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Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Section Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) United Nations

High-Level Segment Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) United Nations

Asian NGOs' Proposals on the "Role of the United Nations System in Supporting the Efforts of African Countries to Achieve Sustainable Development"

Report by

Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA) - International

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I. Background Information

1. In December 2000, the Headquarters of the Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement (OISCA) - International, received a fax letter from Dr. Hanifa Mezoui, Chief of the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO) Section, Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), United Nations (UN). The letter invited OISCA to study the opinions of Asian NGOs on the theme of the "Role of the United Nations System in Supporting the Efforts of African Countries to Achieve Sustainable Development," report the results to the NGO Section in the form of a written document, and to present the report at the High-Level Segment meeting of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) held in July 2001 at Geneva.
2. OISCA accepted this proposal, as we saw multiple potential merits in it. We realized that our playing an active role in this project could possibly 1) contribute to the betterment of African lives, 2) help institutionalize the system of NGO participation in the High-Level Segment of ECOSOC, and 3) enhance the presence and recognition of Asian views at the highest echelons of the global community.
3. During February, OISCA reached a large number of Asian NGOs, mostly by fax, informing them about this project and particularly encouraging those NGOs with substantial experience in Africa to participate. Regarding the Asian NGOs based outside of Japan, OISCA obtained from the NGO Section a list of over one hundred NGOs that have the General or Special consultative status with ECOSOC, and that collectively represent thirteen countries between Pakistan and the Fiji Islands. We believe that some eighty NGOs based outside of Japan received, either through fax or e-mail, our invitation to send us a proposal written in English.
4. Regarding the NGOs based in Japan, we faxed a few dozen organizations active in the developing world, inviting them to a meeting to exchange views over the theme. On 26 February, representatives of nine NGOs, all having African

experience, gathered and discussed the subject. Dr. Masao Yoshida, who is the Vice-President of Japan Association for African Studies as well as the Chairperson of a prominent networking NGO, Africa-Japan Forum, presided at the meeting as Chair. The participants were generally delighted to see this concrete manifestation of the UN's recognition of Asian NGOs. With a sole exception, all organizations participating in that meeting eventually presented their proposals to OISCA in Japanese.

5. As for the Asian NGOs based outside of Japan, over a dozen NGOs responded to our message. The responses were typically light and friendly, although a number of them admitted that they did not qualify to act as a contributor as they have not been involved in Africa. Eventually OISCA received proposals from six organizations, among which two are based in India, and the rest are in South Korea, Thailand, Malaysia, and Pakistan.
6. In Section II below, we pay attention to the proposal(s) made by each of the participant NGOs in this project. In turn, Section III will provide concluding remarks, followed by the names and titles of NGO officers in charge of contributions to this proposal.

II. Proposals by Respective NGOs

7. In the following, we shall discuss the proposal(s) made by the fourteen Asian NGOs, most of them with substantial African experience, on the theme of the "Role of the United Nations System in Supporting the Efforts of African Countries to Achieve Sustainable Development." We begin with the NGOs based outside of Japan, and then turn attention to the NGOs based in Japan.
8. The World Muslim Congress (WMC), based in Pakistan, recognizes that today's humanity as a whole - including both the developing world and the industrialized countries - are facing grave problems. To improve the situation, the UN should confront "the scourges of drug abuse and alcoholism, which are the basic causes of domestic violence, fatal health problems, destruction of the institution of family, and economic stress, as well as premarital and extramarital affairs, which further cause health hazards such as HIV/AIDS, the problem of unwanted pregnancies and the rising incidence of divorce." Additionally, the battle against "the threat to environmental deterioration, which was addressed by the Kyoto Agreement, needs further support and boost by the UN through information programs organized especially by the NGOs." (This statement is also endorsed by the World Council of Muslim Communities.)
9. The Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture (SERFAC) based in India presented the most substantial proposal, including fifty-seven specific recommendations. The recommendations reflect the general observation that, although "Family is the center of every community and society," it has not gained "sufficient attention and focus in the development vision, planning and execution," thus causing the failure of development activities in Africa and elsewhere. The UN should employ "Family" as a central unit,

and promote healthy families by a multi-dimensional approach that involves counseling and therapy services for couples, sex and conflict-management education at schools, the establishment of women's and children's rights against various abuses, etc.

10. **The Institute of International Social Development (IISD) based in India believes that African sustainable development could be attained only through a multi-level approach that elevates lives both physically and spiritually. Improvement in the physical dimension requires: economic policies, including the enhancement of skilled labor and prevention of exploitation by middlemen; and health administration, including the prevention of birth defects, provision of children's immunization programs, promotion of organic food products, etc. Improvement in the spiritual dimension can be attained by the infusion of proper values through education, which promotes "less selfish, less power hungry and less heartless" personalities, and by providing "the opportunity to do soul-searching," which helps to keep people away from "frustration, anger, fear," etc.**

III. Concluding Remarks

The above reveals that the participating Asian NGOs' concrete proposals to the UN are truly diverse. The noted focal unit or actor ranged from the African individual, family, government, international NGO, industrialized world, and global community to the UN itself. Similarly, the suggested problems to be tackled were also diverse, including: material scarcity and debt; illness and disability; indifference, prejudice and conflict; environmental deterioration; and the institutional and administrative features of the UN.

In spite of such heterogeneity in concrete recommendations, however, the NGOs participating in this Proposal are unanimous in hoping to see improvements in African conditions, enhanced opportunities for NGO participation in UN affairs, and an increased recognition of Asian perspectives by the rest of the world. And to the extent that this project allowed us to contribute to such goals, we are grateful to the NGO Section of DESA for having invited us to take part in it. Thank you.

Name & Title of NGO Officers in Charge of Contributions to This Proposal

(In alphabetical order of NGOs represented.)

1. **Africa-Japan Forum (Japan):**
Dr. Masao Yoshida, Chairperson; Ms. Noriko Watase, Vice Chairperson; Mr. Shinsuke Kawauchi, Board Member.
2. **Association for Aid and Relief (Japan):**
Ms. Yuko Goto, Coordinator.
3. **Community Action Development Organisation (Japan):**
Mr. Nobuhiro Kunieda, Executive Director.
4. **Institute of International Social Development (India):**
Mr. Shomik Chaudhuri, UN Representative.

5. **Japanese Organization for International Cooperation in Family Planning (Japan):**
Mr. Hideki Takahashi, Director, Resource Development & Domestic Campaign Division.
6. **Korean Federation for Environmental Movement (South Korea):**
Ms. Kim Choony, Chief of International Affairs.
7. **OISCA School for Global Cooperation (Japan):**
Mr. Nobuo Takabe, Educator.
8. **Organization for Industrial, Spiritual and Cultural Advancement - International (Japan):**
Mr. Michiyasu Arayashiki, Executive Officer in charge of Overseas Affairs; Mr. Fumio Kitsuki, Deputy Secretary General in charge of Overseas Affairs; Dr. Yukio Kamino, Chief of International Coordination.
9. **Peace Boat United People's Alliance Aid (Japan):**
Mr. Yoshinori Shimizu, Member of Executive Committee, Peace Boat;
Mr. Tsuneyo Tanaka, Coordinator, Peace Boat UPA-AID.ij
10. **Sasakawa Africa Association (Japan):**
Mr. Masataka Minagawa, General Manager.
11. **Service and Research Foundation of Asia on Family and Culture (India):**
Dr. Sr. Catherine Bernard, Director.
12. **World Assembly of Youth (Malaysia):**
Mr. Donald Charumbira, Secretary General.
13. **World Fellowship of Buddhists (Thailand):**
Dr. Nantasarn Seesalab, Hon. Secretary-General; Hon. Rev. Ilukpitiye Pannasekara Thero, Chief Sanghanayaka for the African Continent.
14. **World Muslim Congress (Pakistan):**
H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Omar Nasseef, President; Mr. Raja Zafarul Haq, Secretary-General; Dr. Malik Sardar Khan, Executive Councillor and Permanent U.N. Representative.
(World Council of Muslim Communities: H.E. Dr. Abdullah bin Omar Nasseef, President; Dr. Malik Sardar Khan, Secretary-General.)