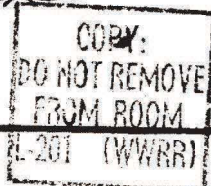


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SECOND COMMITTEE
3rd meeting
held on
Tuesday, 28 September 1982
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 3rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. FAFOWORA (Nigeria)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

1. Mr. RIPERT (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation) said that one of the central concerns of all members of the Committee at the current session was bound to be the breadth and depth of the economic crisis which spared no group of countries, irrespective of their levels of development or their economic and social systems. The Economic and Social Council had devoted much of the deliberations at its latest session to the subject and had identified the fields in which the need for action to reverse the prevailing dangerous trends was greatest. He therefore believed that it would be useful if he offered some personal reflections on the over-all goals which the international community should set itself in those circumstances, on some prerequisites for success and on the instruments for effective concerted action.
2. The United Nations Charter, particularly in Article 55, unambiguously affirmed the links between peace and friendly relations among States, on the one hand, and socio-economic progress and development, on the other; the importance of those links had been constantly reaffirmed by the United Nations ever since its foundation. Continuance of the current trends of the world economy would not only jeopardize the prospects of satisfying the essential needs and aspirations of the peoples of the third world but would dangerously increase the threats to peaceful and friendly relations among States. The quantitative targets adopted in the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade were, of course, at present unattainable, and the need for a resumption of accelerated development was therefore all the more urgent.
3. The interdependence of economies was perceived as a dominant reality of the contemporary world; it created the need for common purposes and concerted action at the international level. Even where domestic decisions were concerned, no country, or at least no large country, could conduct its policies without affecting other economies, and the opposite was also largely true.
4. However, identifying common purposes and agreeing on concerted action required something more than simply taking account of purely economic considerations; the fundamental concepts of equity and justice must also be taken into account. During the last few decades the world economy had made spectacular progress, very often as a result of international co-operation. But the phenomenon of over-all growth had affected different countries unevenly, and within national economies it had often affected different social groups unevenly. Similarly, as could be seen at a time when world growth had slowed down, the burdens of adjustment had not always been fairly distributed.
5. The goal could not, therefore, be simply the resumption of an indiscriminate process of growth; the need at the international level was for accelerated development of the third world countries and, in the short term, for ensuring a

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more equitable sharing of the burden of adjustment. However, that strategy of international solidarity would be accepted by peoples, in all its implications, only if it found a counterpart in the policies pursued within the different national societies - in both developed and developing countries. Reconciling such a prerequisite with the organizational and operational principles of international institutions composed of sovereign States might be, in political terms, one of the hardest challenges facing Member States.

6. The resumption of a lasting process of growth and development in a more interdependent world economy required a significant easing of the climate of uncertainty which currently hovered over the system of international economic relations. The world economy had become a huge production machine capable of generating more than \$10,000 billion in goods and services. Technological progress, economies of scale and flows of long-term investment were among the main driving forces of that machine. Yet the functioning of those driving forces was imperilled by such uncertainties as erratic fluctuations in rates of exchange and in the prices of raw materials, failure to observe the rules of the game in matters of trade and recourse in that field to arbitrary and unilateral actions, and discontinuities in the financing of development aid institutions. Uncertainties and risks would always accompany human undertakings, and the value of the regulatory effect of market mechanisms should not be underestimated; nevertheless, it was important to reactivate or define international rules and the conditions for their observance, particularly in the commercial, monetary and financial fields, if the weaknesses of the old system were to be remedied.

7. The complexity and growing interdependence of modern economies also increased the need for an over-all approach and for coherent action. International success in terms of growth and development could not be expected solely from the sectoral efforts to which action was too often restricted. For example, many people were rightly worried about how the debts accumulated by businesses or Governments over the last decade were to be repaid on an assured and regular basis. The answer did not only involve purely financial mechanisms but was closely linked, firstly, to the possibilities of expanding the international trade of and markets for exporting countries and to commodity prices and, secondly, to the nature and stability of the international monetary system. Corrective action could not, therefore, be conducted only on one front. Interactions of that kind had thus far been imperfectly appreciated, because of the dispersion of forums and decision-making centres under the current international system. However difficult it might be, that dimension of the problems must be taken into account in identifying the prerequisites for overcoming the current crisis.

8. The first of those prerequisites was for Governments to reaffirm and demonstrate, by their acts and decisions, their commitment to the spirit of multilateralism. In recent years, that spirit had unfortunately suffered from a process of erosion, which was particularly apparent and dangerous in two fields: trade and the functioning of international financial institutions. The crucial role played by those institutions in the development process had been amply demonstrated by experience. It had become very urgent to replenish, and as soon as

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possible to increase, the resources of those institutions. The current slowdown of flows of concessional aid was seriously affecting the low-income countries, and particularly the least developed countries. Increasing that type of transfer would have a catalytic effect on investment in the developing countries. Encouraging steps had recently been taken in Toronto to assure the immediate future of the International Development Association, but its medium-term and long-term future still remained uncertain.

9. He would like to draw attention particularly to the situation of the financing agencies of the United Nations system in the field of technical co-operation, especially UNDP. The financing and executing instrumentalities which the United Nations possessed in that field were not only directed towards those sectors that the international community had identified as meriting special attention; they were also aimed directly at the groups of countries which had greatest need of them, particularly the least developed countries. He drew attention to the recommendations put forward in the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the Least Developed Countries and said that the problems of rapid adjustment, adaptation to technological changes and optimal management of scarce resources which those countries faced were powerful reasons for stepping up, not slowing down, United Nations activities in that field. He would like on behalf of the Secretary-General, to reiterate the appeal made recently by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. He hoped that the efforts now being exerted to restore the resources of UNDP to the levels originally planned would evoke a favourable reaction in the course of the Committee's deliberations.

10. A decisive indication of the resolve which Governments were prepared to show in favour of the multilateral approach would be the launching of global negotiations in the fields of trade, energy, development, currencies and finance. If undertaken with a sufficient degree of common purpose, such negotiations would enhance the coherence of the policies followed by the different countries or groups of countries in those essential fields and would make it possible to study and carry out simultaneously, and to some extent on an integrated basis, the necessary adjustments in the mechanisms and institutions which at present governed international economic relations. Apparently, there were now only minor differences in the positions of the countries concerned with the negotiations. If that was in fact the case, everything possible should be done to bring about, even before the end of the current session, an agreement on the convening of a conference on the global negotiations. Such a decision could not, of course, suffice to ensure the success of the conference; much remained to be done in order to agree on the immediate objectives. But were there not even greater risks in abandoning, or even dragging out indefinitely, talks the significance of which was increasingly apparent only to a few initiates?

11. The fact remained that the progress which was urgently needed in the field of international co-operation could not be made dependent on the holding of a conference, which in any case would take time. The launching of global negotiations must be accompanied by measures that would have an immediate impact.

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In that connexion, he recalled the Secretary-General's appeal, at the recent session of the Economic and Social Council, for concerted international action to get the world economy back on a course of stable expansion. The adjustments in the structures of production and trade which the resumption of balanced development required would be considerably facilitated if they took place in a dynamic context. That was particularly true for the developing countries, especially the poorest among them, whose capacity for rapid adjustment was, one might say by definition, limited. The point was not to recommend a policy of systematically stimulating demand and abandoning efforts to combat inflation. Rather, the point was to recommend a set of policies which would have to be applied in varying degrees according to national circumstances, but which did not ensure the success of the battle against inflation at the cost of a freezing of investment or a continued deterioration of employment. Another point was to give developing countries with external deficits greater support in financing their development and restoring balance in their external payments.

12. In November, the Contracting Parties to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) would meet at the ministerial level for the first time in many years. The international community had widely acknowledged the contribution made by an open trading system, governed by uniformly respected rules, to world prosperity as well as to the global structural adjustment process. Nevertheless, examples abounded of measures adopted outside the GATT rules; the arbitrariness of unilateral actions and recourse to bilateral deals in conflict resolution were tending to become the rule rather than the exception. Yet, when arbitrariness replaced rules, it was the weakest who suffered most. Moreover, the aggravation of the climate of uncertainty which accompanied those practices was a factor in the slowing-down not only of trade flows but also of investments. It was therefore vitally important that the forthcoming GATT meeting should produce determined action designed to reverse those trends. It was also essential that the session should not be dominated exclusively by conflicts among the leading industrialized countries or groups of countries. New measures were required if the system was to provide a better response to the efforts of the developing countries.

13. The sixth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development would be held in 1983. It would provide an important opportunity for Member States not only to consider development problems as a whole in the context of the current difficulties facing the world economy but also to align viewpoints and to channel international action towards certain key areas involving trade, currencies, finance, commodities and support for economic co-operation among developing countries. He was sure that the General Assembly would want to give the Conference the political momentum necessary for its success.

14. He found it very encouraging that economic co-operation among developing countries was taking ever more definite shape. Under the impetus of the Caracas Programme of Action, the recent meeting in Manila had concentrated on the problem of trade among developing countries. There were many avenues for co-operation in such important matters as financing, food security, science and technology or the development of new and renewable sources of energy. The United Nations should be

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able, through arrangements respecting the principles of universality underlying the Organization, to give its support to efforts corresponding to the requirements of future years and the interest of all Member States.

15. He hoped that agreement could be reached at the thirty-seventh session on the establishment, at the beginning of 1983, of a United Nations Financing System for Science and Technology for Development and on the implementation of the Nairobi Plan of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy.

16. With regard to the organization of the Committee's work, he said the Secretariat was committed to reducing the volume of documents and improving their quality. Some progress had been made in that regard but much remained to be done, and delegations should be aware that a decrease in their requests for the production of reports would be a great help.

17. Referring to Economic and Social Council resolution 1982/50, concerning the "revitalization" of the Council, he said that implementation of the measures adopted by the Council would undoubtedly improve its functioning and thus permit a better preparation of the work of the General Assembly in the social, economic and related fields.

18. The world atmosphere was currently fraught with political tension. The arms race had flared up again, and considerable resources which could be used for growth and development were being squandered on it. The importance of interdependence, multilateralism, development and international economic co-operation would not, he was sure, be lost on Member States. The challenge facing them was serious, but if sufficient action was not taken there was a serious risk that isolationist attitudes would prevail. The lesson of the 1930s should be borne in mind: recourse to protectionism not only affected levels of living and of employment throughout the world, but was also accompanied by the awakening of narrow nationalism and aggressive militarism.

19. The alternative course was not an easy one. It required that all Member States, and particularly the most powerful among them, should conduct their internal affairs while considering almost systematically the repercussions of their decisions on others. It required the exploration of new directions of negotiation and conflict resolution. Lastly, it required large-scale reforms in the organization and operation of the international institutions set up just after the Second World War. The importance of the stakes, and the considerable success achieved by international co-operation before the onset of the present crisis, left no doubt as to the course to be chosen. He therefore hoped that the thirty-seventh session of the General Assembly would be marked by a number of specific decisions indicative of the determination of Member States to follow it.

AGENDA ITEM 71: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

(f) FOOD PROBLEMS

20. Mr. WILLIAMS (Executive Director, World Food Council), reporting on the Eighth Ministerial Session of the World Food Council, said that the central issues before the Council had been to encourage efforts to reverse the tide of growing hunger in developing regions, giving priority to Africa's critical food problems, and to improve the co-ordination of policies and additional resources in order to increase the self-sufficiency and reduce the food risks of developing countries.

21. The world food supply had improved in the previous two years; large crops and stock accumulation in some countries had brought world reserves of cereals up to 18 per cent of annual consumption, thereby providing an opportunity to strengthen arrangements for reducing hunger and food security risks. The improvement had resulted primarily from good weather in most regions and from the sustained efforts of many countries to increase their food production. However, the international community's concern about growing hunger in the world at large should not abate, because the improvement masked important problems affecting the food security of people and nations.

22. The current world food situation was unstable, and there were serious imbalances, with many countries facing growing food deficits and hunger. Almost every region in the world was a net importer of grain, the major exception being North America, with over half of the world's accumulation and providing 80 per cent of all grain exports. A few other areas, such as Australia and Argentina, provided an important component of world supplies. However, farmers in North America were finding it difficult to meet their production costs, while many importing countries lacked the trade earnings to purchase the grain they needed. Projected crop acreage reductions in North America and sporadic large-scale demand by some importers caused serious uncertainty about future prices and the continuity of grain supply. The prospects were for increased variability of world cereal production and for unstable markets.

23. While the rate of increase in food crop production had been steady in most countries - between 2 and 3 per cent - that was adequate only for the rich countries with their higher output per capita and lower rate of population growth. Even though some developing countries achieved the same rate of growth in food production as the industrialized countries, there was little or no margin of safety between supply and demand in low-income regions, many of which lay in zones of extreme climatic variability. The race between food supply and population growth was already being lost in Africa, where per capita availability of food had been declining steadily for a decade.

24. Slow economic growth, with its negative effects on the income, trade and external deficits of developing countries, was projected for the world economy for the coming four years. While world stocks of food grew, effective demand in low-income regions was pitifully low; indeed, the proportion of the total population with inadequate diets had increased. Given existing trends and

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programmes, the outlook was for substantially larger numbers of undernourished people in the world. While the poor in developing countries faced such a serious food situation, the more affluent, in both developed and developing countries, had little difficulty in obtaining feed for their animals and high-quality meat diets for themselves. That imbalance had explosive social and political implications.

25. The world food problem was on everyone's agenda of good resolutions, but in many countries financing and assistance were actually being diverted to non-productive consumption. Scarce resources were increasingly being channelled into refined consumer services and luxuries and the build-up of armaments, while capital formation with a view to employing the available working force and meeting future social and economic needs was being neglected. Hunger problems would worsen in the 1980s unless resources and efforts were redirected by all concerned.

26. At its recent session in Mexico, the World Food Council had recommended: accelerated implementation of national food strategies, with priority support to low-income countries, particularly in Africa, recognizing the need to co-ordinate improved policies with increased technical and financial assistance; stepped-up measures directed at reversing the tide of growing hunger; and improved food security for developing regions through more open trade and assurances of continuity of food supplies, together with food production and reserve programmes in support of a larger measure of food self-sufficiency. Greater food self-sufficiency for low-income countries could best be achieved by a more integrated approach to food problems on a national basis. Many developing countries were incorporating integrated food strategies in their national development programmes. Reversing the rising trend of undernutrition in Africa would require difficult decisions on essential policy adjustments by the African Governments, in accordance with the Lagos Plan of Action, including higher priority for basic food crops. The Council had concurred with the recommendations made by the African Ministers for Food and Agriculture at its Regional Consultation for Africa to the effect that accelerated efforts by African countries and international agencies should be undertaken as a matter of urgency.

27. Many low-income countries should be encouraged to achieve greater food self-sufficiency, and the Council was gratified that many developing countries were preparing national food policies and strategies. They would, of course, require additional financial assistance, and donor countries had undertaken to make a special effort in that regard. The initiative of the Italian Government to mobilize greater efforts in the fight against hunger was particularly promising. The Council had urged that food strategies should be financed through existing consultative groups, with the adoption of new arrangements as necessary.

28. Direct measures for turning the tide of growing world hunger included an important recent initiative launched by the European Economic Community: the Plan of Action to Combat World Hunger. If the trend of growing world hunger was to be reversed before the end of the century, measures specifically targeted at undernourished people would be required. They included: stepped-up investment in human capacities, emphasizing subsistence households with young children; higher

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priority for policies and programmes to increase the productivity of producers on small plots; and employment generation to provide income for food purchases for poor landless families. While expanding labour-intensive employment would increase food demand immediately, food production would take several years to increase, so that food aid was essential; it was not, however, a good solution to hunger problems unless accompanied by income-generating measures for food-hungry groups. Redirecting food aid and more clearly integrating it with national food production objectives would restore its credibility and build support for greater efforts in the medium term. The World Food Council believed that the costs of eliminating hunger were financially manageable; additional investments of some \$US 4 billion annually in the years ahead would go a long way towards ensuring that the objective was attained. The other prerequisite was managerial ingenuity and political decision.

29. Food security depended on food production and reserve programmes and on more open and expanding trade opportunities. Trade policies were particularly important because when the terms of trade turned against low-income countries, their export earnings and food purchasing power declined. Until the necessary external resources could be earned from international trade, larger allocations of development assistance to food production and distribution would be required. If the international community wanted hunger and malnutrition to be eradicated, the level of development assistance for food must be substantially increased in the next few years. While some progress had been made since the 1974 World Food Conference in adopting measures for coping with food emergencies and the 500,000-ton target for an International Emergency Food Reserve had been achieved for the first time in 1982, efforts to achieve an internationally agreed food grain reserve, accompanied by price stabilization procedures, had not been successful. That had led the Council to propose limited food reserves, specifically for developing countries.

30. There was a strong case for developing countries to adopt national food stock policies within the context of their production and price objectives. The Council had proposed that developing countries should be helped to set up food reserve programmes as part of their national food policies. The proposal envisaged priority being given to developing countries' individual food security needs while contributing to increased international market stability. It would help farmers in the exporting countries to avoid production cuts, with their potentially destabilizing effects. Since international grain prices were at their lowest for 30 years, the acquisition of stocks would be an economic proposition, with only minor risks. Because of the proposal's stabilizing effects on international markets and the balance of payments of developing countries, the IMF buffer stock facility had been suggested as a source of finance for stock acquisition. It would complement the cereal financing facility instituted two years earlier. Additional investment in storage facilities in many developing countries was urgently needed, and the Council's proposal covered that aspect, too. While less ambitious than the controversial Wheat Trade Convention, the proposal was an integrative one.

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31. Food and hunger problems were at the centre of global and development concerns. Overcoming hunger required sustained, and higher, national priority for food production and distribution and more specific measures to reach the undernourished on the part of developing countries, supported by a concerted global effort. He urged the General Assembly to endorse the conclusions and recommendations adopted by the World Food Council at its eighth ministerial session.

(i) ENVIRONMENT

32. Mr. TOLBA (Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme) said that at the session of a special character to mark the tenth anniversary of the Stockholm Conference, the Governing Council had adopted a declaration calling for the strengthening of UNEP as the major global institution for dealing with environmental issues and as the appropriate forum for fostering international co-operation in that field. A remarkable unanimity had emerged on the priority actions for the forthcoming decade. Governments had concluded that there had been a mixed record of success in the decade since the Stockholm Conference. The greatest progress had been made in fulfilling the objective of increasing knowledge of the environment. However, in applying solutions the record had been modest. There had also been agreement concerning the way nations perceived their environment. Two principal threats to the shared environment had been recognized: poorly planned or managed industrial development, which was polluting the atmosphere, the land, rivers and coastal waters, and underdevelopment, which was forcing the underprivileged two thirds of the world to squander resources such as soil and forest on which their future livelihood depended.

33. At its thirty-sixth session the General Assembly had expressed support for providing policy-makers with fresh options and directions through the formulation of an Environmental Perspective to the year 2000 and beyond, and the Governing Council had accordingly approved the setting up of a commission of eminent people to prepare such a perspective and had requested the Executive Director to have consultations with governments on the matter. On the question of the arms race, the Governments represented at the special session had declared that the human environment would benefit greatly from an international atmosphere of peace and security.

34. At its tenth regular session the Governing Council had devoted itself largely to translating the resolutions of earlier session into programmes and actions. The need to improve co-ordination within the United Nations system had figured prominently in the deliberations, and the Governing Council had approved the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme, as a comprehensive device for co-ordinating activities within the framework defined at the session of a special character and the structure recommended by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination.

35. It was a cause of great disquiet to the secretariats of United Nations agencies that the contents of the documents on programming before the General Assembly did not always tally and in some instances created disparate legislative

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mandates. The environment chapter in the medium-term plan, for instance, differed to some extent from the programme approved by the Governing Council, and might even suffer further amendment in the light of CPC's comments. The draft regulations and rules for programme budgeting were also likely to have considerable repercussions on the responsibilities of the Governing Council and other bodies, and it might be appropriate for the General Assembly to canvass the bodies concerned before finalizing its decisions on that subject.

36. The Governing Council had devoted much attention to the requests of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly to improve United Nations efforts at the regional level and, as a corollary, had considered the arrangements for the regional presence of UNEP. It had concluded that UNEP should take fully into account the special circumstances and needs of individual regions, that UNEP's regional offices in the developing regions should be strengthened and receive additional support while maintaining support to the environment co-ordination units in the regional commissions, and that consultations should be conducted with member governments of the Economic Commission for Europe and its Executive Secretary on the desirability of establishing a joint ECE/UNEP division; as matters stood, the Executive Secretary was strongly opposed to the establishment of a joint division.

37. Three decisions adopted by the Governing Council at its tenth session were of particular significance, since they were directed towards the implementation of the International Development Strategy. In recognition of the fact that the countries facing the most serious environmental problems were those least able to deal with them, the Council had asked him to report at its eleventh session on ways of enabling UNEP to tackle serious environmental problems in third-world countries more effectively. The reactions of Governments to the proposals on that subject which were to be submitted to them in the near future would be crucial. Secondly, the Council had decided to establish within UNDP machinery to assist the poorer nations in developing projects to tackle their most pressing environmental problems. The success of that venture would ultimately depend on the degree of financial and other support forthcoming. Finally, at the request of the Council, UNEP had begun to identify areas in which developing countries might co-operate to tackle common environmental problems and to locate the necessary expertise and institutions in developing nations.

38. The fight against desertification remained a top priority. Deserts were still advancing at an alarming rate, and one third of the world's arable land was threatened. UNEP was co-operating with UNDP and UNSO in the Sudano-Sahelian region - the worst affected area. At its most recent session, the Economic and Social Council had recommended that UNEP should participate in the establishment of institutional machinery to combat drought and desertification in east and southern Africa. Useful though institutional arrangements were, however, the essential need was for large-scale financing, and Governments had been reluctant to provide funding for the Plan of Action to combat desertification.

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39. The same situation prevailed in the case of other major environmental problems: the loss of genetic resources, soil deterioration and the transformation of tropical forests. Species of birds, animals and plants were threatened with extinction at an alarming and unprecedented rate, while tropical forest was being lost and productive land degraded extremely rapidly. Such destructive processes could only be corrected over very long periods of time. It was important to muster the political will and financial resources necessary to implement existing policies and make the best use of existing institutional arrangements.

40. The relative success of UNEP's programmes for enclosed and semi-enclosed seas provided a model of how the political will and funding essential to sound environmental management could be generated; in that instance regional treaties had been the major vehicle. With that experience in mind, the Council had at its tenth session adopted a number of decisions aimed at strengthening environmental law in such priority areas as marine pollution from land-based sources and the handling and disposal of toxic wastes. It had also adopted decisions, on shared natural resources and offshore mining and drilling, specifically addressed to the General Assembly, and had recorded its satisfaction at the outcome of the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea, with particular reference to the protection and preservation of the marine environment.

41. Having considered a study on the environmental effects of apartheid, the Council had reaffirmed its solidarity with the victims of apartheid and had called for a speedy end to all forms of racial segregation. It had been concerned to promote public awareness of the plight of apartheid's victims.

42. With regard to the frequency of the Governing Council's sessions, most Governments had expressed a preference for biennial meetings, but a decision on the matter had been deferred until the following session.

43. A pledge of \$US 1 million had been received from a private foundation in Japan to endow a new international environment prize, and the Secretary-General was to establish a trust fund to receive the endowment.

44. It had been recognized at the special session that Governments had not shown sufficient vigour in tackling environmental problems during the previous decade. The environment, particularly in developing countries, was still deteriorating and would continue to do so unless action was taken. The view that environmental issues hindered economic development had been replaced by the realization that the components of the biosphere were resources to be conserved through environmental management. Real progress had been made in reducing damage to the environment while pursuing sound economic goals.

45. It was clear that there was a need for more research. The umbrella term "environment" embraced a range of sometimes poorly understood and hotly disputed issues. In some cases expert opinion was far from unanimous. Training and environmental education had to be provided. Action to resolve environmental problems would not be effective until the general public had a much clearer understanding of the issues. A consensus had emerged at Nairobi in favour of the immediate implementation of solutions to the various environmental problems.

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46. In consensus, however, there was latent complacency: agreement on what should be done was no guarantee that anything would be done. In the case of UNEP, for example, funding was barely adequate. There was an absurd discrepancy between the concern expressed by Governments over the state of the environment, as exemplified by the additional tasks entrusted to UNEP, and the means made available to tackle those problems. The Environment Fund was in sore need of additional pledges. Uncertain funding undermined staff morale, affected the day-to-day operation of the organization and made future planning extremely difficult.

47. The task which lay ahead was to ensure that the decisions reached at the two sessions in 1982 were implemented. Governments had to make sure that adequate financing was forthcoming. The major donor countries of Western Europe and North America were facing a difficult economic situation, while the developing countries wanted an expansion of activities far beyond the current level of funding. While the Environment Fund might not receive all the contributions which would be desirable, a certain minimum of funding was necessary if UNEP's efforts were not to be wasted.

48. Disturbing paradoxes were all too evident. A world which spent colossal amounts on armaments did not see fit to use a very small fraction of that amount to provide mankind with clean water and adequate sanitation, to end undernourishment or to avert impending environmental catastrophe. Governments and peoples had to shoulder their responsibility to ensure that the world was handed down to future generations in a state which guaranteed human dignity for all.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

49. Mr. COT (France) said that all countries, irrespective of their levels of development or economic systems, had been affected by the recession. No group of countries, however, had been so severely affected as the developing countries. The most striking indicator of their tragic situation was the fact that their per capita domestic product had declined for the first time since the 1950s. The least developed among the developing countries were the hardest hit, since any fall in annual income in such countries inevitably aggravated undernourishment among their populations. Since the bankruptcy of those countries represented no great danger to the world's financial and banking networks, he personally feared that their needs would be overlooked in the international struggle to overcome the economic crisis, with resources being mobilized, as a matter of priority, for the benefit of the newly industrialized countries. Given the slowdown in official development assistance and the depletion of the oil-producers' financial surpluses, the mechanisms established in 1981 to assist the least developed countries might well prove wholly inadequate.

50. The Programme of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries recognized that special measures should be adopted for those countries, particularly in the area of official aid. France itself was increasing its bilateral and multilateral assistance to those countries and, as of the following year, it would contribute to the Special Measures Fund for the Least

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Developed Countries. He was pleased to see that the follow-up arrangements established in the Programme of Action were functioning smoothly. The round-table discussions, in particular, seemed conducive to accurate evaluation of the countries' needs and to better mobilization of the necessary resources.

51. Whereas some had sought in the past to blame successive "oil crises" for the stagnation of the world economy, it had become clear that there were also other, structural causes such as the decrease in labour productivity and the low level of research and development activity in the developed countries. The need of the moment, however, was not to apportion blame, but to work together to find solutions. There were two fields which held promise - energy, and science and technology. He hoped that at the current session it would be possible to define clearly the institutional and financial arrangements needed for the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action. In that connexion, his Government reiterated its support for an energy affiliate to mobilize the necessary resources.

52. With regard to science and technology he said that innovation could be a powerful force for economic recovery. His Government had recently proposed that the developed countries should jointly explore new fields opened up by science and technology and help the developing countries to participate in that effort. His Government was following with interest the negotiations on the establishment of the financing system for science and technology for development and intended to contribute to the system, once the institutional arrangements had been completed.

53. His Government was convinced that the international community could weather the current crisis only if all countries acted in solidarity, fully realizing that their economies were interdependent. Since economic revival was likely to come about through meeting the immense potential demand of the third world's markets, the industrialized countries should not be tempted by short-sighted calls for protectionism. France remained faithful to free-trade, and it would say as much at the forthcoming ministerial meeting of GATT and at the sixth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. In particular, France believed that it was necessary to organize the commodity markets. It hoped that the Common Fund would be able to start its operations as soon as possible and its instrument of ratification had just been deposited. The slow pace at which new commodity agreements were negotiated might well force UNCTAD to lower its sights with regard to the organization of markets. Curbing the widely-fluctuating prices of raw materials was one area in which some concrete results might be achieved so as to introduce the predictability needed to stabilize national economies. France was receptive to any proposal relating to that sector and reserved the right to make such proposals at the sixth session of UNCTAD or elsewhere.

54. Solidarity was also necessary in the field of development assistance. His Government was greatly concerned at the continuing decline in the level of development assistance as a result, in particular, of some disaffection on the part of the wealthiest countries with all multilateral institutions. His Government had put forward specific suggestions on ways of accelerating the replenishment of the International Development Association and hoped that they would find favour with a

(Mr. Cot, France)

large number of countries. Moreover, it wanted to see UNDP's central role strengthened through more effective management and less fragmentation of programmes. Strengthening UNDP would have the further advantage of checking the drift towards bilateralism. France's bilateral programmes were co-ordinated and their effectiveness measured by a multilateral agency. France was striving to increase the level of its official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of its GNP by 1988.

55. Those efforts would be to no avail unless they were accompanied by responsible policies - responsible because one way of contributing to the recovery of the world economy was to pursue national policies designed to increase investment and employment without overlooking the need for adjustment or abandoning the struggle against inflation and because developing countries must reduce their external dependency. In that connexion, the Lagos Plan of Action was very encouraging because it stressed the need for the African countries to attain self-reliance. His Government supported the desire of developing countries to strengthen economic co-operation among themselves.

56. His Government attached importance to the establishment of a new international economic order and believed that the opening of global negotiations would undoubtedly be useful in that connexion. The draft resolution submitted by the Group of 77 in March 1982 to, and subsequently accepted in amended form at, the meeting of industrialized countries in Versailles, provided a basis for an acceptable compromise. While it ruled out duplication, as between the Conference and specialized agencies, it did not in any way pre-judge the specific modalities for the operation of the Conference itself and left the door open for the establishment of various ad hoc groups, as the Group of 77 desired. His delegation hoped that the clarifications which both sides would give in the coming weeks would remove any final hesitations delegations might have so that the negotiations could begin.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.2/37/1; A/C.2/37/L.1 and Add.1)

57. The CHAIRMAN said that the Committee would proceed with the proposed programme of work contained in document A/C.2/37/L.1 on the understanding that delegations could make general statements under item 71 or item 12, as they wished. The Committee would review its programme of work from time to time.

58. Mr. SZEREMETA (Poland) said that the question of whether to hold a general debate should be decided in the light of the international situation, rather than by following precedent. There was to be no general debate at the current session, although it would have been useful to have one. It was in such debates that political will could be generated. In practice, however, a general exchange of views did take place on certain topics.

59. It was illogical, in the circumstances, to devote two weeks to introductory statements by heads of specialized agencies. Ideally, their views should be submitted in writing in advance, in which case members could make any comments required. In any event, heads of specialized agencies should be brief and avoid repetition.

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60. Mr. PLECHKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had supported the developing countries' desire to dispense with the general debate at the previous two sessions as an exceptional measure, as had been fully reflected in the summary records of the proceedings. There were, however, no exceptional circumstances at the current session to support the omission of the general debate. Indeed, given the crisis in the world capitalist economy, the increasing problems of developing countries and the attempts to hinder the development of international economic co-operation and the implementation of the new international economic order, the general debate was more valuable than ever.

61. Those opposed to a general debate merely wished to hide the real reasons for the lack of progress in the global negotiations. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 34/138 on the global negotiations. The elimination of the general debate at the thirty-fifth and thirty-sixth sessions had meant that no resolution on the global negotiations, a matter of great importance to developing countries, had been adopted. Certain States were already attempting to revise key elements of resolution 34/138.

62. A general debate would have facilitated a correct understanding of international economic problems and the development of solutions with the participation of all States. The Western States' monopoly of the mass media enabled them to disseminate their propaganda, in which they distorted or ignored the position taken by developing and socialist countries on the new international economic order. In such circumstances, a general debate provided developing countries with a platform from which to expound their views to the entire world. Although his delegation was strongly in favour of holding a general debate in the Second Committee, it would not insist, given the lack of preparation by most delegations. The absence of a general debate, however, was not helping the Committee to resolve the problems before it.

63. The CHAIRMAN said that there were different views on the general debate. The fact that the Committee had dispensed with general debate at the current session did not constitute a precedent. The idea of written submissions by heads of specialized agencies seemed very practical and could be considered further.

64. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee wished to adopt the proposed programme of work (A/C.2/37/L.1 and Add.1).

65. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.30 p.m.