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SECOND COMMITTEE
35th meeting
held on
Thursday, 10 November 1983
at 3 p.m.
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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 35th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ZIADA (Iraq)

later: Mr. DIETZE (German Democratic Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 81: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE:

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/3 (part II); A/38/201 and Corr.1-2; A/38/202);
- (b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/3 (parts I and II); A/38/211-217 and Add.1; A/38/218-219; A/C.2/38/2);
- (c) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/38/152 and A/38/180 and Add.1)

1. Mr. AKHUND (United Nations Co-ordinator of Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon) said that the report of the Secretary-General under item 81 (b) (A/38/217 and Add.1), which he was submitting to the Committee on behalf of the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 37/163, had been completed on 29 August 1983. Since then, many developments in Lebanon had had an important impact on prospects for the country's reconstruction and development. After reviewing the situation as it had appeared at the end of August, he proposed to describe the role which United Nations bodies had been called upon to play in the recent and continuing emergency.

2. According to the report of the Secretary-General, as of late August there had been signs of economic recovery and indications that the government had been making progress in asserting its authority. Nevertheless, while its collection of revenues had increased substantially, its budget deficit was higher than in 1982 and its balance of payments continued to show large deficits.

3. The Lebanese Government Council for Reconstruction and Development had estimated, after the Israeli invasion of 1982, that the country's reconstruction programme would cost 70 billion Lebanese pounds over a nine-year period. The Report contained an outline of that programme and the basic guidelines followed in drawing it up as well as detailed information on a proposed World Bank programme of essential reconstruction projects in Lebanon. It also contained a list of the more important projects for technical assistance proposed by special missions from a number of United Nations bodies which had visited Lebanon between August 1982 and August 1983.

4. Although the prospect for Lebanon's reconstruction and development had appeared encouraging in August 1983, the report had emphasized that a full-scale reconstruction and development programme could not be launched until the authority of the Lebanese Government had been fully restored throughout the country.

5. In the two-month period since the completion of the report there had been a very serious deterioration of the situation. A sudden eruption of fighting in the southern suburbs of Beirut in late August had soon spread to the whole city and

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full-scale fighting had then broken out in the Shouf mountains. Although a cease-fire had gone into effect on 26 September, cease-fire violations had increased in late October and had become systematic. Beirut airport had been closed for more than a month and the fighting, in addition to causing considerable damage, had led to the displacement of large numbers of people.

6. On 6 September, the Minister of Social Affairs and Chairman of the Government's High Relief Committee (HRC) had addressed a letter to the United Nations Co-ordinator of Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon in Beirut, conveying a request to the Secretary-General for emergency relief assistance for between 150,000 and 200,000 displaced persons. On the basis of an assessment of the relief needs of 150,000 persons for a six-week period, the Secretary-General had launched an appeal to the international community and the United Nations system for relief assistance totalling approximately \$10 million. The contributions of some United Nations bodies, the Government of Norway and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) had amounted to over \$4 million, and approximately \$6 million had been obtained as a result of a separate appeal made by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The Under-Secretary-General, Mr. Buffum, who had overall responsibilities at Headquarters for relief efforts in Lebanon, had also made available immediately \$750,000 from the balance remaining in the Trust Fund for Lebanon.

7. In accordance with the wishes of the Lebanese Government, the United Nations Joint Co-ordinating Committee, which had been established by the General Assembly in 1978, had actively assisted government authorities in organizing and monitoring the distribution of food and basic household articles to displaced families. It had been decided that ICRC would provide relief to displaced persons in areas of conflict such as the Shouf mountains and that the United Nations bodies would cover greater Beirut and the surrounding areas.

8. Relief had reached displaced persons within four days of the request being received from the Lebanese Government, with the first distribution of relief goods taking place in the second week of September and the second distribution in early October. On both occasions, United Nations assistance had been given to displaced persons in greatest need, in accordance with the priorities established by HRC. In addition, the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Hariri Foundation, a private charitable organization acting on behalf of the Saudi Arabian Government, had in October distributed rations to displaced families not covered by the criteria followed by the United Nations. Medical supplies and attention had been provided by ICRC and the World Health Organization and requests for surgical, orthopaedic and other equipment as well as ambulances were under consideration. A sum of \$130,000 had been made available from the Trust Fund and \$700,000 contributed by UNICEF from its emergency funds to help restore or maintain the supply of water in the affected areas.

9. After the agreement on a cease-fire, it had been expected that many, if not all, displaced persons would begin to move back to their homes. However, in view of the uncertain situation, no such movement had yet taken place. Even among the

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families who could return, many would remain in need of relief systems for some time because their homes, food reserves and means of livelihood had been destroyed. The Government was therefore planning to extend the period of emergency assistance, which had originally been intended to last for six weeks, up to the end of October and had requested the United Nations and other donors to continue to provide assistance for some time. The United Nations Co-ordinating Committee at Beirut had agreed, subject to an ongoing review of the situation, to provide the needed assistance for the months of November and December.

10. Since then the serious situation in Tripoli had warranted a further assessment by the United Nations. The United Nations would, in any case, keep the situation under close review. Very recently the Tripoli situation had worsened and had caused further displacement of Palestinian refugees and Lebanese citizens. A request had just been received from the Lebanese Government that morning for emergency relief assistance for 4,000 families. The United Nations organizations were responding to that new need and were remaining vigilant with regard to future developments.

11. Arrangements for co-ordinating relief operations were the same as in 1982, with HRC responsible for organizing and co-ordinating relief operations. The Government had also set up a high-level committee to draw up and implement an integrated programme of emergency relief and rehabilitation. On the donor side, co-ordination had been ensured by the United Nations Co-ordinating Committee. As during the emergency after the 1982 Israeli invasion, that Committee had been joined by representatives of donor countries and non-governmental organizations, among them EEC, USAID, the Department of Technical Co-operation of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Middle East Council of Churches, the Save the Children Federation, the Hariri Federation and YMCA. At Headquarters the Inter-Agency Working Group, under the chairmanship of Mr. Buffum, had rendered assistance in co-ordination with donors, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations and other bodies. He expressed his appreciation to them for their support as well as to the many United Nations bodies which had made personnel and resources available for the relief programme. In particular, UNICEF had helped in the procurement of relief goods in the local market and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) organized and conducted the distribution of rations to displaced families. There had been the closest co-ordination between UNHRC and the United Nations Co-ordinating Committee, with members of that Committee participating in meetings of UNHRC and also undertaking certain operational tasks on behalf of the Government. United Nations teams had visited the affected areas and refugee centres and had been able to report that relief assistance had reached the needy promptly and that their basic needs were being met. That was due not only to the speedy response of the international community but also to the fact that the local administrations continued to operate and that, in some regions, private and semi-private local groups, organized on an ad hoc basis, had been helping to provide assistance and maintain necessary services.

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12. Even though the material needs of the displaced persons were being met, it had been traumatic for them to have to flee their homes, especially since many and perhaps most of them had lived through that experience more than once before. Since the displacement of such a large number of people had disrupted administrative and social services and had seriously set back productive activity and the economy in general, it was obvious that relief work could not be confined to the provision of basic necessities but must be accompanied by a well-planned and comprehensive programme for the rehabilitation of housing and the physical and social infrastructure. The problem of housing was complicated by the fact that, because of the present climate of insecurity, many of those who had left their villages might be unwilling to return to them, and was all the more urgent because many of the displaced families were occupying schools and colleges, thereby delaying the holding of classes. The Government was understandably anxious that no action should be taken during the present emergency which could lead to changes in the demographic pattern of the country.

13. While it might be useful to establish a special organization to deal with the rehabilitation of the most heavily damaged areas, as had been done for the southern suburbs of Beirut in 1982, the Government recognized the comprehensive nature of the problem and the importance of a centralized and integrated approach at the planning and policy-making levels. However, as far as the implementation of programmes was concerned, a grass roots approach, mobilizing the efforts of private voluntary organizations, local committees and citizens' groups, could be most effective. UNICEF and UNHCR had had considerable experience in organizing work at that level and could assist the Government if it so desired.

14. Referring to some general questions that arose in connection with emergencies of that kind, he noted that such man-made disasters did not strike suddenly. It was possible to observe, to analyse and often to foresee the consequences of unresolved disputes and problems between or within nations. The central and crucial questions of how to anticipate potentially dangerous situations before they erupted and how the United Nations might better deal with crises had no simple answers but must be addressed.

15. The United Nations system, which was active in Lebanon in providing relief assistance for the fifth time, had benefited from previous experience and improved its ability to deal with such situations. Since each emergency situation had its particular characteristics, there was no standard routine for dealing with relief operations and flexibility was essential. There must also be proper co-ordination at the government level, between the Government and the donor community and among donor agencies. It seemed that such co-ordination had been achieved to a large extent in Lebanon.

16. It must also be borne in mind that relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction were phases in a continuous process. While it was difficult to draw a clear-cut line between one stage and the next, many donors had fairly stringent definitions of what constituted each stage and relief was restricted to what was needed to keep body and soul together by providing the most basic necessities. Consequently, once

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an emergency situation had been taken care of, the sense of urgency associated with it tended to diminish. However, rehabilitation was necessary as a follow-up to emergency relief and as the essential foundation of a longer-term reconstruction programme. It was, of course, in the interest of everyone not to prolong relief operations unnecessarily since the same resources and efforts could better be directed towards helping people to become self-reliant, especially in Lebanon where, because of the succession of crises, it was not easy to make a distinction between those rendered needy by the latest conflict and those still suffering the consequences of earlier troubles.

17. Concerning the reconstruction and development of Lebanon, it was evident that those efforts would be delayed by the most recent events. Unofficial estimates had indicated that fresh damage was very substantial and that most sectors of the economy had suffered a setback. A number of factories had been destroyed and property damage as a whole had been heavy. The economic downturn had been further aggravated by the inactivity of the industrial sector and the disruption of electricity and telephone service. Transport and banking were also suffering substantial losses. Given those circumstances, it was not possible to assess the resources and time that would be needed for the country's reconstruction and development. There was no doubt that all estimates would have to be revised upwards. The unfortunate and tragic happenings of the last few months re-emphasized the urgency of finding a solution to the problems underlying the strife convulsing the country for nearly a decade. The hope for a stable peace, which would enable the Lebanese people to turn their energies to rebuilding their country, had at least been revived by the first results of the national dialogue among Lebanese leaders, which had been initiated recently at Geneva.

18. Mr. MOUSOURIS (Assistant Secretary-General and Joint Co-ordinator of Special Economic Assistance Programmes) said that the 17 countries for which special economic assistance programmes had been instituted had fragile economies and faced various extraordinary difficulties owing to internal strife, destabilization from abroad or severe natural catastrophes. Their problems had been exacerbated by the global recession and the drastic adjustment measures that many had had to undertake. Extraneous circumstances had increasingly shaped the foreign exchange position and influenced domestic economic performance. Government revenues had been reduced and expenditures on investment had been drastically curtailed.

19. All that was not new; what was new was the heightened precariousness of the situation of most countries and the increased severity of the adjustment programmes. In addition, adverse climatic conditions had sharply reduced food availability and eroded nutritional standards. In some countries large population groups were suffering famine while others had experienced enormous damage to their economies from drought and floods. The influx of refugees, displaced persons or repatriates in some countries had placed an additional strain on their economies.

20. However, the picture was not totally bleak, for some countries had averted further deterioration in their economies while a few were showing signs of recovery.

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21. He drew attention to document A/38/216 which contained summary reports on 12 countries, and to the reports of the Secretary-General on Chad (A/38/213), Nicaragua (A/38/218), Sierra Leone (A/38/211) and Ghana (A/38/215). Document A/38/219 described, by recipient country the assistance provided by the United Nations system to the countries having special economic assistance programmes.

22. While Benin's debt burden had increased and serious food shortages had appeared, the Government's budgetary policy had resulted in a small budget surplus. Some \$96 million in financing had been secured for the programme which had been recosted at \$257 million. The programme had been integrated into the 1983-1987 development plan presented to the Round Table Conference that year. Indications were that substantial assistance would be provided.

23. Drought and the movement of refugees in Botswana had strained the country's resources and mineral exports remained depressed. The Government had had to undertake a number of austerity measures. Some \$80 million had been mobilized for projects identified in the special economic assistance programme. Most of the unfunded projects were included in the programmes of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference.

24. Because of the 10-year drought in Cape Verde, food aid remained essential for that country's survival. Some 60 per cent of the \$417 million required for the current development plan had been mobilized at the Round Table of Development Partners held in 1982.

25. The Central African Republic had experienced a decline in per capita income in 1982 and its balance-of-payments deficit had more than doubled. Despite the efforts made by the Government since 1981 to improve the situation the previous economic projection would have to be drastically revised because of the recent drought. The country needed substantial external budgetary support and the priorities reflected in the current special economic assistance programme might have to be modified in the near future.

26. Serious food shortages continued in the Comoros. Some \$55 million had been raised under the special economic assistance programme and the Government had selected 19 projects amounting to about \$90 million for inclusion in that programme. They would be included in the presentation to a Round Table Conference scheduled for 1984.

27. For Djibouti, a small country with few known natural resources, little agricultural production, and a large number of refugees, over \$100 million had been mobilized for projects in the special economic assistance programme. Djibouti's five-year investment programme would be presented to the Round Table Conference which was scheduled for later in the month. External assistance in the amount of \$310 million was being sought.

28. Although the Gambia had experienced some progress in the period 1982-1983, agricultural production had fallen in 1983 and serious food shortages had

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appeared. The current five-year development plan envisaged an expenditure of \$238 million. The projects in the special economic assistance programme - valued at about \$80 million - remained unfunded. It was hoped that at the Round Table Conference, scheduled for 1984, assistance would be forthcoming for both the programme and the plan.

29. The Government of Guinea-Bissau estimated that it required food assistance valued at over \$24 million. Half of the funds required for the special economic assistance programme had been mobilized. The Government planned to include the unfunded projects in its four-year development plan which was to be presented to a Round Table Conference in 1984.

30. Lesotho's economic problems remained most difficult owing to the pressures being brought to bear on it by South Africa. Matters had been compounded by the severe drought and a food emergency had been declared. Outlays on debt-servicing were increasing rapidly, as were costs for national security because of the external threat. The Security Council remained seized of the situation in Lesotho. A Round Table Conference would be held in 1984.

31. Liberia's economic situation had worsened in the last year. The Government had launched a stabilization programme in association with the International Monetary Fund and it had just presented its requirements for external assistance at a Round Table Conference. The total assistance being sought amounted to \$975 million of which about \$277 million had already been committed.

32. The food supply situation in Mozambique was extremely serious because of the drought. The situation was aggravated by problems in moving relief supplies, which were largely the result of externally-provoked armed disturbances. The economy was experiencing serious difficulties and had caused the Government to review a number of economic policies.

33. Uganda was on the way to recovery as a result of reconstruction policies adopted by the Government. Agriculture and exports were progressing and improvements had been registered in the balance of payments and the budget. Those developments were all the more important considering that, at the time of the overthrow of the dictatorial régime in 1979, the economy had been devastated. The Government was implementing an investment programme which required funding of \$737 million. About \$300 million was still needed. A consultative group meeting under the aegis of the World Bank was scheduled for 1984.

34. The special economic assistance programme for Chad amounted to \$341 million. Some \$140 million of that had been mobilized in addition to food aid. The protracted armed conflict had recently become more acute intensifying the need for relief and reconstruction assistance.

35. The account of the assistance received by Nicaragua was based on information provided by various sources including the Government, according to which it had received \$240 million in grants and over \$2 billion in loans and credits since 1979.

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36. Sierra Leone, recently classified as a least developed country, could not mobilize the necessary resources to meet its development potential because petroleum and rice imports alone absorbed all its export earnings. However, the country was well-endowed with natural resources and external assistance could significantly help it to realize its economic potential. A special economic assistance programme amounting to \$275 million had been formulated.

37. The sudden return to Ghana of almost 10 per cent of its population had imposed an extremely heavy burden on the already declining economy. The existing food situation had been aggravated by the influx of returnees and by the recent drought. The multi-agency mission which had just visited Ghana had drawn up a programme of assistance, the emergency-related component of which amounted to about \$50 million. A consultative group for Ghana, under the auspices of the World Bank, was scheduled to meet later in the month.

38. Noting that the Economic and Social Council, in resolution 1983/45, had requested the Secretary-General to apprise the General Assembly of the measures he had taken to assist the Governments of Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru in the aftermath of extensive flooding in some areas and the drought in others, he said that the report of the multi-agency mission which had visited those countries would soon be available as an ECLA document. The damage caused by those disasters was estimated at \$2 billion in Peru, \$840 million in Bolivia and \$640 million in Ecuador. Two thirds of that damage represented direct losses in infrastructure and in the primary sector. Peru required external assistance amounting to \$179 million, Bolivia \$129 million and Ecuador \$97 million and \$17 million was required for regional projects. It should all be in the form of grants or soft loans.

39. Adjustment policies were invariably painful. For the countries receiving special economic assistance they entailed special hardships since their levels of living were low already and could hardly be depressed further. Given such factors as the uncertainty in the prospects for a generalized economic recovery and the diminished access to commercial credits, official development assistance assumed critical importance. If the international community failed to respond at a time when the weak countries were making harsh decisions, their efforts might be in vain. The outcome would be not only uncertain but perilous.

40. Mr. GIORGIS (Ethiopia) said that, given the outstanding record of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, his delegation fully endorsed the request made by the Co-ordinator for additional financial resources from the regular budget.

41. He drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to drought-stricken areas (A/38/214) pointing out that, for almost 10 years his Government had been forced to divert funds earmarked for developmental activities in order to save the lives of many of its citizens. In 1983 again, Ethiopia was experiencing a critical situation, having been hit by the worst drought in 10 years. More and more people were being forced to flee their homes in search of food and water. There were now 7.3 million people who were vulnerable to recurring natural

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disasters, 3.7 million of whom were affected by the drought and 2.3 million of whom had been displaced from their habitat by man-made disasters.

42. The Government had made repeated appeals to the international community. He thanked those who were providing Ethiopia with substantial assistance but pointed out that the assistance received so far was not adequate to ensure the survival of millions of people. So far only 10 per cent of the 900,000 tons of relief supplies requested had been received. Accordingly, the Government was unable to provide the minimum relief ration of 400 grams per person required for survival. The critical food problem had been attested to by representatives of various organizations.

43. The relief effort in Ethiopia was rendered difficult by the paucity of international assistance and the formidable transport problem. So far the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission had been able to distribute about 9,000 tons of food per month - far below the 15,000 tons per month recommended by the inter-agency mission which had recently visited his country. Thousands had to walk for many days to get to the relief camps; not all were able to undertake such an arduous journey. To make matters worse, in about two months the Commission would not be able to distribute any food as none would be available unless international assistance was obtained as a matter of urgency. The response to the appeal launched by the inter-agency mission had so far not been commensurate with the urgency of the matter. If mass starvation and death were to be averted the international community must act immediately.

44. The situation would only be worse in 1984. The Director-General of FAO had recently warned that the population of 22 African countries might soon face hunger on a massive scale and predicted that a situation similar to that of the countries of the Sahel in the early 1970s might occur if current trends were not reversed. The problem of drought in Africa was exacerbated by the lack of dependable early-warning systems. Such a system had been established in Ethiopia and had proved quite useful. Strengthening of that system by means of international assistance would enable it to provide services to other countries in the subregion; the Ethiopian Government was prepared to co-operate in that respect.

45. Ethiopia was one of the 22 countries threatened by the acute food shortage. The main rainy season in 1983 had yielded inadequate rainfall, particularly in the northern region, so that drought would continue in 1984. The inter-agency mission and other organizations which had visited Ethiopia in 1983 had confirmed predictions of food shortages for the following year. Ethiopia's efforts to feed its population were hampered by scant external assistance; Ethiopia was the lowest per capita recipient of grants and concessionary credits of all countries in the same economic category. His Government was aware that temporary relief to drought victims was inadequate and was therefore in the process of launching a campaign to find a long-term solution to the problem of recurring drought. However, factors such as over-grazing, poor husbandry in cultivated areas and concentration of the population in certain regions also contributed to the current food situation, necessitating the resettlement of people from densely populated and degraded areas to fertile regions which enjoyed adequate rainfall. To date, some

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200,000 individuals had been resettled under such government programmes; however, the scheme required a large amount of financial and material resources as well as an extended period for its implementation. He therefore appealed for substantial assistance from the international community.

46. Mr. MINIKON (Liberia) said that, despite determined national efforts, prolonged drought and other unfavourable environmental factors continued to force down the total staple food-crop production of African countries. Their plight was a challenge to the entire international community, but especially to the industrialized countries, which had the capacity and technological know-how to ameliorate, and in fact reverse, the situation.

47. African countries' resolve to meet their food needs was firmly expressed in the Monrovia Strategy for the Economic Development of Africa and the Lagos Plan of Action, which provided the basic framework for the long-term transformation of the African economy. Nevertheless, further assistance was required to complement the national efforts of the 22 African countries facing food shortages.

48. As a recipient of assistance from the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), his delegation welcomed the Office's efforts in the matter of disaster preparedness and prevention. The human and economic costs associated with disasters often made it necessary for countries to divert resources earmarked for development projects to disaster relief; his delegation consequently appealed to all Member States to continue to provide financial support for UNDRO's activities.

49. The statement presented by the Assistant Secretary-General and Joint Co-ordinator of Special Economic Assistance Programmes regarding the effect of the global recession on the countries for which special economic assistance programmes had been instituted accurately reflected the situation of Liberia. Despite the many stringent measures taken by the Government to stimulate economic recovery, the country's economic situation remained critical. At the Round-Table Conference for Liberia, held in accordance with General Assembly resolutions at Berne in October 1983, the Liberian Government had sought contributions in the amount of \$698 million to help implement the National Development Plan. A body composed of donors had been organized to monitor and co-ordinate economic assistance for Liberia through bilateral consultations in co-ordination with the Government. However, the Round-Table Conference was only the beginning of a process that must be sustained until a solution was found to the economic problems.

50. Speaking on agenda item 80 (Training and research), following the decision taken by the Chairman at the 33rd meeting, he commended UNITAR on its valuable studies and promotion of the social and economic development of developing countries. The training by UNITAR of diplomats and officials from developing countries was also of great importance to his delegation. He supported the Executive Director's proposal to revitalize the Institute by reorienting its training and research programmes, but urged that the Institute should refrain from cutting back training and research programmes for developing countries. His

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delegation had participated in a seminar organized by UNITAR and the Economic Development Institute at Washington in February 1983 which had been very rewarding; such seminars should be continued. Noting that the Institute would require a minimum of \$3 million for its 1984 budget, he called upon all Member States and financial institutions to respond generously to the Executive Director's appeal for contributions.

51. Mr. Dietze (German Democratic Republic) took the Chair.

52. Mr. HOUNGAVOU (Benin) said that the underdeveloped state of the Beninese economy and the negative impact of the international economic crisis justified continuation of the special economic assistance programme for that country. Since 1972, when Benin had begun to follow a new political path, its Government and people had worked to bring about profound changes in the country's development,. Results had been encouraging but limited, Benin's economic situation worsened from month to month as a result of the world economic situation. Balance-of-payments deficits and dwindling foreign currency reserves had been caused by a drop in the price of export commodities coupled with a sustained increase in the cost of imports. The country's terms of trade had deteriorated significantly and it had been necessary to resort to loans granted under increasingly difficult conditions in order to carry out certain vital development projects. In addition, the northern part of the country had been subject to creeping desertification in recent years, while the coastal region had been affected by drought following an exceptionally long harmattan.

53. With regard to the information on Benin in document A/38/216, he pointed out that the trends indicated in paragraphs 23 and 27 had continued into 1983. The special economic assistance programme, established in 1981, required financing for 51 projects if it was to solve the problems. Progress reports indicated that, of the total \$257.2 million required for the programme, \$96 million had been mobilized; however, of the latter amount, \$81.3 million had been mobilized in 1982, indicating that little progress had been made in 1983.

54. The country also required assistance in the form of follow-up to the Round-Table Conference of development partners which had been held at Cotonou in March 1983. At that Conference, Benin had presented a strategy based on sectoral investment for the period 1983-1987 amounting to 598.4 billion CFA francs. While it was too soon to evaluate the results of the Conference, he assured the Committee that his Government would furnish all necessary information regarding the financing of that plan. He concluded by paying tribute to UNDRO and FAO for their assistance.

55. Mr. ADLING (German Democratic Republic) said that his country assisted countries facing emergency situations by direct means. Thus, in 1982, it had provided blood plasma, medical equipment, clothing and blankets to the victims of Israeli aggression in Lebanon. It had also participated in relief efforts for other countries in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America. That policy of assistance was an integral part of the German Democratic Republic's solidarity with developing countries in their effort for a new international economic order and

(Mr. Adling, German
Democratic Republic)

against colonialism, neo-colonialism, racism and apartheid. In fact, the emergency situations in many developing countries were the results of many years of colonial dependence and neo-colonialist exploitation. Those countries were handicapped in taking action against disasters by the capitalist economic crisis. He condemned the attempt of certain Western countries to use disaster relief as a means of exerting political pressure on progressive movements in Africa, Asia and Latin American.

56. Many of the economic difficulties faced by the countries of southern Africa were the direct results of South Africa's aggressive policies, in which it was encouraged by its imperialist collaborators. In that connection, he expressed his delegation's strong support for General Assembly resolution 37/69 condemning the collaboration of certain Western States with the racist régime.

57. The German Democratic Republic had been a sponsor of General Assembly resolution 37/157 on assistance to Nicaragua and had provided a wide range of assistance to that country, particularly in health and education, training, specialist services and cultural co-operation. He reaffirmed his country's solidarity with the Nicaraguan people in its struggle for economic and social progress and condemned all counter-revolutionary action against Nicaragua's independence and right to self-determination.

58. It was clear from the report of the Secretary-General in document A/38/202 that the United Nations system was adequately equipped to provide disaster relief assistance, but that assistance should be provided only at the request of the Governments concerned and with full respect for the sovereignty of the requesting States. His delegation objected to attempts by certain parties to use disaster relief assistance as an instrument for interfering in the internal affairs of other States. Consequently, UNDRO's activities should be continued in accordance with that Office's mandate as set forth in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI). It should be noted that the measures taken by UNDRO during the past year had often complemented the actions launched by Governments themselves. Efforts to enhance the developing countries' capacity to cope with natural disasters were valuable; however, for United Nations disaster relief to be more efficient, assistance measures should be better co-ordinated with development activities with a view to eliminating the causes of disasters as well as their effects.

59. Mr. CHEKAY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) agreed with the statement in the Secretary-General's report (A/38/201) on the work of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) that UNDRO's main activity was co-ordination (subprogramme A); however, it emerged from the report that in fact UNDRO sometimes forsook that role and took on the functions of United Nations specialized agencies (paras. 53, 60-62, 74 and 76), and although the report suggested that UNDRO gave assistance in response to specific requests, it was clear from paragraphs 7, 45 and 47 that that principle was not always observed. His delegation maintained that assistance should be given only at the request of the Governments concerned, as specified in General Assembly resolutions 36/225 and

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37/144, and not in such a way as to usurp the functions of the General Assembly, the Security Council or the Economic and Social Council.

60. The range of assistance given by the United Nations system had considerably broadened during the past two years and it was therefore all the more desirable that UNDRRO should develop its co-ordinating role. The Office should be particularly concerned to ensure that there was no duplication in disaster preparedness and disaster prevention (programmes B and C); the computerization might be useful in that respect.

61. He had doubts about the proposal for a feasibility study of a system for direct access to commercially available data bases (A/38/201, para. 101) because the results would not be commensurate with the expenditure involved. Emphasis should be on the more effective use of existing data bases rather than on the establishment of new ones.

62. There had been a substantial increase in the resources made available to UNDRRO, together with a reduction in the revised budgetary appropriation for the biennium 1982-1983. The statistical table in paragraph 103 of the report showed that, if the computed time of each communication could be reduced to the level of 1980-1981, the dollar cost might be almost halved.

63. He would like more information on the item "other common staff costs" in annex II of the report; the item showed an 11 per cent increase over the corresponding amount in the previous biennium despite a general reduction in the budgetary appropriation. That was why he felt that UNDRRO's future activity could and should be maintained within the limits of its own resources.

64. The Soviet Union fully recognized the importance of assistance to countries in distress, and his Government and various public organizations, such as the Red Cross and Red Crescent and the Soviet Committee for Solidarity with the Countries of Asia and Africa, gave disinterested assistance to countries stricken by natural disasters, generally on a bilateral basis, an arrangement which had proved to be fully effective in practice. It supplied food, medicines, transport and other urgently needed aid and Soviet assistance had never been and never would be linked with any political conditions or unilateral economic advantage. The Soviet Union co-operated closely with international organizations, supplying the World Meteorological Organization with data from the Soviet cyclone watch satellite and co-operating with other countries including Canada, France and the United States in the ARGOS programme described in paragraph 89 of the Co-ordinator's report.

65. He noted with appreciation the progress made in providing special economic assistance to Democratic Yemen (A/38/212) and Nicaragua (A/38/218). It was clear from the Secretary-General's summary report (A/38/216) that some of the reports on special programmes had not been based on the conclusions of the United Nations specialist missions but on information supplied by the assisted Governments, thus enhancing the authenticity of the reports and saving the cost of unnecessary missions. However, in the case of one report (A/38/211), prepared by a United

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Nations mission, various essential elements were lacking. The Government concerned should provide the Secretary-General with more copious information than had been obtained by the mission.

66. He noted with regret that the reports prepared by United Nations missions still contained one-sided assessments of the situation in the country concerned (for example, A/38/213, para. 14); that a project for the re-equipping of a police force was masquerading as special economic assistance (A/38/213, p. 39, project G-8); and that there was even an attempt to present the period of colonial domination as a "blessing" for the social and economic development of an occupied territory (A/38/211, para. 13).

67. His delegation maintained that the assessment of the political position or activities of any Government was not within the competence of any United Nations disaster relief organization. Where relief was needed in case of disasters resulting from other than natural causes, the Secretariat should be guided strictly by decisions of the competent intergovernmental authorities, particularly the Security Council, the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and should not try and substitute itself for such bodies.

68. Mr. KOROMA (Sierra Leone) noted with concern that there were so many General Assembly resolutions requesting assistance for developing countries that the matter seemed to have become routine. For Africa alone an average of 21 resolutions had been adopted annually over the last few years in response to natural disasters, or man-made problems, or natural disadvantages such as being land-locked. Some of the requests for assistance concerned countries which could not respond appropriately to international economic vicissitudes and therefore faced a continuous deterioration of their economic position. Therefore, the search for solutions of problems of wars, natural disasters, geographical disadvantage and economic upheaval could not be a routine matter. It was a matter which affected the lives of millions of people, and assistance resolutions should form part of the endeavour of the international community to establish a more just and equitable international economic and social order. Moreover, the number of such resolutions was so great that, while arrangements for the implementation of some of them had been more or less satisfactory to the countries concerned, there were other cases in which the country's real needs had not been met.

69. He recalled with gratitude that Sierra Leone had been the subject of General Assembly resolution 37/158 and that a multi-agency mission had visited the country and submitted its report (A/38/211). The framework within which the priorities of projects would be decided was outlined in paragraph 88 of that report, and the projects themselves were listed in the following sections. He wished to stress, however, that all the projects in the report were of crucial importance to his Government, so that the priority indication in the report should in no way exclude the consideration by any donor country of projects not given priority in the report. He drew attention particularly to the list of additional projects in appendix I, of which his Government would provide full details on request.

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(Mr. Koroma, Sierra Leone)

70. The President of Sierra Leone had appealed for generous and effective response to the proposals in the report when he had addressed the plenary Assembly (A/38/PV.13). His Government was taking steps to approach donor Governments and consult the relevant institutions with a view to mobilizing international assistance, and details of the final arrangements would be given to all Governments and relevant organizations. Meanwhile, he drew particular attention to the immediate needs referred to in paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 37/158; the situation in respect of those needs remained critical. Response to his appeal could be made direct to his Government or its mission to the United Nations.

71. His delegation intended to propose a follow-up resolution which would invite the favourable response of the international community to the assistance proposals before the General Assembly and request that the matter of development aid for Sierra Leone should be kept in view.

72. Mr. NAGGAGA (Uganda) outlined the progress made by his Government in dealing with its economic problems: in 1981, it had introduced a major package of policy reforms to stabilize the economy and revive investment and production. The programme had been an important step towards improving the policy environment for rehabilitation of the economy and, in 1982, drawing on the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to Uganda (A/37/121) the Government had presented a priority two-year recovery programme to a consultative group meeting in Paris, on the basis of which the next national development plan would be launched. In the one and a half years during which the recovery programme had been in course of implementation, there had been a marked improvement in various sectors of the economy including export earnings, agriculture, manufacture, transport and communications, so that the deficit in the balance-of-payments was somewhat less than it had been. Nevertheless, budgetary problems continued, and increased international support would be needed to prevent a further rise in the budget deficit.

73. The implementation of the recovery programme had been hampered by various factors, the chief one of which was lack of resources which were some 36 per cent below the required amount, while Uganda, being one of the least-developed countries, had been one of the first victims of the current squeeze on commercial bank lending, so that a number of priority projects essential to the well-being of the people had had to be cut back or postponed altogether.

74. Much rehabilitation remained to be done, and he hoped that the second consultative group meeting in Paris in January 1984 under the auspices of the World Bank would be well attended. The Sierra Leone economy had been almost totally destroyed during the previous decade, and rehabilitation was posing many problems, including delay in the disbursement of committed resources, leading to delays in the execution of priority projects, and the demand by some financiers for down-payments and mobilization of resources for balance-of-payments support. However, he hoped that the momentum acquired would be sustained by regular and increased external aid.

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75. Mr. TOURE (Guinea-Bissau) said that the critical difficulties faced by the developing countries made them all the more aware of the need to devote maximum efforts to consolidating their national independence by challenging the neo-colonialist structures of exploitation and by organizing co-operation and solidarity among themselves within international, regional and sub-regional organizations. Although co-operation among developing countries had so far yielded concrete results only in regional economic assistance, technical co-operation among developing countries had been successful at both the regional and international levels. It should be pursued by the developing countries with the assistance of international organizations and specialized agencies, and should be co-ordinated by UNDP.

76. The situation in his country had led the Government to formulate a global development strategy to enable it to stabilize the country's finances and promote economic recovery. The strategy was based on economic restraint and austerity, with the basic goal of preventing imbalances. External imbalances could, unfortunately, jeopardize the achievement of goals in the best of plans. Everyone knew the principle causes of the steady deterioration in the terms of trade and no one was surprised that the machinery governing the prices of raw materials on international markets was well out of the reach of the developing countries. It was therefore easy to understand why Guinea-Bissau, which relied heavily on external aid, was affected by the international economic situation and why special emergency assistance for a period of at least two years was essential to restore the economy. Food-aid requirements were estimated at around 82,200 tonnes at a total cost of \$24.4 million.

77. In order to ensure the greatest possible efficiency in the use of external aid, his Government wished to co-ordinate the arrangements made with the various donors by defining their respective fields of activity, the volume of the assistance required and the means of providing it. For that purpose, it planned to organize, with the assistance of UNDP, a round-table at Geneva in 1984. Through such round-tables, Guinea-Bissau might become an example of how countries might redefine international aid in order to reap maximum advantage from it.

78. Mr. MIHALJEVIC (Yugoslavia) said that all efforts should be made to further improve the ways in which the international community responded to the tragic suffering of those affected by disasters and emergencies. His delegation supported the Economic and Social Council's recommendation that the General Assembly should authorize the Secretary-General to permit UNDRO to respond to requests for emergency disaster assistance up to a total of \$600,000 in any one year. Yugoslavia supported the work of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and believed that its capacity and effectiveness must be further strengthened to enable it to respond to the needs of countries in cases of natural and other disasters. His Government attached particular importance to disaster prevention activities and hoped that the recommendations made at the January 1983 meeting of the Co-ordinating Committee would be implemented.

79. Mr. KHOJANE (Lesotho) said that, while his country had always been classified as a least-developed, land-locked and most-seriously-affected country, its

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(Mr. Khojane, Lesotho)

situation had been compounded in 1976 by South Africa's closure of certain border posts in an attempt to coerce it into granting recognition to the bantustan of the Transkei. As a result of Lesotho's steadfast opposition to the system of apartheid and its unswerving commitment to receiving refugees fleeing oppression, South Africa had stepped up its punitive measures in order to suffocate the smaller country economically.

80. A special mission sent to Lesotho to assess the situation had emphasized in its report (S/15600) the need for economic support to enable Lesotho to receive and integrate refugees. Assistance totalling \$46 million for security, maize storage, employment, electricity supply, the new international airport, emergency medical services and the creation of a fire-brigade had been recommended. Those recommendations were intended not only to protect Lesotho's government officials, its citizens and the refugees residing within its borders from physical harm, but also to provide safeguards in such vital areas as food, health, education and work opportunities. His delegation appealed to the General Assembly to endorse the Security Council's actions and to incorporate aspects of them in a resolution on special assistance to Lesotho.

81. The recent international economic crisis and the African drought, which was likely to be recorded as the most devastating in more than two centuries, had exacerbated his country's precarious economic situation. Additional food assistance from the international community was therefore of great importance. Because of the deterioration in relations with South Africa, expenditure on national security had shot up, necessitating the diversion of substantial resources from development purposes.

82. The detailed report on special assistance to Lesotho, to be prepared by the Secretariat in 1984, should reflect the magnitude of the assistance originally requested in 1976, the amount of supplementary requests, the size of contributions for the reporting period and since the beginning of the programme, and the balance still required to complete the programme. It should also indicate the progress made as a result of the special missions recommendations. Separate reports on special assistance programmes were extremely valuable: they assisted the General Assembly in monitoring the programmes and provided Governments and their aid partners with the most reliable source of information on their development needs. Their individuality and confidentiality should therefore not be compromised.

83. His Government thanked the international community for its favourable response to Lesotho's appeals and urged it to consider making more contributions, especially in view of the country's latest problems.

84. Mr. SALLAM (Yemen) expressed thanks to those countries which had helped his Government overcome the effects of the earthquake which had devastated 876 villages and the country's infrastructure and to organizations such as UNDP, UNDRO, WHO and FAO for their valuable contributions to the relief operations.

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(Mr. Sallam, Yemen)

85. On the basis of a report prepared by a joint mission composed of representatives of a number of organizations, the overall cost of the reconstruction programme had been estimated at \$622 million. That had placed a new economic burden on his country and prompted it to revise its development priorities. He appealed to countries, international agencies and intergovernmental organizations to increase their assistance in cash and in kind, especially because his Government was embarking on the reconstruction of the affected areas.

86. Mr. RAHMAN (Bangladesh) said that, as the resource bases of the least developed countries were very limited, when a natural or man-made disaster struck, their development programmes were paralysed. It was recognized that the international community must take steps to improve the arrangements for providing developing countries, irrespective of their state of development, with adequate assistance in disaster relief co-ordination and preparedness. Rapid delivery and distribution of relief supplies were essential in order to minimize human suffering, but paragraph 88 of the report of the Secretary-General (A/38/202-E/1983/94) indicated that, on average, there was a four-month delay between the request for emergency food assistance and the delivery of the food. That was far too long for a population to be facing starvation, yet it was the situation in many developing countries. Efforts must be made to develop machinery to facilitate a more effective response. More training programmes for officials from developing countries were needed, but they must be country-specific or at least concentrate on a subregion. In that connection, his Government welcomed the two seminars organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific with a view to improving the ability of the United Nations to respond quickly to emergency situations.

87. On the financial side, the main emphasis should be on a general-purpose fund for non-earmarked emergency relief. The UNDRP Trust Fund would be the most appropriate instrument, but a resolution must be passed to give it a mandate in that area. Emergency relief should not fail to take account of the special recovery and rehabilitation needs of the affected country. A good example of such an effort was the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region.

88. Mr. AKAKPO (Secretary of the Committee) announced that the Ivory Coast had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/38/L.20, Togo and Congo had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/38/L.22 and Madagascar was sponsoring draft resolution A/C.2/38/L.23/Rev.1.

The meeting rose at 6.45 p.m.