

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VERCELES (Philippines)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

ELECTION OF THE RAPPORTEUR

1. The CHAIRMAN said that, since there were no candidates for that office, the election of the Rapporteur would be deferred to a later meeting.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (continued)

2. The CHAIRMAN pointed out that all the documentation relating to agenda item 12 was available in the near future, save for the report of the Secretary-General on permanent sovereignty over national resources in the occupied Arab territories, which would be issued towards the middle of October. Since the question of the world population situation would be considered by the Economic and Social Council at its resumed session in the second half of October the Committee would defer that question to a later stage.

3. Bearing in mind those two exceptions, he expected that consideration of agenda item 12 would be completed by the end of the following week and he announced that the list of speakers for that item would be closed at noon on 2 October. He hoped that the Committee would begin its debate on agenda item 71 entitled "Training and research" the following week. Finally, he informed the Committee that the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities would take place at Headquarters on 3 and 4 November 1981.

AGENDA ITEM 69: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

4. Mr. FERRARI (Executive Director of the United Nations Center for Science and Technology for Development) drew attention to the main advances which had been made during the past year towards the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development. In January 1981, the Intergovernmental Committee had appointed the members of the Advisory Committee on Science and Technology for Development and had drawn up an operational plan for the implementation of the Programme of Action. At its third session, the Committee had identified 31 activities and areas of concentration related to the Programme of Action and had decided that the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation, assisted by the Administrative Committee for Coordination Task Force on Science and Technology for Development, should define the respective roles of the entities of the United Nations system, including the lead-agency roles for relevant joint activities. The Director-General had also been entrusted with the promotion and coordination of the operational plan.

5. Regarding the report of the Secretary-General on the study of the efficiency of the United Nations system in the field of science and technology for development (A/36/240), the Intergovernmental Committee had welcomed the proposals contained in the report and had recommended that the General Assembly should request the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation, with the assistance of Executive Director of the Center for Science and

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Technology for Development and the ACC Task Force on Science and Technology for Development, to study the six proposals and submit action-oriented recommendations with estimates of costs to the Intergovernmental Committee at its fourth session.

6. At its resumed third session, in August, the Intergovernmental Committee had concentrated on defining, on the basis of the report of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on the United Nations Financing System for Science and Technology for Development, the guiding principles for the submission of programmes and projects relating to science and technology and to submit recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the structure of the executive body of the Financing System. Although no decision had been reached at that session, progress had been made in the sense that the positions taken at that session would facilitate future deliberations.

7. To understand the role of the Financing System it must be placed in the context of the present economic crisis. In his statement to the Committee, the Director-General for Development and International Economic Cooperation had pointed out that the international economic structure which had prevailed at the end of the Second World War had given way to a multipolarity of economic power centers undercutting hegemonic relations between center and periphery but this collapse of the hegemonic order had not been followed by the creation of an alternative system involving cooperative management. The multipolarity had led to unilateral solutions in which countries competed with one another in every field, including that of science and technology. With the exception of electronics and genetic engineering, the international supply of scientific and technical knowledge was a more competitive field now than it had been 15 or 20 years earlier. While that state of affairs might lead to a partial improvement in the bargaining power of developing countries, it had not altered the tremendous imbalance which existed between developed and developing countries in that area as in others.

8. The events of the last 10 years, in particular the restructuring of oil prices, had drawn attention to the urgent need for technological innovations in all areas not only the energy sector. Those innovations would probably change the contemporary industrial system. The developing countries must be in a position to participate in the design of the future system in order to have access to the benefits that would stem from it. In an interdependent world, it was the possibility of developing and applying technological solutions which, in large measure, determined the capacity for equitable growth. Moreover, the effectiveness of policy making depended not only on consensus over goals but on the capacity to take advantage of historical changes when they occurred.

9. It was in recognition of the fact that the Vienna Programme of Action had been adopted by the Assembly. The Programme of Action had as its objective the strengthening of the science and technology capacities of developing countries and the enhancement of the role of the United Nations in that field, including the provision of increased resources.

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10. The question of resources was a delicate one. The problem was first one of quantity, insofar as the needs of developing countries in capital resources far exceeded the resources now available for science and technology. But it was also a problem of the modalities of application and investment of such resources. Not only was it necessary to identify the productive sectors capable of absorbing those resources but the productive sectors must be linked with the international market and the developing countries must be able to prepare national plans for the application of science and technology which were in tune with their development goals.

11. The Financing System for Science and Technology for Development which the Intergovernmental Committee had considered as its resumed third session has been designed with those objectives in mind. It was in that context that the General Assembly was now called upon to implement the decision concerning the Financing System adopted at the thirty-fourth session.

12. Mr. BI (Under-Secretary-General, Department of Technical Cooperation for Development), noting that the international economic situation was rather uncertain, said that the effect of the general stagnation was, naturally, being felt in the area of technical cooperation. In that area, as in others, resources continued to fall far below needs and had been considerably eroded by inflation. The importance of technical cooperation was recognized and had been reiterated in the International Development Strategy for the 1980's. In fact, the scope of such cooperation had been extended in recent years to include new fields such as science and technology, the integration of women in development and new and renewable sources of energy, to mention only a few.

13. Unfortunately, the scarcity of available resources was jeopardizing the implementation of the planned programmes. Confronted with pressing problems - inflation, unemployment, food scarcities and trade imbalances - countries were forced to take ad hoc palliative measures rather than undertaking technical cooperation programmes which would accelerate their economic and social development.

14. The Department of Technical Cooperation for Development was primarily an executing agency for a number of funding bodies in the United Nations system. It was the second largest executing agency of the United Nations Development Programme and the main executing agency of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. Since its establishment, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 32/197 on the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, the Department had been able to improve considerably its services to the developing countries. In 1980, it had delivered a programme of \$134 million as compared with \$100 million in 1977 and, as of 31 August, the Department had delivered \$127 million pointing to an even greater total for 1981.

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15. The Department carried out technical cooperation activities in the following fields: development planning, development administration and finance, population, natural resources and energy and statistics. Integrated rural development and the role of women in development also received special consideration. While the Department had the technical and managerial capacities to help the developing countries acquire the physical and institutional infrastructure needed for their development, the United Nations system was unable to generate resources commensurate with their expectations and with the priorities indicated by the legislative bodies. That situation had been highlighted at the recent United Nations Conferences on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on the Least Developed Countries.

16. The Department had contributed to the preparations for the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, held in August in Nairobi. Requests for technical cooperation and advisory services in the energy field had increased, and the Department was currently executing more than 50 per cent of the energy projects financed by UNDP. Moreover, it was executing a series of small-scale hydropower surveys in 40 developing countries financed by the United Nations and Japan in conformity with the Nairobi Programme of Action which provided, inter alia, that national energy capacities should be strengthened through assistance in assessing new and renewable sources of energy, determining priorities, establishing or strengthening appropriate institutional arrangements, undertaking specific programmes and acquiring specialized personnel for energy planning and development. As follow-up action to the Nairobi Conference, the Department, in cooperation with the Swedish Government, had organized a Symposium on Energy Planning in Developing Countries which was currently taking place at Stockholm.

17. He was also looking into ways of developing the Department's activities in the field of new and renewable sources of energy, stressing intensification of technical cooperation and other support activities for developing countries, and hoped to be able to submit concrete proposals to the General Assembly at its thirty-seventh session.

18. In the field of natural resources, the Department continued to cooperate with United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration in mineral exploration projects, and would support new projects in the field of geothermal energy, in which it had 20 years of experience. It was also undertaking a series of missions in response to General Assembly resolutions 33/194 and 34/201 on multilateral development assistance for the exploration of natural resources. It had received requests for 77 assessment missions from 43 countries which wanted assistance in identifying their energy and mineral exploration requirements for the next 10 years and in estimating the financial resources needed for that purpose (see document A/36/418). That demonstrated the importance attached by the developing countries to developing their energy and mineral resources, but without funds, those requests could not all be met. Although the Department's energy programme was modest in relation to the needs of those countries, it was the major technical cooperation programme of the United Nations system in that field. The Department was ready to contribute to the implementation of the

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Nairobi Programme of Action, and given additional resources it could greatly increase its activities in that sector.

19. The Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the least developed countries, adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, included major recommendations in several fields of concern to the Department, such as development planning, training, exploration of natural resources and population. In order to offset the shortage of skilled personnel, the least developed countries should draw up plans to initiate and strengthen training, and to organize specialized "in-service" training, as part of their development efforts. The Department had taken part in the preparations for the Conference with funds available to it and earmarked for that purpose under the regular programme of technical cooperation. The Department's experts and technical advisors had helped 12 countries prepare for the Conference, and planning specialists had been involved in the review meetings with potential aid donors organized in recent months. Because of its mandate and technical expertise, the Department could contribute in two respects to the follow-up to the Paris Conference: first, by carrying out technical cooperation projects in areas of its competence and secondly, by helping Governments to strengthen their planning institutions and to prepare for the review meetings to be held in the future.

20. Through the country programming missions financed by the United Nations regular programme of technical cooperation, the Department was also assisting the least developed countries to formulate and review their programmes and identify their needs and priorities for technical cooperation. In so doing, it was attempting to integrate technical cooperation into natural development plans. At the global level, the Department could cooperate with UNCTAD in determining the framework for country reviews and in monitoring and evaluating the progress made. He hoped that full advantage would be taken of the expertise available within the Department in that field.

21. In addition to its assistance in natural resources exploration which was detailed in document A/36/418, the Department was involved in the problem of water resources within the framework of the Mar del Plata Action Plan. Pursuant to the first Interregional Meeting of International River Organizations, organized by the Department in cooperation with the Government of Senegal and the Organisation pour la mise en valeur du fleuve Senegal, the Economic and Social Council, in resolution 1981/81, had entrusted the Department with establishing a support function for the collection, analysis and periodic distribution of information concerning international river organizations. The Council had also requested the Secretary-General to organize interregional seminars and to prepare a manual on issues relevant to the development, use and protection of international water resources.

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22. The Department was also concerned with the role of the public sector in promoting the economic development of developing countries, and in that connection, he recalled that the Secretary-General had been requested to present to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1982 a feasibility study on the establishment of an international centre for public accounting and auditing, to be financed on a voluntary basis. At their latest session, the UNDP Governing Council and the Economic and Social Council had endorsed the current orientation of technical cooperation activities undertaken by the Secretary-General, and had invited the Administrator of UNDP to take fully into account the Department's special competence and expertise. The Department was ready to increase and improve delivery of technical cooperation to developing countries in general, and least developed countries in particular, provided that the General Assembly would take a number of decisions on issues of substance and resources.

23. Mr. RAMACHANDRAN (Executive Director, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) said that most developing countries would have to deal with four major problems throughout the 1980s: food, shelter, energy and transportation. The first was outside the jurisdiction of the Commission on Human Settlements; however, the Commission intended to concentrate on the other three for the rest of the decade in accordance with its medium-term plan.

24. Although shelter was fundamental to human life, housing conditions in much of the world had been deteriorating, steadily and had become a source of dissatisfaction, and even of social and political unrest, in both industrialized and non-industrialized countries. That was why the Commission on Human Settlements had strongly endorsed the idea of an International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

25. At its fourth session, held in Manila from 27 April to 6 March 1981, the Commission on Human Settlements had approved the work programme for the 1982-1983 biennium and the 1984-1989 medium-term plan for the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), which mapped out activities based on the new International Development Strategy. In order to emphasize shelter issues, the Commission had decided to establish a new subprogramme entitled "Shelter and community services" to redeploy resources between subprogrammes. It did not involve the creation of any new administrative units or any increase in staffing. Under the new subprogramme, efforts would be concentrated on the upgrading of slums and squatter areas, especially in developing countries, while rigorously adhering to the concept of affordable shelter, making use of local resources and applying appropriate construction techniques.

26. In the field of energy utilization, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) had submitted several technical papers to the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and to the Conference itself. The Conference had identified a number of

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energy issues which would have important implications for human settlements in the coming years, especially in the field of solar energy. The Nairobi Programme of Action also stressed the need to diversify the energy supply base and to increase significantly the contribution of new and renewable sources of energy to total energy supply. In conformity with those recommendations, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) planned to carry out research into spatial planning in human settlements and the rational use of energy and to study various planning and land-use policies to help developing countries apply energy-efficient human settlements policies. As the urban population of developing countries would double in the next 20 years, economy in urban energy consumption would be a vital factor in achieving targets for improved living standards. In the rural sector, the Nairobi Programme of Action provided for measures aimed at alleviating the acute domestic energy supply situation of rural settlements, by applying, either at the village or household level, well-known technologies which could be given wider application (for instance biogas digestors), experimental technology (decentralized integrated systems) or even traditional technologies whose efficiency could be improved (cooking stoves).

27. In the area of transportation, the Commission on Human Settlements had put transportation requirements of low-income settlements on the agenda of its next session. As had been pointed out at a recent UNIDO symposium on transportation in developing countries, practically no country in the world had given serious attention to building up a transportation system for low-income communities. In many cases, rural transportation facilities were worse than they had been in the 1960s because priority had been given to expensive and sophisticated transportation hardware which was affordable by only a small fraction of the population. Furthermore, Governments had tended to concentrate their efforts in that field on permanent infrastructure, to the detriment of vehicles. Modes of transportation which had fallen into disuse, such as railways and inland waterways, should be re-examined.

28. In view of its limited resources, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) could not hope to solve all those problems. Its aim was to encourage research institutions to take up those issues, review work as it progressed and ensure the necessary linkages. The results of such research could then be applied in the Centre's technical cooperation programme which was expanding not only in absolute figures, but also in terms of the number of countries benefiting from it.

29. The practical application of research results would be one of the important elements of an international year of shelter for the homeless. In line with General Assembly resolution 35/76, the Commission on Human Settlements had considered the idea of an international year at its fourth session and had unanimously recommended its proclamation for 1986, the tenth anniversary of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. The Economic and Social Council, recalling its guidelines concerning the proclamation of international years, had recommended 1987 instead as the international year of shelter for the homeless. It

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was therefore up to the General Assembly to settle the matter and take a decision at its current session, bearing in mind the reasons for the Commission on Human Settlements' preference for 1986, so that preparations could begin. It was proposed that the Commission should be the intergovernmental body to guide the preparatory work for the international year and that the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) should act as its secretariat. That would ensure that the year would be organized in the most efficient way and that would arise no institutional problems for follow-up after the year had ended. The Commission was convinced that the proclamation of an international year would give an impetus to shelter programmes throughout the world and would contribute to meeting the objectives of the new International Development Strategy.

30. At its fourth session the Commission on Human Settlements had decided to focus its attention on two topics concerning on the one hand, the role and contribution of the construction industry in human settlement programmes and national economic and social development and on the other hand, the provision of infrastructure in slums and squatter areas and in rural settlements.

31. With regard to the first item, the Commission had stressed the crucial link between the development of the construction sector and the achievement of national, social and economic development goals, particularly if the construction sector was properly planned with maximum utilization of local resources. That was especially true of many developing countries where the construction sector provided considerable opportunities for employment and on-the-job training. Accordingly, it had urged Governments to recognize the significant role that investment in that sector could play in economic and social development and to formulate policies for the development, strengthening and support of the construction sector and related activities by mobilizing indigenous resources in terms of technology, labour and construction materials. Governments had also been urged to give priority to the coordination of information, research and training, the mobilization of financial and other resources from national and international sources, and the creation of regional and sub-regional coordinating agencies. Those views had been presented at the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries where a high priority had been recommended for the construction sector in the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s.

32. The Commission had welcomed the formulation of a detailed programme of planned activities in the area of infrastructure, with emphasis on the provision of water supply, sanitation, surface drainage and solid waste disposal in slums and squatter areas and in rural settlements. In cooperation with other United Nations agencies, such as WHO and the World Bank, the Centre would continue its research and development work in that field in order to make a significant contribution to the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade.

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33. The Commission had, at its fourth session, adopted the Manila Communique on a Human Settlements Movement which reaffirmed the basic principles to be observed in formulating national settlements programmes, and was linked to the preamble to the new International Development Strategy which recognized human settlements development as an important tool for achieving economic and social improvement in the developing countries. The principles of the Strategy were reflected in the priorities accepted by the Commission on Human Settlements in approving the 1984-1989 medium-term plan and they would be taken into consideration in the formulation of future biennial work Programmes.

34. Finally, he drew the Committee's attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the living conditions of the Palestinian people (A/36/260 and Add. 1), which contained the responses of Governments to a communication of the Secretary-General on that subject and outlined the measures taken by the latter to implement General Assembly resolution 35/75.

35. In order to be able to implement its work programme for the 1982-1983 biennium, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) would require extrabudgetary contributions of roughly US \$10 million, especially since it had been asked to make further savings in its regular budget resources. He therefore urged all States which planned to participate in the Pledging Conference in November to give the Centre the necessary support to enable it to implement its work programme.

The meeting rose at 4.40 p.m.