania and Swaziland. He also spoke on volunteerism at the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and at the XIV International AIDS Conference in Barcelona.

76. Anita Roddick served as an advocate for corporate volunteering and social responsibility and the

complementarity between work and volunteerism. She participated in the official launch of the Year and addressed the European Economic Forum. Nafis Sadik focused on the role of volunteerism in the fields of women's rights and health and the need to recognize the contributions of volunteers generally, and women volunteers in particular. She was a guest speaker at the special General Assembly meeting on volunteering on 5 December 2001. Takehito Nakata, the United Nations Volunteers Honorary Ambassador and an active advocate in Japan for the designation of the Year, promoted volunteerism in visits to Africa, Asia, Latin America and United Nations Headquarters.

### **E. Information and communication technologies**

77. While the Year's objectives were promoted in many ways, the contribution of information and communication technologies and the Internet merit special attention. It is hard to imagine how the Year could have touched such a wide audience without it.

78. The official web site was a powerhouse for information-sharing, promotion and global networking. Features included a global calendar, national profiles, organization listings, news, research, policy documents, volunteer stories and promotional materials that could be downloaded and adapted locally. It received almost nine million hits in 2001.

79. In addition to the official web site, more than 50 web sites and web pages were set up at regional, national and state levels. Many have been transformed into permanent national volunteer information and resource portals, as in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Cyprus, Germany, Nepal, South Africa, Thailand and Turkey.

80. Another widespread web-based tool was the electronic newsletter, such as the international Global Update, and national newsletters, such as those in El Salvador, Mongolia, Nepal, Nicaragua and Portugal. These were often downloaded and further disseminated in print by local organizations.

81. Many countries developed online databases and volunteer matchmaking services, including Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, Jordan and the Philippines. India Calls was launched as an online volunteer clearing house matching individuals and corporations with volunteer posts. In Australia, the Corporate Volunteers

Virtual Round Table was a web-based service providing information on corporate volunteer programmes. The New York City committee collaborated with VolunteerMatch, a major non-governmental organization promoting online volunteer opportunities.

82. A key objective in Madagascar was the establishment of “cyberspaces” in remote regions to facilitate access to information about volunteering. The number of volunteers in the United Nations Information Technology Service, the Secretary-General’s initiative to bridge the digital divide, increased exponentially in 2001. The United Nations Volunteers-managed online volunteering programme, NetAid (an organization hosting Internet-based development programmes), became the largest provider of online volunteering opportunities in the world. Through the Canadian ePals project, classes around the world exchanged information about volunteering. The Virtual Ibero-American Forum of Volunteering brought together on the Internet volunteer-involving organizations from both sides of the Atlantic. The Cyprus National Committee produced a CD-ROM with information on volunteering.

83. Other tools introduced during the Year to facilitate access to information on volunteerism included the launching in Honduras of a directory of volunteer-involving organizations. In Madrid “volunteer agendas” were distributed and information points on volunteering were set up in collaboration with the municipal government and universities, and a toll-free telephone line for volunteer information was introduced. Cuba set up a volunteer telephone line for information on HIV/AIDS.

### III. Conclusions

84. It is perhaps premature to assess the overall impact of the Year. Nonetheless, some preliminary assessments can be made. In 1997, when the Year was proclaimed, understanding of the concept of volunteerism and its many manifestations was limited. The general perception was that volunteerism, while contributing to general public good, was characterized by improvisation and amateurism and indulged in by better-off members of society to help disadvantaged population groups. In most countries infrastructure to promote and support voluntary action, including legislation, was weak or absent. Dialogue at the

national, regional, and international levels among volunteer-involving organizations, and between them and other stakeholders, was limited. Involvement of the private sector was minimal, and the media paid scant attention. In general, the connection between voluntary action and building and strengthening social capital — including civil society — was rarely made, and volunteerism was not considered a strategic option for social and economic policy makers.

85. There are many signs that the situation described above has evolved significantly. The years leading up to 2001 witnessed a sensitization to, and mobilization around, the volunteerism of a huge and diverse range of stakeholders, including government agencies, non-governmental organizations, community groups, private companies, academia and the media. The concept of volunteerism is now better understood, including the connections between its diverse expressions, which include traditional mutual aid and civic engagement and more modern forms of service and activism, as well as its cross-cutting nature and the reciprocal relationships that lie at its very roots. The issue of the exclusion of certain population groups from access to opportunities to engage in volunteerism is emerging, and increased supportive infrastructure is now in place, or is being developed. Networks connecting interested organizations are likely to continue and grow.

86. A major outcome of the Year has been a collective recognition by Governments of the role and contribution of voluntary action and of the need to adopt strategic approaches to enhancing the environment for such action to flourish. Global trends towards greater self-help, decentralization, participatory democracy and networking are all having an impact on citizen participation, and volunteerism is one defining characteristic. The challenge now is to consolidate successes attained, build on the momentum created by the Year and move the volunteer agenda forward.

### IV. The future

**87. The Year provided indications concerning how to further develop the potential of volunteerism. Three areas of follow-up should be considered. The first is to continue advocacy with Governments and the United Nations system, including in and around intergovernmental forums, wherever volunteerism**

has a role. The second is to continue promoting citizens' disposition to engage in voluntary action and organizations' effectiveness in taking advantage of volunteer potential. The third is to provide technical cooperation in a range of fields identified during the Year that, together, will lay the basis for a strengthened volunteer movement.

### 1. Advocacy

88. The relationship between volunteering and the United Nations was well established during the Year. Volunteering empowers people. It contributes to building solidarity, encourages participation and ownership, creates networks of reciprocity and reinforces a sense of collective responsibility. It is at the core of the United Nations development goals. A key factor in meeting the aspirations of the Millennium Declaration will be local voluntary involvement in projects and programmes relating to those aspirations. The United Nations system should therefore recognize this involvement and factor it into strategies and operational activities. Recognition of the role of volunteerism should also manifest itself in intergovernmental discussions on economic and social development and in publications such as the national human development reports (UNDP), *The State of the World's Children* (UNICEF), *The State of World Population* (UNFPA), *Progress of the World's Women* (United Nations Development Fund for Women), *The State of the World's Refugees* (UNHCR), in progress reports on the implementation of the Millennium Summit goals and in follow-up to recommendations of international conferences and summits. Success in advocacy will depend partially on the availability of good data. This strategic area needs to be pursued, including by reflecting voluntary action in national accounts.

### 2. Promotion

89. The Year saw an intensification of the promotion of volunteerism by a very diverse range of stakeholders. Governments, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the United Nations system, eminent persons and others should continue taking all possible measures to promote voluntary action. Another outcome has been global sharing of information on volunteer issues. Such sharing must be encouraged if volunteerism is to flourish in a

globalizing world. The Internet has proved to be a key element in disseminating information about volunteerism and providing a mechanism for networking. Inclusion of the subject of volunteerism in the World Summit on the Information Society would help support this trend. It would be desirable to develop a global Internet volunteer resource, based on the Year's official web site and on the more than 50 national web sites. This would help strengthen existing web sites and encourage the creation of new ones. It would also help advocacy for voluntary action in support of the Millennium Declaration goals.

### 3. Technical cooperation

90. Considerable strides were made towards enhancing the environment for volunteering. Examples included the drafting of national legislation, the undertaking of volunteer-related research, the establishment of volunteer centres, the formation of national volunteer corps, the development of volunteer opportunities via the Internet and the expansion of corporate volunteering. Enlarging space for voluntary action, including through national and international volunteer assignments in support of United Nations operational activities, is an important means of enhancing the effectiveness of technical cooperation. Expertise resides in a range of stakeholders, including United Nations Volunteers and other United Nations organizations, civil society, academia, the private sector and the media. Various stakeholders should continue seeking ways to effectively channel assistance, including by developing joint initiatives. These must be properly resourced. Support will often be required from national budgets, but all other sources need to be explored.

91. The Year took place at the onset of the new millennium, coinciding with year one of working towards the Millennium Summit goals, which are at the heart of the United Nations agenda. General Assembly resolution 56/38 is categorical about the risks of neglecting to factor volunteering into the design and implementation of social and economic policies. The effectiveness of these policies will determine the extent to which the goals agreed upon at the Millennium Summit are achieved. The resolution lists recommendations on ways in which

**Governments and the United Nations can promote volunteering. What is now needed is a firm commitment by all stakeholders in government, the United Nations system, civil society and the private sector to work together to ensure that the legacy of the International Year of Volunteers is a world where more and more citizens from an ever-broadening range of societal groups are willing and able to volunteer time in ways that bring benefits to society and self-fulfilment to the individual volunteer.**

*Notes*

- <sup>1</sup> Mention of a private sector company does not imply endorsement by the United Nations.
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