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SECOND COMMITTEE
32nd meeting
held on
Friday, 6 November 1981
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VERCELES (Philippines)

later: Mr. ter HORST (Venezuela)

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

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

1. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.7/Rev.2 on assistance to the Palestinian people on behalf of the sponsors, drew attention to the further changes made since the first revision of the draft resolution. In operative paragraph 2—where the word "appropriate" should read "relevant"—the phrase "in consultation and co-operation with the Palestine Liberation Organization, the representative of the Palestinian people" had been added after the words "to take the necessary steps". The Palestine Liberation Organization had been recognized as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people in several resolutions of the General Assembly, and it was felt that the introduction of that element into the draft resolution would help to channel assistance to the Palestinian people through their legitimate representative. In so doing, the agencies of the United Nations system would merely be carrying out the mandate of the General Assembly. In paragraph 3, the words "Urges strongly" had been replaced by "Strongly urges" and the last phrase of the original wording had been deleted. The reason was that the main thrust of the resolution was the "full implementation" of the 18 projects already approved by the Governing Council of UNDP. Paragraph 5 of the text in document A/C.2/36/L.7/Rev.1 had also been deleted, as tending to dilute the main purpose of the draft resolution. A new paragraph 4 had been included, requesting that UNDP should undertake direct execution of the projects in the occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, in co-ordination with the relevant local Palestinian organizations and bodies. In calling for the direct execution of those projects, the draft resolution restated the position overwhelmingly adopted by the General Assembly on several occasions. He hoped that, with the changes he had outlined, the resolution would be adopted at the appropriate time. Lastly, he announced that Bangladesh, the Gambia and Mali had become sponsors of the draft resolution.

AGENDA ITEM 69: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued) (A/36/3/Add.2, Add.4, Add.13, Add.14 and Add.19, A/36/15, A/36/37 (Parts I, II and III), A/36/39, A/36/45, A/36/47 (Parts I and II), A/36/116 and Corr.1, A/36/240, 333, 356, 380, 419 and Add.1, 421, 477, 483, 497, 528 and Corr.1, 536, 538, 566, 573, 576, 577, 584, 605, 631 and Corr.1; A/CN.11/21; A/CONF.100/11; A/CONF.104/22 and Add.1; A/C.2/36/L.2, L.3)

2. Mr. BROWNE (Barbados) said that his delegation was most disturbed by the policies being adopted to deal with the current acute international economic recession. Instead of pursuing policies designed to achieve economic growth and development, more and more countries were turning to restrictive economic measures to reduce the ever-present stagflation and economic instability. Such restrictive policies had resulted in considerable hardship and deprivation, particularly for the peoples of the third world.

3. Given the ever-increasing economic interdependence of nations, such restrictive measures as higher interest rates, import restrictions, deteriorating terms of trade for primary products and reduced levels of development assistance caused serious disruption to the economies of the developing countries. As they further weakened

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(Mr. Browne, Barbados)

the capacity of the developing countries to purchase the exports of the industrial countries, a vicious spiral was set in motion. Thus, the gap between the developed North and the developing South had been growing wider rather than narrowing.

4. The Government of Barbados was convinced that economic co-operation among developing countries was a basic requirement if the developing countries were to play a more meaningful role in the restructuring of international economic relations. The Caracas Programme of Action adopted by the High-Level Conference on Economic Co-operation among Developing Countries was a clear manifestation of those countries' commitment to collective self-reliance. The same concept had been embodied in the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. Accordingly, the Government of Barbados attached great importance to its membership in such regional and subregional groupings as the Caribbean Community and the Economic Commission for Latin America. In his statement to the General Assembly at the 11th plenary meeting, the Minister for External Affairs of Barbados had reiterated that Barbados would continue to exert every possible effort to achieve effective economic integration with its neighbours in the Caribbean area and to develop further economic and other links among peoples of the wider region.

5. The extent to which that policy was being pursued was exemplified by the joint ventures established by the Governments of Barbados and Trinidad and Tobago in such areas as cement production, air cargo facilities, and the provision by the Government of Trinidad and Tobago of economic assistance for its Caribbean neighbours in the field of petroleum products, asphalt and fertilizers. The Government of Barbados had also offered assistance to certain Caribbean and African developing countries in respect of sugar cane technology.

6. His delegation fully supported the Economic and Social Council resolution recommending that the General Assembly should request intergovernmental organizations and the United Nations Secretariat agencies concerned to intensify and expedite the decentralization of economic and social activities to the regional commissions and to consider accelerating the redeployment of staff and financial resources to the commissions.

7. His delegation remained committed to ensuring the effective implementation of General Assembly resolution 32/197, which had initiated the process of restructuring the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system to make them more capable of dealing with the problems of international economic co-operation and development. It would continue to co-operate with other members of the Group of 77 in drafting measures to give full effect to that resolution.

8. It was generally acknowledged that substantial flows of development assistance would have to be transferred to the poor countries if they were to extricate themselves from the vicious cycle of economic depression. In that connexion, it was gratifying that most developed countries had committed themselves to the target of giving 0.7 per cent of their GNP in development assistance. However, few countries had reached the target so far, and those which had demonstrated the political will to do so should be commended.

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(Mr. Browne, Barbados)

9. In the absence of official development assistance, the developing countries were turning increasingly to the external private sector. Those countries fortunate enough to secure private sector loans did so at abnormally high rates of interest and were invariably forced to renegotiate new loans in order to service existing ones. It was estimated that some 40 per cent of the outstanding debt of developing countries was owed to the international private market.

10. In addition to a substantial increase in development assistance, urgent action was needed to make it more effective. In granting aid, especially bilateral aid, many countries tended to "tie" it, as if to ensure maximum benefits to the donor rather than the recipient.

11. It should not be assumed that developing countries regarded development aid as a panacea. Such assistance merely supplemented the main agent of development, which was trade. The extent to which trade had the potential to work for the mutual benefit of the developing and the developed countries could hardly be over-estimated. In 1980, the developing countries had earned \$600 billion from exports, over 20 times the amount they had received in aid. The international economic system should be adjusted to provide for a greater interchange of goods and services and better terms of trade for primary products.

12. There was little doubt that the international economic system needed to be restructured to provide for a more equitable distribution of the world's resources between the developed North and the developing South. The statements made and the Programme of Action adopted at the Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and the Conference on the Least Developed Countries attested to that fact. The proceedings at Cancún also seemed to have given new impetus to the call for global negotiations on a restructured international economic system. The Government of Barbados welcomed that new spirit of co-operation and compromise. There were still many obstacles in the way of launching the global negotiations, but they were mainly procedural and not insurmountable.

13. Mr. SAAD (Egypt), commenting first on 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), said that his delegation strongly supported the proposal in paragraph 45 concerning the dissemination of the results of attempts by United Nations bodies to assist in national development efforts, in order to promote the development of endogenous scientific and technological capacity in the developing countries. It agreed with the statement in paragraph 68 that more weight was now being placed on co-operation between developing countries, but stressed that such co-operation should not be enhanced at the expense of co-operation between developing and developed countries. The conclusion in paragraph 101 that existing programmes and field activities could serve to reinforce endogenous scientific and technological capacity in developing countries without increased funding was very constructive, especially taken in conjunction with paragraph 182, which called for directing greater attention to improving the efficiency of the United Nations system by strengthening and supporting the relevant institutions in Member States. The Member States referred to should, of course, be developing countries.

(Mr. Saad, Egypt)

14. Requests for the demonstration of political will were made repeatedly in the international dialogue. Nevertheless, the continuous commitment of Member States, which had been an important element in launching the Vienna Programme of Action, was an essential factor in translating theory into practice. That commitment must continue and become effective through the establishment of the United Nations Financing System. His delegation fully supported the first proposal, emphasizing co-ordination between the activities of the organizations, organs and bodies of the United Nations system. However, it believed that the proposal to set up an international institute for science policy training needed further examination in the light of the priorities of the Vienna Programme of Action and the activities of existing United Nations institutions.

15. The Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development had achieved a positive result in setting up the operational plan as a framework for the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action, but no system of that kind could exist without financial resources. Accordingly, the resumed third session had been convened chiefly to consider the report of the intergovernmental group of experts on the United Nations Financing System for Science and Technology for Development. The Financing System was the only component of the science and technology structure not yet established; in that regard, the proposal submitted by the Group of 77 constituted a good basis for long-term financing arrangements.

16. The world was plagued by a widening gap between rich and poor nations. Science and technology could, within the framework of a global effort, play an important role in narrowing that gap. If developing countries were able to use the appropriate advanced technology, two main objectives could be achieved: solutions to development problems could be brought within reach more quickly, and developing countries could make use of time that would otherwise have been spent in developing the technology.

17. The Interim Fund for Science and Technology had worked effectively, especially in view of the limited time and resources available. For reasons of continuity, his delegation urged that projects already approved or appraised by the Fund should be carried out and resources made available for them.

18. In connexion with the report of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (A/36/39), he said that his delegation had noted with interest the opening statement of the Administrator of UNDP. Since the adoption of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action in 1972, TCDC had made considerable progress in promoting collective self-reliance and mutual economic co-operation. Among the achievements were the adoption of the new institutional arrangements and administrative mechanism for TCDC and the new legal arrangements, national focal points and potential sources of financing. All those were crucial components in any successful TCDC effort. The developing countries should continue their efforts to increase and promote technical co-operation among themselves and should increase opportunities for creating skilled manpower pools and for planning and education by establishing joint institutions.

19. The Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy had been a historic event in international relations. The Nairobi Programme of Action had succeeded in

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(Mr. Saad, Egypt)

tackling all aspects of the question of new and renewable sources of energy, and the Conference's deliberations had now been translated into measures for action and had become the responsibility of the international community as a whole. The next few months would be crucial in laying the foundations for the execution of the Programme of Action and at the same time providing the General Assembly with guidelines and a framework for its final decisions on institutional arrangements. To facilitate the preparation of institutional arrangements, the Plan of Action had introduced a co-ordination mechanism. His delegation considered that the United Nations system could participate fully in the mechanism by deploying a special team to the Office of the Director-General for Development and International Co-operation to work under his supervision. The team should be selected on the basis of the areas for priority action identified in the Programme. The areas suggested by the Secretary-General of the Conference would be a good beginning. The team should carry out its work basically through field studies and consultation with all parties concerned in the area of new and renewable sources of energy, both inside and outside the United Nations system, and in particular with Governments. The co-ordinating mechanism should report to the Intergovernmental Committee at its 1982 session so that the Committee could analyse its proposals and recommend the necessary arrangements and measures to launch the implementation of the Programme of Action.

20. The Conference on the Least Developed Countries represented a considerable contribution to the effort to establish the new international economic order. The Substantial New Programme of Action gave the international community an opportunity to improve the international economic situation by committing itself to an integrated programme including a follow-up, monitoring and periodical evaluation mechanism. The special measures to be taken on behalf of the least developed countries should be part of the global measures for the developing countries as a whole. Though modest, the Conference's results were constructive and encouraging, particularly the Programme's reference to doubling official assistance to the least developed countries by 1985. The principles adopted at the Paris Conference should be incorporated in the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade.

21. Mr. TANIGUCHI (Japan) said that the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had been a significant achievement: it was no exaggeration to say that the issue of the least developed countries was the most important challenge facing the world. His delegation was consequently gratified at the adoption by consensus of the Substantial New Programme of Action. He noted that the new medium-term target established by the Government of Japan called for official development assistance for the five-year period beginning in 1981 to be increased to more than twice the total disbursements of the preceding five-year period. Within that over-all increase, Japan would spare no effort to increase its assistance to the least developed countries.

22. Where science and technology were concerned, the most difficult problem was the establishment of the long-term Financing System. In that connexion, he emphasized the importance of a realistic target figure. Experience with the Interim Fund led his delegation to believe that if the target figure was set too high it would be difficult to attain it. The Japanese Government believed that the System should be based on purely voluntary contributions and could not, therefore, accept

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(Mr. Taniguchi, Japan)

the idea of negotiated instruments of commitment proposed in the experts' report. In view of the complexity and diversity of the problems touched upon in the report, his delegation felt that there was not time at the current session of the General Assembly to arrive at an arrangement acceptable to all parties. As his delegation had suggested at the resumed third session of the Intergovernmental Committee, a temporary transitional arrangement should be considered, possibly in the shape of a one-year extension of the Interim Fund.

23. A one-week extension of the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Committee had been proposed so that the issues left unresolved at the Vienna Conference could be considered. His delegation believed, however, that those issues were of lower priority than such matters as the long-term Financing System, and it was therefore unnecessary to extend the next session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the sole purpose of discussing them.

24. The question of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system included two issues to which he would restrict his remarks: streamlining the subsidiary bodies of the Economic and Social Council, and interagency co-ordination of operational activities for development within the United Nations system. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 32/197, a number of delegations had opposed any attempt to streamline the subsidiary bodies of the Council. Unless that attitude changed, section II of the Annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197 could hardly be implemented in the near future. Nevertheless, his delegation believed that streamlining was the first step in the over-all process of restructuring and that it would be a useful measure for revitalizing the Economic and Social Council. Japan was also in favour of a subject-oriented session of the Council that would be closely linked with the streamlining. His delegation could not agree to the proposal that the membership of the Council should be enlarged. If it was enlarged, it might easily become open-ended and thus merely duplicate the functions of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly.

25. On the second issue, he expressed his delegation's appreciation to the Joint Inspection Unit for its report on the relationships between the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and entities of the United Nations Secretariat (A/36/419). Among the various recommendations of JIU, recommendations 12 and 18 were particularly striking. It was interagency co-ordination that had been lacking in the United Nations bodies and organizations involved in operational activities. If recommendation 18 was developed in greater detail, it would be of use in the effort to achieve the objectives of paragraph 28 of the Annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197. Regarding co-ordination at the national level, his delegation welcomed the news that the Director-General intended to consult the Governments of Member States on the best way of implementing the new system of Resident Co-ordinators.

26. The introductory report given by the Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy at the 25th meeting was a very important document, which should be read together with the report of the Conference (A/CONF.100/11). Implementing the Nairobi Programme of Action would not be an easy

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(Mr. Taniguchi, Japan)

task, since the Programme contained a great many policy and technical elements which were still quite vague; however, detailed consideration must be given immediately to how best they could be translated into action. He was pleased to note that President Reagan had made specific reference to the Conference in a speech on 15 October and that the Chairman's summary of the Cancún meeting had also contained a specific reference to the Conference.

27. Several matters raised in the Nairobi Programme of Action should be taken up at the current session of the General Assembly. First, since no new institution had been established to co-ordinate the activities of the United Nations system in the field of new and renewable sources of energy, it was particularly important that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should exercise their functions to improve that co-ordination. He hoped that the Secretary-General of the Conference would play a very active co-ordinating role at the ACC level, and he urged the Director-General to play the active role requested of him in paragraph 63 of the Programme of Action.

28. Second, there was the problem of Secretariat support. In order to implement the Programme of Action effectively, it was necessary to get sufficient support from the Secretariat in the implementation of the elements contained in paragraphs 60 to 64. It would be advisable to utilize personnel and facilities already available in the system. However, more important than the size of the staff or facilities was their quality. He looked forward to seeing the report of the Secretary-General on that important problem.

29. Third, there was the question of funding. At Cancún, the Prime Minister of Japan had expressed the view that it was important for developed and developing countries alike to increase their self-help efforts in the field of energy surveys and energy policy planning. Japan was ready to extend co-operation in that respect. It was of the utmost importance to estimate how much funding would be needed to develop new and renewable sources of energy and how much pre-investment would be necessary. Expediting the implementation of the consultative meetings referred to in paragraph 91 was essential in order to secure funding. He hoped that the proposals his delegation had made at the Nairobi Conference would be of some use in that respect, and he looked forward to hearing more from the Secretary-General of the Conference on the progress made toward that end. Consultative meetings might best be pursued at the regional level through the regional commissions. In that connexion, he welcomed the discussions initiated by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific on how to link the Nairobi Conference with the Commission's regional projects and hoped that those discussions would help to create a climate favourable to the implementation of the consultative meetings.

30. Fourth, there was the question what should be done before the meeting, in 1982, of the committee, which was to be entrusted with implementing the Programme of Action. It was essential to maintain the momentum generated by the Conference and to determine who would assume leadership of the efforts to follow up the Programme of Action. Concrete programmes should be drawn up for implementing the Programme in the short, medium and long term. Those concrete programmes were particularly important, as was the question of priority areas of action.

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31. Mr. de LUSIGNAN (World Bank) said that the World Bank had been gratified by the constructive way in which the Committee had considered issues in the field of international co-operation and development, because many of those issues were central to the Bank's operational activities. The analysis given by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation had been especially illuminating, and the Bank shared the forceful sentiments expressed by the Administrator of UNDP.

32. The interdependence of the modern world called for a global outlook. The Bank attempted to provide such a global overview each year in its World Development Report. Urgent effective action was needed on a number of priority objectives, the first one being food. The Bank fully adhered to what had been said concerning the fight against hunger and malnutrition. In recent years some 30 per cent of IBRD and IDA lending had gone to finance agricultural and rural development projects, and that emphasis would be maintained in coming years. Equally important, however, were the issues of energy and the least developed countries.

33. The United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy had contributed significantly to increased global awareness of the potential of such sources of energy by putting that potential into realistic perspectives and had promoted the sharing experience among participants. The Programme of Action provided a generally sound framework for implementing a diversified energy transition. UNDP and the Bank had begun to work together, as requested in paragraph 90 of the Programme of Action, to determine the pre-investment requirements for new and renewable sources of energy in the developing countries in the 1980s. They were already engaged in an energy-assessment survey of some 60 developing countries and believed that it would be an important tool for long-term energy planning, and for guiding and co-ordinating the support of the international community.

34. In addition, the Bank intended to further increase its lending programme from slightly over \$2 billion (16 per cent of its total commitments) in fiscal year 1981 to up to \$3 billion in fiscal year 1982. At the same time, it planned to put more emphasis on the new and renewable sources of energy while pursuing programmes in oil and gas exploration and development. All that would be accompanied by increased support for research and technical assistance to strengthen the technological capabilities of oil-importing developing countries. Because of the existing shortage of funds, the Bank was determined to explore all reasonable avenues to set up an effective mechanism to promote energy investment and was currently engaged in that process, particularly in view of the support given to the idea of an energy affiliate in Nairobi at the recent meeting in Melbourne, of the Commonwealth Heads of Government and finally at Cancún.

35. The support expressed for IDA at the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had been very encouraging, particularly at a time when it was essential to keep up the momentum concessional aid had received through bilateral and multilateral donors over the years. The Bank was responding to the special needs of the least developed countries by adjusting aid modalities to accommodate their special needs, by shifting emphasis to sectors of major importance to their long-term development prospects and by helping them to mobilize their own private sector resources and local entrepreneurial talent through technical and financial assistance to development banks. IDA credits to the least developed countries now

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(Mr. de Lusignan, World Bank)

accounted for 30 per cent of IDA flows as compared with 13 per cent 10 years earlier, and that proportion was expected to be sustained during the 1980s. However, the pressures on IDA resources continued to grow and, with little or no possibility of borrowing in private capital markets, the need for additional concessional resources for the least developed countries became particularly urgent.

36. Within the context of special actions for the least developed countries, he drew attention to sub-Saharan Africa, the one major region of the world which had suffered a decline in per capita income during the 1970s and which was expected to suffer a similar fate in the 1980s. In 1979, the Bank had prepared a special report entitled Accelerated Development in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Agenda for Action. The African Governors of the Bank had expressed satisfaction with the report, which all agreed was only a working document to help to start a dialogue on how the development prospects of sub-Saharan African countries could be improved. It analysed the causes of the disappointing performance and prospects in the region and suggested that by much more efficient use of resources, improved domestic policies and a doubling of official development assistance in real terms the level of per capita income could be significantly increased by 1990.

37. Agriculture, rural development and food; energy; sub-Saharan Africa—those represented the three priorities which the Bank believed required special attention. While the Bank intended to pursue its contribution to development as flexibly and professionally as it had done to date, within the limits of its competence and resources, he drew attention to the imperative need for constructive co-ordination between donor and recipient countries.

38. Mr. TSUI (Secretary of the Committee) announced that the United States had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.22; the Gambia and Rwanda had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.23; New Zealand had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.25; Belgium, the Central African Republic, Chad, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Rwanda, Somalia, the Sudan, Togo and Yugoslavia had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.27; Bangladesh, the Gambia and Viet Nam had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.31/Rev.1; and the Central African Republic had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.32.

AGENDA ITEM 72: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)
(A/36/3/Add.28, Add.31 and Add.32 (Part I and Corr.1 and 2 and Part II), A/36/38, 73 and Add.1, 183, 208 and Add.1, 259, 261-267, 268 and Corr.1, 269, 270 and Corr.1, 271 and Corr.1, 272, 273 and Corr.1, 274-277, 280, 281, 282, 599, 636; E/1981/16 and Corr.1, E/1981/37 and Corr.1, E/1981/86; A/C.2/36/L.4)

39. Mr. ZWAYNE (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation had taken note of chapter XXXII of the report of the Economic and Social Council [A/36/3/Add.32 (Part I and Corr.1 and 2 and Part II)]. It was grateful for the efforts which had been made in connexion with aid to the developing countries and to refugees in Africa, Asia, the Pacific, southern Europe and Latin America. Concerning the report of the Secretary-General on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Lebanon (A/36/272), which described the scale of the assistance needed there, he said that Syria, as a participant in the conciliation committee, appreciated the efforts made by the United Nations and specialized agencies in that area and hoped that additional aid would be given to Lebanon as soon as possible to assist that country in its reconstruction efforts.

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(Mr. Zwayne, Syrian Arab Republic)

40. Turning to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the evaluation of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (A/36/73), he thanked JIU for its evaluation and drew attention to the various suggestions, made in paragraph 127.

41. Mr. CASCAIS (Portugal) said that UNDR0 played a unique role in mobilizing and co-ordinating relief assistance and in disseminating information essential to donor and recipient countries alike, and the international community should continue to support the aims of the Office. He noted with appreciation the report of the Secretary-General on the work of UNDR0 (A/36/259).

42. Some of the difficulties which UNDR0 had been facing reflected uncertainties as to what its precise functions were in mobilizing and co-ordinating assistance and in the field of disaster preparedness and prevention. In the latter two fields, UNDR0's activities duplicated those of other institutions. The multifaceted character of the problems UNDR0 had to deal with emphasized the need for better multiagency co-operation, and his delegation welcomed the progress which had been achieved through the establishment of memoranda of understanding between UNDR0 and other institutions in the United Nations system. In that context, his delegation approved of the arrangements now in effect under which UNDP resident representatives also represented UNDR0.

43. A clarification of some aspects of UNDR0's mandate was required. The definition of that mandate in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) provided a good framework. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit on evaluation of the Office (A/36/73) and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon (A/36/73/Add.1) provided a useful basis. There was room for improvement, however, and his delegation hoped that the efforts initiated recently by the Economic and Social Council would have a positive conclusion at the current session of the General Assembly, thus helping UNDR0 to establish an international disaster response system which was prompt and efficient.

44. His delegation had listened with great interest to the report given by the Administrator of UNDP at the 25th meeting on the activities of the United Nations system in support of the recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region. Portugal supported a well co-ordinated approach to the problems faced by the countries in the region and had recently joined the Club du Sahel, thereby clearly demonstrating its willingness to co-operate in efforts to promote development there. His delegation had recently announced that, for the first time, Portugal would contribute to the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office.

45. Portugal, being at an intermediate stage of economic and technological development, was simultaneously a recipient and a donor of assistance. Within its capabilities, it was contributing to efforts to assist countries afflicted by severe economic problems. It had been developing co-operation, mainly in the fields of training, health, education and creation of infrastructures, thus far chiefly on a bilateral basis. However, it was strengthening its efforts in that area and would strive to provide some assistance within the framework of the United Nations system.

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46. Mr. LUSAKA (Zambia) said that the years leading to Zimbabwe's independence had been difficult for Zambia. Its development efforts had been continuously disrupted because of the costs to its economy of the application of United Nations sanctions against Southern Rhodesia, estimated at no less than \$US 1 billion, and the persistent armed incursions by Rhodesian rebels which had caused extensive damage to Zambia's economic infrastructure. Thus, the economy had been hampered from achieving significant growth primarily due to Zambia's geopolitical position. That situation had been compounded by the rerouting of Zambian cargo to various entry ports, which had been expensive. The amount of resources made available by the international community to help Zambia for costs incurred for applying the sanctions against Southern Rhodesia fell far short of its needs. However, Zambia did greatly appreciate the assistance rendered by countries, organizations and individuals during that critical period.

47. Since the attainment of independence in Zimbabwe, Zambia had been actively pursuing economic development, but to enable it to correct the structural imbalance and continue its involvement in regional co-operation it needed more external resources. The gross domestic product had considerably declined since 1973, with mining, manufacturing construction and agriculture showing a downward trend. Despite the recovery of the agricultural sector in the 1980/81 season, Zambia was still not self-sufficient in all agricultural products. The Government had embarked on extensive programmes to increase and promote food production. Those programmes called for massive external financial assistance.

48. Although Zambia could now use the southern routes, it still had to develop and maintain alternative routes on which it could rely permanently. It also required an extensive network of feeder routes in order to promote agriculture in rural areas. Internal and external transport investment programmes were essential in order to underpin the economic reconstruction now under way and to serve more normal development needs.

49. Mainly owing to the diversion of development resources to other essential activities as a result of its compliance with the Security Council's decision on sanctions against Southern Rhodesia, Zambia lacked adequate and strong infrastructures, particularly in the agricultural sector. The improved performance in 1980/81, especially in maize production, could be attributed to the Government's decision to increase producer prices for strategic crops and to favourable weather conditions. The Government was currently reorganizing its agricultural institutions in order to improve their implementation of its policies. The mining sector had not met its targets. Price fluctuations for copper and cobalt made planning, both national and budgetary, difficult, and their effect on the balance of payments could not be doubted. Furthermore, the effect of external account imbalances had manifested itself in a low level of economic activity.

50. Zambia was still host to more than 42,000 refugees from neighbouring countries. It was grateful for the assistance provided to the refugees by the international community and hoped that more material assistance would be made available so as to enable them to establish a permanent source of livelihood. The Zambian Government also needed resources to strengthen its existing infrastructure, particularly its education, health and social welfare centres for refugees.

(Mr. Lusaka, Zambia)

51. His delegation hoped that the draft resolution on assistance to Zambia which it would be presenting would receive a more tangible response than in previous years from the States Members of the United Nations and its organs.

52. Mr. SANGHO (Mali) said that the progressive desertification of the Sudano-Sahelian region necessitated the formulation and implementation of large-scale integrated development programmes, particularly for water control, under the programme of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS).

53. With regard to water control, the Senegal and Niger Rivers could be used in projects allowing millions of hectares to be exploited and cheap sources of energy to be created. In order to achieve those goals, Mauritania, Senegal and Mali were combining their efforts to carry out a joint programme of integrated development of the Senegal River basin. The realization of that ambitious project would give Mali access to the sea, allow twice-harvested land to be irrigated, improve and expand stock-breeding and facilitate the production of low-cost electricity, making it possible to exploit the immense mineral resources of the region. On a larger scale, the Niger River Commission had elaborated a general management programme for the Niger River basin, the implementation of which would stop desertification in part of that area. The damming of the Sélingué River was part of the over-all development policy; several thousand hectares were already available for agricultural development, stock-breeding, fishing and fish-breeding, while new possibilities for navigation on the Niger River were opening up.

54. The eight States members of CILSS had formulated a regional development programme, the priority objectives of which included food self-sufficiency for the peoples of the Sahel, desertification control, rehabilitation of the Sahel, water control and the establishment of transport and communication infrastructures. That programme had not, unfortunately, been able to mobilize the financing it required. His delegation again urged States, organizations and international institutions to provide or continue to provide assistance for the projects, especially so that UNSO would be able to respond effectively to the priorities established.

55. For many reasons, his country had not yet been able to carry out all of its conservation projects, but it had engaged in the following: large- and small-scale reforestation efforts, brush fire control activities, prohibition of hunting, research on animal life to facilitate improved protection and utilization, prevention of desertification through reduced use of firewood, expansion of water use, and use of solar energy in homes and hospitals and for irrigation. Moreover, the Government was considering the possibility of ratifying certain international conventions on the environment and the establishment of an office of High Commissioner for Renewable Energy. Mali had been represented at a high level at the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, and wished to thank UNEP for its assistance in its efforts to develop new and renewable sources.

56. His delegation hoped that the Committee would adopt draft resolutions A/C.2/36/L.22 and A/C.2/36/L.28 by consensus.

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57. Mr. KITTIKHOUN (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that the prospects of the world economy at the beginning of the 1970s had seemed to offer hope, particularly to the developing countries, which had suffered for too long from the poverty left by colonialism and perpetuated by neo-colonialism and foreign exploitation. Since then, the world economic situation had continually deteriorated. The Committee was thus considering the question of disaster relief assistance at a time when many countries were very seriously affected by the current crisis in the world economy. For that reason, the economically weak countries attached great importance to the question, but they hoped that the discussion of it would focus strictly on its technical and humanitarian aspects and that polemics would be avoided.

58. In general, it could be said that the United Nations system was able to provide to a considerable extent against the disaster situations arising in various parts of the world. The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator had shown itself well able to discharge the mandate given to it in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI). Its effectiveness had been all the more striking in view of the very modest resources at its disposal. The Secretary-General had clearly confirmed in his report (A/36/259) that the grants provided by the Office from its emergency fund, which were limited to \$30,000 per disaster, had been extremely valuable, in spite of their smallness, in stimulating international aid efforts and making it possible to meet unforeseen needs. UNDR0 had also made the international community more aware of the need for coherent and concerted assistance and had enabled the maximum assistance to be provided where the need for it was felt. His delegation therefore found it very difficult to believe in the effectiveness of setting up a new mechanism, as advocated in draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.4. The representative of FAO had told the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1981 that such a co-ordinating committee would automatically tend towards the bureaucratization of emergency relief and that experience had shown that it was far more effective to have ad hoc arrangements for dealing with individual emergencies.

59. On the other hand, continuation of the activities of existing United Nations bodies fully met the needs of developing countries, especially the least developed countries, which were often victims of natural disasters. His own country, which had recently suffered such a disaster and had received emergency aid from UNDR0, recognized the latter's value and wished to express its deep appreciation to the Co-ordinator and all his team. In view of the extreme importance of disaster relief assistance and the seriousness with which the international community treated the problem, it seemed desirable not to become too deeply involved in its organizational aspects, because that kind of exercise might result in an academic debate which could only lead to an impasse.

60. Mr. ter Horst (Venezuela) took the Chair.

61. Mr. KANTE (Guinea) said that emergency assistance from the international community was greatly appreciated by the beneficiaries, but such gestures would be more effective if the raw materials and exports of those countries commanded a fair price in international markets, if the loans given to them did not carry high interest which had to be paid quickly and if the price of equipment and manufactured goods required for their development was not set arbitrarily. As

(Mr. Kante, Guinea)

long as the countries receiving assistance were denied the material bases of development, no generous action would assure their survival, much less their viable development. Accordingly, assistance must be aimed at providing viable economic bases; then the international community would only have to cope with isolated disaster situations. As document E/1981/16 showed, from 1971 to 1980 specialized agencies had had to provide disaster relief only to countries with fragile infrastructures.

62. Lack of means of communication often made emergency aid efforts more difficult; yet the procedure required that the beneficiary country should be consulted before any action was taken. Terrain without roads and rivers without bridges had to be crossed, and relief arrived too late. The best solution would be one which would assist the countries concerned in overcoming their current problems. The medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region was one of the means of achieving that goal. Although its objectives were clear and realistic, they had not all been reached because the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office was entirely dependent on voluntary contributions for its operational activities. Document A/36/208 indicated that, in six years, the number of projects planned by UNSO had increased from 52 to 113 and the financial requirements had risen from \$153 million to \$646 million, but by the end of 1980 only \$419 million had been mobilized. It was noteworthy that 12 of the countries currently receiving assistance from UNSO were on the list of least developed countries and five were land-locked; thus, they were especially vulnerable. The fact that their populations continued to exist below the acceptable level of living was a challenge to the international community, which could not claim to be developed as long as any part of it endured such conditions.

63. The problems created by drought and desertification were many, and their consequences for the economic and agricultural potential of the countries concerned were great and complex. Efforts to solve them should be both extensive and coherent. The pilot project for the restoration and improvement of the Fouta-Djallon massif was one of those efforts, and Guinea had been placed on the list of countries to benefit from UNSO activities under that project. In his delegation's view, the project must aim at integrated development stressing the interdependence of all elements of the area itself and the involvement of surrounding areas. His country had the best water resources of all West African countries: 19 international rivers flowed through it. The Fouta-Djallon project was aimed at ensuring the navigability of rivers for a length of 2,610 kilometres in Guinean territory and in neighbouring States, dredging those rivers to facilitate drought and flood control in the countries concerned, developing hydroelectrical production through dams, 14 of which were planned, and serving as the linchpin of the new African economic integration policy. When one considered that the Niger, Senegal, Gambia and Mano Rivers all rose in the Fouta-Djallon massif, it was clear that the realization of all those objectives was closely linked to the improvement of the basins in that massif. The development of agriculture and livestock production would enable the countries of the region to become self-sufficient in basic foods and end the flight of their populations to the cities. Two national services had already been established for the implementation of the project and the co-ordination of national and international actions. A meeting was planned at FAO headquarters to finalize the project, and OAU would then organize a conference on it. Since that conference might be held in Guinea, his delegation welcomed all countries and organizations interested in the realization of that vital project.

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64. Mr. BAUCHARD (France) said that the problems posed by emergency situations, whether natural or man-made, had assumed alarming dimensions, and the international community had had to adapt its response accordingly. Resolution 2816 (XXVI), establishing UNDR0, had been a major step forward. Although he agreed with the Davidson report that in 10 years the United Nations had considerably strengthened its capacity to respond to complex emergency situations in an increasingly effective and co-ordinated way, there was room for further improvement, especially in the light of the growing complexity and widespread nature of the problems. In that connexion, Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/43 evidenced the concerns of the Council. Although his delegation did not agree with all the conclusions of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, some of them were worthy of consideration. The Davidson report had also made some very pertinent comments, and the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had made a useful contribution. His delegation felt that a broad consensus could be reached on four fundamental principles.

65. Firstly, the response to emergency situations should be based on the priority requirements of speed and effectiveness; that suggested the need for the establishment of a rapid and direct system of information with adequate financial and human resources. Secondly, the key role of UNDR0 should be clearly reaffirmed, but there was room for improvement in its functioning because of its increasing responsibilities. His delegation welcomed the Co-ordinator's announcement that he had modified UNDR0's structures; such measures could only strengthen and improve the effectiveness of UNDR0. Thirdly, in view of the increasing number of organizations providing emergency assistance and the growing complexity and volume of the situations that had to be faced, there was a need for co-ordination both in the field and at the international level. In the field, the resident co-ordinator had been entrusted with general responsibility for co-ordination in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 32/197. Since 1972, the resident representative of UNDP had established teams to plan responses to emergency situations. That need should be confirmed. At the international level, there was a need for similar co-ordination between the specialized or voluntary agencies concerned. Such co-ordination could be effective only if it was planned in advance. Co-ordination should not be interpreted as an infringement on the autonomy and fields of competence of those organizations; the point to be stressed was the need to work together and organize joint operations.

66. The fourth principle, which must be strongly reaffirmed, was that the activities of the international community could be undertaken only with due respect for the sovereignty of States. In resolution 2816 (XXVI), potential recipient Governments had been invited to take a number of measures, and the resulting responsibilities should remain entirely theirs. International organizations could not take the place of recipient States; they could only work in close co-operation with them in full respect for their sovereignty. At the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, the French delegation had submitted a working paper in the form of a draft resolution, which had been transmitted to the General Assembly; his delegation hoped that it would be useful for the Committee's work and would enable the General Assembly to arrive at a consensus on that important question at the current session.

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67. Mr. MIHALJEVIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that Yugoslavia had always supported and valued the work and activities of the United Nations in the field of disaster relief. UNDR0's contribution in co-ordinating disaster relief operations was quite significant; it was also important to point out that considerable efforts had been made in stimulating the state of preparedness in many developing countries to deal with any natural disaster and other emergency situations. In that connexion, it was proper to say that in many cases UNDR0 had been the initiator and the prime mover of those actions at the national level. It was quite obvious that, had it not been for limited financial resources, UNDR0 would have made much greater progress in its work and been able to respond more adequately to the major emergency situations which had occurred in the course of the last year.

68. With regard to the JIU report on the evaluation of UNDR0, his delegation firmly believed that resolution 2816 (XXVI) was adequate. It was not convinced that changes in the substance of the resolution were necessary at the present time, and it therefore had serious doubts as to the adequacy of the JIU recommendations, especially those contained in paragraph 143 of the report, which were intended to limit the scope of UNDR0's activities only to natural disasters. In that regard, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that the recommended approach carried a risk of leaving certain situations uncovered. For that reason, it would be advisable for the General Assembly to reaffirm at its current session the mandate agreed upon when UNDR0 had been established. There was room for improvements, especially with regard to co-ordinating disaster relief assistance as well as enhancing the role of UNDR0 in disaster assistance, which should be limited primarily to developing corresponding methodology that would help national authorities in assessing the consequences of disaster situations. His delegation was not convinced of the need to set up a central body to co-ordinate relief efforts in emergency situations, although it recognized that in the case of major disasters there might be a need for special consultations, which could be undertaken either by the Secretary-General or by an institution authorized by him. What was important was to avoid a proliferation of new bodies and mechanisms. Instead of considering the possibility of establishing new bodies, better use should be made of the existing ones, particularly the facilities of UNDR0's Co-ordination Centre. Yugoslavia welcomed the work that UNDR0 had accomplished so far in extending and co-ordinating assistance to all countries which had suddenly been struck by natural calamities.

69. Mr. GÖKÇE (Turkey) said that his delegation was aware of the heavy burdens on UNDR0 and of the problems it had been facing; it was also aware of the difficulties and unjustified hostility that the Office had had to tolerate during the last year. It fully supported UNDR0 in its endeavours to fulfil the demands of its mandate and commended the Co-ordinator for his untiring efforts and determination to carry out his duties against ever-mounting internal and external odds.

70. The International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, recognizing the detrimental effects of disasters on the development of developing countries, placed emphasis on the responsibility of the international community to provide those countries with adequate and timely assistance in matters of disaster relief, prevention and preparedness. The framework provided by the Strategy was designed to improve the effectiveness of the United Nations system in the field of disaster relief. In any efforts to improve and strengthen existing arrangements, the provision of fast and efficient delivery of relief to disaster-prone areas should be the principal motivation and objective.

(Mr. Gökçe, Turkey)

71. The performance of UNDR0, despite its many difficulties, had been remarkable over the last 10 years. During that period, it had also been involved in the co-ordination and provision of assistance in 32 disasters other than "sudden natural disasters". Over the past 18 months, the whole range of United Nations involvement in the response to disasters and emergencies of all kinds had been very closely examined. That examination had made it possible to identify the important issues and real achievements in the area of emergency assistance rendered by the entire United Nations system, and UNDR0 in particular, over the last 10 years. The Davidson report (E/1981/16) concluded that the United Nations had considerably strengthened its capacity to respond to complex emergencies in an increasingly effective and co-ordinated way, and ACC had made very useful suggestions for improved action in the future. At the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, extensive discussions had taken place on a draft resolution dealing with co-ordination of international efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations. That draft resolution was now before the Committee for further consideration.

72. His delegation was satisfied that the international community had, until the present, consistently endeavoured to effectively respond and adjust to the institutional needs of that humanitarian cause. Those endeavours would continue. However, the Joint Inspection Unit's report, which had ruthlessly and unjustifiably attacked UNDR0 with the purpose of dismantling and reducing it to a minor size and function was a negative contribution, and his delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General of the United Nations for clearly arguing, in his comments on that report, against the delimitation of UNDR0's mandate and pointing to the risks involved in such an action. Under no circumstances would his delegation allow any of the recommendations of the JIU report to creep into any resolutions. His delegation was pleased to learn from document A/36/73/Add.1 that the Secretary-General recommended that the mandate of UNDR0 laid down by the General Assembly in 1971 should not be changed. It was fair to say that the great majority of the views expressed at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council had been in line with that position; the same was true of the views expressed during the present debate in the Second Committee. General Assembly resolution 35/107 had envisaged the possibility of reviewing UNDR0's mandate during the current session; under the circumstances, he hoped that it would be possible to arrive at a consensus to confirm and reaffirm the mandate elaborated and agreed upon in the resolution establishing UNDR0.

73. In resolution 35/107, paragraph 4, the General Assembly had decided to maintain for a further two-year period the trust fund established pursuant to resolution 3243 (XXIX). His delegation was pleased to hear from the Co-ordinator that so far nine countries, including Turkey, had contributed to the Trust Fund. He urged all Governments to follow suit.

74. Mr. FARAH (Djibouti), referring to the problems confronting Djibouti as a result of economic difficulties and the drought, observed that documents A/36/281 and A/36/276 both emphasized the urgency and importance of bringing about quantitative and qualitative improvements in the situation through the implementation of short-term and long-term development programmes. It was also stressed in

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(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

document A/36/281 that many projects, particularly the long-term projects, still needed financing from external sources and that massive investment was needed in order to tap Djibouti's development potential. Unfortunately, a number of high-priority projects such as those for the construction of transport links, for exploiting the brine deposits of Lake Assal and for harnessing geothermal energy to produce cheap electric power had not proceeded beyond the feasibility study stage. Flood control was another area in which projects must be implemented as a matter of urgency. Another major problem mentioned in both reports was the acute shortage of qualified, experienced and skilled manpower, which was felt in all public and private sectors and must be remedied before it became chronic and jeopardized the country's chances of socio-economic development.

75. While his delegation fully endorsed the assessment contained in document A/36/281, it wished to emphasize the urgency of implementing the special economic assistance programme and trusted that the necessary financial and technical resources would be made available. It also endorsed the analysis of the consequences of the drought made in document A/36/276, which identified inadequacies in the programmes for the rehabilitation of displaced drought victims and outlined the assistance which could be provided to the Government of Djibouti in coping with the rehabilitation and resettlement of drought victims. The Government fully supported the establishment of an intergovernmental body to combat the effects of drought and other natural disasters. Both reports were accurate in their description of the harsh economic conditions with which Djibouti had been confronted immediately after independence a little over four years ago. Being an arid country with extreme climatic conditions, Djibouti had no agriculture or industry to speak of, which accounted for its need to import all its food-stuffs and other goods for daily consumption, thus incurring high transport, storage and distribution costs. The obstacles to economic development inherent in an acute shortage of financial resources had been further compounded by a vast influx of refugees into the country and the prolonged drought in the Horn of Africa. Since the country's livelihood was still based essentially on a service economy which was subject to fluctuations in international trade and whose dynamic sectors, such as seaport, airport, railway and telecommunications activities, all needed strengthening if they were to become economically viable, it had become imperative for the Government to seek other means of economic emancipation. It had therefore decided not only to revitalize and modernize those sectors of the service economy but also to promote and develop the industrial and agricultural sectors in order to diversify and broaden its economy.

76. Djibouti's repeated request for inclusion in the list of least developed countries had unfortunately been rejected on the basis of out-of-date information. The Committee for Development Planning had based its latest assessment on a 1976 figure for per capita GDP of \$366 at 1970 prices, which was totally misleading and did not reflect economic realities, particularly with regard to income. Djibouti had thus been denied least developed status on the basis of pre-independence figures. In order to bring a number of international experts to undertake a comprehensive study of the economic situation, which had concluded that economic growth in 1977-1978 had amounted to 1.1 per cent and inflation to 23.5 per cent, leading to a further drop in the per capita GDP. Another factor which had contributed to reducing

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(Mr. Farah, Djibouti)

GDP to a figure of \$314 in 1978 was the continuous influx of refugees. Although that figure appeared to be too high to qualify a country for inclusion in the list of least developed countries, three distorting factors must be taken into account. The first was the high level of prices, reflecting the total absence of any agricultural and industrial production, the fact that all food, fuel, raw materials and manufactured goods had to be imported, the high cost of air and sea freight and inadequate storage and distribution facilities. The difficulty of comparing the living standards of different countries with different consumption patterns, a difficulty compounded by exchange rate fluctuations, was another factor which contributed to distorting the figures. Moreover, subsistence production was undervalued in Djibouti, where such production amounted to 20 per cent and market production to 80 per cent, 65 per cent of the latter being consumed in the capital. Allowance having been made for specific consumption patterns, the per capita GDP of Djibouti at constant 1970 prices had thus been estimated at \$165-247 in 1976, \$131-181 in 1977 and \$104-157 in 1978. In addition, 57 per cent of the national budget had been subsidized from outside assistance in 1979, which made Djibouti's economy very precarious. The third distorting factor was the presence of a large number of expatriates, who earned high wages and spent very little locally, although the inclusion of their income inflated the figures for per capita GDP. Furthermore, the manufacturing sector had represented 8.5 per cent of GDP in 1978, 4.8 of which corresponded to meat and bakery products; the literacy rate was 12 per cent, 3.2 per cent of which were accounted for by expatriates; 30 to 50 per cent of children showed signs of malnutrition; and food consumption represented 65 per cent of total consumption. Djibouti trusted that those facts would provide a more accurate picture of actual economic conditions and correct the misleading GDP figures given for Djibouti in various United Nations and international publications. It therefore wished to reiterate its request for inclusion in the list of least developed countries, in the belief that it was fully eligible.

77. Lastly, the Republic of Djibouti wished to record its appreciation for the assistance it had received from friendly countries, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and United Nations specialized agencies since its accession to independence. It trusted that the projects listed in the reports of the Secretary-General would obtain the support of all Member States.

78. Mr. BIRIDO (Sudan) observed that, on the occasion of the interagency mission to the Sudan to visit the drought-prone areas and assess the impact of the drought, the Minister of Agriculture had drawn attention to the remoteness of those areas from food production areas, the inadequate transport and storage facilities, the dangers of desertification as a result of the cumulative effect of the drought and the efforts of the Sudan to mitigate the adverse effects of the drought and creeping desertification. The Minister of Planning had stressed that the Sudan might have been able to handle the crisis without external assistance had it not been for the international economic situation, notably the rocketing cost of energy and imported goods, the decline of exports, the unfavourable balance of payments, the emigration of qualified personnel and the problem of the hundreds of thousands of refugees. The mission having concluded, inter alia, that drought was a recurring phenomenon for which preparations should be made well in advance and as part of the national development programme, the Government was currently examining the valuable proposals and measures it had suggested.

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(Mr. Birido, Sudan)

79. His delegation strongly welcomed the recommendation of the mission regarding the provision of additional technical expertise by the international community, particularly within the United Nations system, since a national co-ordinating body with a permanent secretariat was scheduled to be established under the Six-Year Economic and Social Development Plan (1977/78-1980/83) to be responsible for drought control strategy and for co-ordination among ministries and between donors and the Government. The Government had also maintained close contacts with the Governments of the region with a view to the establishment of an intergovernmental body in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 35/90, paragraph 6. Regional co-operation was in fact a cardinal element of Sudanese foreign policy, which was why the Government had invited the competent authorities in the countries concerned to meet in Khartoum early in 1982 to discuss ways and means of establishing the intergovernmental body; it was confident that the Secretary-General and the Administrator of UNDP would render the necessary assistance to achieve that objective.

80. In the light of the Sudan's commitment to efforts to strengthen the co-ordination of international humanitarian assistance as a matter of urgency, his delegation welcomed the fact that disaster relief had for the first time been included in the International Development Strategy as one of the integral elements of the Third United Nations Development Decade and that its importance was distinctly reflected in the Substantive New Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries adopted in Paris. The considerable experience of disaster situations gained by the United Nations over the last decade should also go a long way towards improving co-ordination. The Sudan considered that the basic mandate of UNDR0 as defined in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) must be maintained and that UNDR0 must continue as a focal point in the United Nations system for disaster relief matters. It concurred with the view expressed by the Secretary-General in his comments on the evaluation by the Joint Inspection Unit (A/36/73/Add.1) that any delimitation of UNDR0's mandate would risk leaving uncovered certain situations where no formal responsibility had been assigned to any entity within the United Nations system. It also believed that UNDR0 should promote wider recognition of the impact of disasters on economic development in the developing countries and the importance of effective preventive and preparedness measures.

81. In connexion with the consultant's report prepared pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/43 (E/1981/16), the Sudan considered that the mandate of the consultant had been very restrictive and had failed to cover many important areas. For instance, as suggested by the consultant in paragraph 23 of his report, the distinction between natural and man-made disasters was not justified. The availability and flow of financial and other resources to meet disaster relief requirements had unfortunately not been covered in the report, and insufficient attention had been paid to the quality of assistance and ways and means of delivery, a failing diagnosed by JIU in paragraph 127 of its evaluation of UNDR0 (A/36/73). In short, it was unfortunate that, owing to the constraints of his mandate, the consultant had concentrated on the United Nations system rather than on the situations and problems in the field. The Sudan nevertheless supported in principle the efforts to co-ordinate emergency assistance

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(Mr. Birido, Sudan)

at both the headquarters level and the field level, and it agreed with the consultant that the basic facilities and services were available. In ensuring that the United Nations system spoke with one voice, the initiatives and measures adopted by ACC would be of great help. Co-ordination must also involve donor and host countries as well as the International Red Cross and voluntary organizations. At the field level, while the role which the United Nations could play in assisting countries to mitigate the effects of disasters within the framework of needs identified by the host Government was valuable, its importance must not be exaggerated—a point clearly made in paragraph 123 of the JIU evaluation.

82. As to future action, his delegation believed that a decision should be reached at the current session, and it reaffirmed its readiness to co-operate with other delegations to that end.

83. Mr. JOHNSTON (Australia) said that he would confine his remarks to one aspect of a very important subject. The need for a strong and effective role for the United Nations system in disaster situations had been emphasized in recent years by their increasing incidence. The scale and complexity of the problems required a response at both the national and the international levels, and the overriding interest should be to ensure adequate and timely relief. Underlying developmental considerations would be equally important in the longer term but the immediate concern must be to ensure that emergency needs were met.

84. Traditional differences must be set aside and common grounds sought for mounting appropriate responses, since anything less than a consensus approach would be inappropriate. All those with a legitimate role to play must join together in the common cause. The Davidson report (E/1981/16) contained encouraging indications of progress over the past decade in improving preparedness to meet natural disasters and other emergency situations at the national level and at that of the United Nations system. It also indicated a significant strengthening of the United Nations system's capacity to respond to emergency needs. The issue now was what scope there was for improving the system.

85. The important role played by UNDRO as the focal point in the United Nations system's relief operations should be recognized and preserved. UNDRO's contribution in the form of direct assistance had been limited, but its activities had enhanced international awareness of the need for the co-ordination of relief assistance and, by mobilizing efforts, had also helped to maximize the value of resources reaching the places of actual need. His Government had been a constant supporter of those valuable activities and had contributed \$100,000 to the UNDRO Trust Fund in 1981. Nevertheless, there was an urgent need to streamline and strengthen UNDRO by consolidating its experience to date, resolving its administrative and management problems and promoting greater understanding and acceptance of its mandate.

86. It was equally important to tackle the need for improved co-ordination of disaster relief realistically and with sensitivity, since existing short-comings *could not be ignored*. But there were clearly interests at both national and international levels which must be respected. Co-ordination at the field level was essential and arrangements for it should be formalized—for example, through

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(Mr. Johnston, Australia)

the establishment of Relief Co-ordination Units where appropriate. However, any such arrangements must operate with the concurrence of the host Government. It would be advantageous to recognize the de facto role of resident co-ordinator already being performed by UNDP resident representatives, who should be able to convene local relief co-ordination meetings while at all times respecting the sovereign rights of the local Government and the special expertise of the various agencies.

87. It was also highly desirable that co-ordination arrangements at the local level should be matched by an ad hoc decision-making authority which would be able to meet at head of agency level under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General or his Special Representative in New York or, preferably, in Geneva. That was not to suggest a new bureaucracy or new institutional arrangements; nor did his delegation suggest that there was a case for diminishing such relevant and useful devices as lead agency arrangements. What was being sought was a flexible and adaptable mechanism at the centre which would allow for the involvement of the heads of the relevant agencies and of the Secretary-General himself as a means of ensuring the best possible response to major emergency situations in cases where that was necessary.

88. In conclusion, therefore, he entirely agreed with the representative of India's emphasis on the collective challenge of meeting the needs of the victims of disasters on an adequate and timely basis. The overriding purpose must be to assist them in preventing or at the least minimizing the impact of disaster. It was especially important to consolidate and enhance the basis for doing so at the current session of the General Assembly.

89. Mr. RAKOTONAIVO (Madagascar) said that the question of disaster relief assistance was of particular interest to his delegation. With regard to the activities of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, his delegation had noted with great interest the information in the Secretary-General's report (A/36/259), welcomed the additional information given by the Co-ordinator in his opening statement and was sincerely grateful for the untiring efforts which the Office had constantly made to assist disaster-stricken countries. His delegation supported the establishment of a co-ordinating centre in UNDR0, which, according to the Secretary-General's report, would make it possible to record and disseminate all information about disasters in a relatively short space of time, to formulate requests for assessments of the damage caused and, finally, to determine to what extent international action was necessary. Such an initiative would tend to meet the concern of donor countries for co-ordination.

90. His delegation had also noted with satisfaction the arrangements made to increase UNDR0's means of transporting relief supplies cheaply or at no cost in the quickest and most suitable way (by air, sea or road). Such measures aimed at expediting the delivery of relief were of particular importance, because its real value and effectiveness could only be appraised in direct relationship to the speed with which it was delivered.

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(Mr. Rakotonaivo, Madagascar)

91. With regard to individual programmes, his delegation was pleased to note that information and study missions had been organized earlier in the year with a view to improving the arrangements for pre-disaster planning and disaster prevention in the countries of the south-west Indian Ocean, including Madagascar. His country would like to have the results of those studies in the near future.

92. On the subject of missions, his delegation had been struck by the fact that, as could be seen from the table in Annex VI to the JIU report (A/36/73), the percentage of missions to Governments of donor countries or to various seminars or meetings was much higher than the percentage of missions to disaster-prone countries. Some other negative aspects of UNDRO's activities had been pointed out in the JIU report. His delegation had always supported measures necessary to rationalize the Office's administrative and operational procedures. It had examined with the greatest attention the JIU and ACC reports, which indicated that UNDRO's mandate was vague and imprecise, that it lacked a governing body to direct its activities and that there were conflicts of competence between UNDRO and other relevant United Nations organizations. However, his delegation was of the opinion that UNDRO's role and operating mechanism were clearly defined in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) and 3243 (XXIX). The provisions of those resolutions remained valid and he could not, therefore, support the efforts being made to modify the organization's status or to question its existence. His delegation agreed with the conclusion reached by the ACC and by the Secretary-General, namely, that the Office must remain the central body for co-ordinating and mobilizing relief, pre-disaster planning and disaster prevention. His delegation also thought that the JIU proposal for the establishment of machinery at the intergovernmental level to control and direct the Office's activities might create new problems, such as politicizing assistance and rendering the decision-making mechanism more cumbersome.

93. The major problems which had impeded UNDRO's activities were mainly financial. The Office had only a token budget and no assured income. Unfortunately, financial resources had not followed the same rate of growth as the human resources so judiciously provided for the Office in anticipation of its future evolution; that seemed to be the root cause of the current state of the UNDRO establishment. His delegation had always supported all proposals to provide the Office with a continued sound financial basis, in keeping with the spirit of General Assembly resolution 31/173, and it deplored the fact that the international community had not yet succeeded in defining a viable financing policy for the activities of UNDRO. Unlike JIU, his delegation was in favour of maintaining the trust fund until a valid system of financing had been set up, and in that connexion it would draw attention to General Assembly resolution 35/107. In spite of its slender resources, Madagascar was one of the four countries which had made contributions in 1980 to the disaster prevention and pre-disaster planning account. It had also been the only country to contribute to the emergency assistance relief account for that year, thus displaying once again the spirit of international co-operation which should inspire all delegations.

94. In conclusion, he expressed his delegation's thanks for the efforts which the Assistant Secretary-General had constantly made to institute special assistance programmes for developing countries, most of which were in Africa, and reaffirmed

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(Mr. Rakotonaivo, Madagascar)

its support for the programmes of assistance to Lebanon, to the Palestinian people and to the States of southern Africa which were combating the racist régime.

95. Mr. TSUI (Secretary of the Committee) announced that the Central African Republic had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.28.

The meeting rose at 6.55 p.m.