

United Nations

such issues are clearly understood. They bring particular expertise and experience to bear on policy setting and the implementation of courses of action agreed by the United Nations, and assist in channeling resources to where they are most needed. Importantly, they positively influence public opinion towards the United Nations by carrying the message of what the organization is doing to improve the lives of the world's peoples.

The Fifty-eighth session of the General Assembly gained much from the participation of Non-governmental organizations and civil society, particularly in its development work. From the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development and the High-level Plenary on HIV/AIDS to informal hearings on issues such as the role of the business sector, commodities and tax cooperation, non-governmental organizations and civil society made important contributions to our collective efforts to effectively address pressing global issues.

We need to maintain the momentum towards meaningful partnership, as challenges to the international community continue unabated. There is, for example, considerable scope for non-governmental organizations and civil society to contribute towards the successful convening of the high-level plenary the General Assembly will hold in 2005, during its Sixtieth Anniversary.

As is well known, the high-level plenary will review follow-up and implementation of the outcomes of more than a decade of United Nations summits and conferences in the economic and social fields, the MDGs, and other matters addressed in the Millennium Declaration. Non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations were participants in all these gatherings; they also have a vested interest in ensuring that the commitments made in these meetings are kept, in the interest of advancing the United Nations development agenda including the MDGs, and addressing other issues for the maintenance of peace and security in our world.

It is also expected that non-governmental organizations and civil society will play their part in respect of other follow-up activities of the General Assembly. Two activities of note are the follow-up to the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS to be convened in June 2005 and the ten-year review of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS), scheduled to be held in Mauritius in January 2005.

Even as we build partnerships with NGOs and civil society, a case continues to be made for greater involvement of non-governmental organizations in the work of the General Assembly. Our world is rapidly changing, and the United Nations, including the General Assembly, must continue to change with it.

The process of revitalization of the General Assembly has been significantly advanced during this Fifty-eighth session, both in terms of strengthening its role and authority as well as its working methods. The matters, which the Cardoso Panel on United Nations-Civil Society relations took up, and on which it has now reported, can indeed be considered in the context of the General Assembly revitalization processes. The Assembly will no doubt speak to these issues directly in determining how it might optimally build partnerships with non-governmental organizations when it takes up the Cardoso report during its Fifty-ninth session.

Representatives of non-governmental organizations, your participation in significant numbers in this conference makes a strong statement about your commitment to the MDGs. Moreover, it underscores your determination to take action, in partnership with the United Nations, to overcome obstacles and to achieve the MDGs, to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedoms.

I wish to convey his best wishes for a successful and proactive conference, and commend you for your energy, dedication and commitment in working together with the United Nations to uphold the letter and spirit of the Charter.

I thank you.