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at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MURGESCU (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 60: UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (A/34/25, A/33/354, A/34/296, A/34/405, A/34/406, A/34/557, A/34/575, A/C.2/34/5, A/C.2/34/L.2)

1. Mr. TOLBA (Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme) introduced the report of the UNEP Governing Council on the work of its seventh session in document A/34/25, which had been transmitted to the Second Committee by the Economic and Social Council pursuant to its decision 1979/56 of 2 August 1979.
2. The Governing Council in its decision 7/1 had referred to some of the major issues on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly, such as the new international development strategy and progress in the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. The possibility of establishing a new international economic order would largely depend on the rational management of resources and the environmental and ecological soundness of measures to be adopted. The prime concern of the developing countries, poverty, had numerous environmental implications, such as poor water supply, inadequate housing, low levels of sanitation and nutrition, dangers to health, vulnerability to natural disasters and the deterioration of ecosystems leading to food shortages. Consequently, environmental concerns should be reflected in the new strategy as a whole and not just in a section devoted to such concerns.
3. In his statement to the Preparatory Committee for the New International Development Strategy, he had put forward a number of suggestions based on the views expressed in the Governing Council. The main objective of the development process should be to meet the requirements of existing and future generations without exceeding the limits of biospheric tolerances. That would require improved methodologies for identifying possible environmental impacts and determining the costs and benefits of environmental measures. The strategy should deal with the question of international agreements for the rational use of territory beyond national jurisdiction and should include specific environmental targets, including, where possible, environmentally sound regional or global projects. It was essential to assess the harmful environmental impact of major development activities and to consult with the countries affected or with UNEP with a view to minimizing those effects.
4. As a result of several discussions he had had with leading statesmen of both developed and developing countries, UNEP had launched a programme on cost-benefit evaluation of environmental protection measures, the recommendations of which could serve as a practical contribution to the formulation of the new international development strategy. In co-operation with the organizations of the United Nations system a first set of guidelines was being developed for assessing and minimizing the possible adverse environmental impacts of development activities in specific sectors of economic activity. Considerable progress had also been made at a meeting held with the World Bank, UNDP and other multilateral development assistance institutions, including the major regional development banks, to prepare a declaration of environmental policies and procedures relating to economic development.

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(Mr. Tolba, UNEP)

5. During 1979, in co-operation with the regional commissions, regional seminars had been held on alternative patterns of development and life styles. To date, those for Africa and for Asia and the Pacific had been held, and others, relating to Latin America, Europe and Western Asia, would be held shortly. The results of those seminars would be discussed and synthesized at an interregional seminar to be held early in 1980 which should provide an input for the preparations for the new international development strategy.

6. Another area of interest was the interrelationship between resources, environment, population and development. UNEP had played an important role in that area, as had been recognized by the Economic and Social Council, which had invited the views of the Governing Council on action taken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 3345 (XXIX). Significant elements of that action had been a document submitted to the Economic and Social Council by an inter-agency group, the symposium held in Stockholm at the invitation of the Swedish Government and the common position taken by the Administrator of UNDP and himself on the complementarity of environment and development objectives, announced in a joint statement issued on World Environment Day.

7. The Governing Council had devoted much attention to UNEP's role in the process of restructuring the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system. In its policy decision it had expressed appreciation of the first report presented to it by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination following its merger with the Environment Co-ordination Board. The Governing Council had invited the attention of the regional commissions to the advantages of setting up intergovernmental environmental committees, a matter which was the subject of consultations with the executive secretaries. In addition, the Governing Council had endorsed his further proposals regarding the development of the system-wide medium-term environment programme, the methodologies of which were being tested in selected programme areas.

8. In implementation of General Assembly resolution 32/162 the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and the Bureau of the Commission on Human Settlements had met with him and the Bureau of the Governing Council of UNEP to review co-operative arrangements and programmes between the two organizations. The next such meeting would take place at Nairobi in December. At its next session, the Governing Council would consider giving its tenth session in 1982 a special character, with broader participation by all States Members of the United Nations.

9. Pursuant to decision 7/2 of the Governing Council, by which he had been requested to ensure an adequate assessment of the environmental conditions of the Palestinian people in implementation of General Assembly resolution 33/110 of 18 December 1978, he had submitted to the Secretary-General a summary of the replies received from concerned Governments, the PLO and international organizations.

10. In regard to programme implementation, he said that special efforts would be exerted to improve the work of UNEP in the areas of environmental assessment, annual reports on the state of the environment, public information, implementation

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(Mr. Tolba, UNEP)

of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and halting the depletion of tropical forests. On the question of climatic changes, the Eighth Congress of WMO had accepted the UNEP offer to assume responsibility for the implementation of the climate impact studies component of the World Climate Programme.

11. The International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), WMO and UNEP were considering formulating current activities on the carbon dioxide issue in terms of an international plan of action for a better understanding of the carbon cycle, of the increase in atmospheric carbon dioxide, and its impact on climate. That important issue had been stressed in a joint statement he had issued with the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment of ICSU.

12. UNEP had accepted the offer of the Government of Gabon to host in Libreville from 25 February to 9 March 1980 the meeting of experts, which FAO and UNESCO would join in sponsoring, to prepare an integrated programme of activities for conservation and wise utilization of tropical forests.

13. UNEP was also undertaking a review of the environmental impacts of production and use of various sources of energy, aiming at a comparative assessment of those impacts. Two reports, one on fossil fuels and the other on nuclear energy, had been issued, and a third, on renewable sources of energy, was in preparation. He urged all Governments to conserve energy, to increase the efficiency of production and use of renewable sources of energy, and to solve their environmental problems associated with production, transport, processing and use of existing sources. In that connexion, he strongly welcomed the convening of the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy.

14. At the request of the Governing Council, he was making intensive preparations jointly with various international organizations to convene in 1980 a high-level group of experts for identifying and defining the most important legal, scientific, technical and institutional elements of a policy to prevent soil from degradation. UNEP was also, in response to requests by Governments, helping to prepare plans of action to protect the Caribbean, the Gulf of Guinea and the three Asian seas, which would be added to the ocean protection initiatives already approved.

15. In the sphere of environmental health problems induced by hazardous chemicals, a noteworthy development had been the establishment by several Governments, thanks to efforts by WHO, of the International Programme of Chemical Safety. UNEP was co-operating fully with WHO, notably in connexion with the assessment of pollutant levels and effects and with the International Register of Potentially Toxic Chemicals.

16. UNEP had been working closely with the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN) and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF) to develop concrete guidelines for the proper management by Governments of their living resources. Their efforts had culminated in a World Conservation Strategy which would be launched in March 1980.

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17. Pursuant to the Programme of Action of the World Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development, UNEP, in co-operation with FAO and other organizations of the United Nations system, would make timely reviews of the environmental impact of rural development programmes. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development, he pointed out that the report of the Working Group on Science and Technology and the Future listed among its goals improving ways of mobilizing resources for the solution of global problems caused by the abuse of the environment.

18. Although both the number and the size of voluntary contributions pledged to the Environment Fund by Member States were increasing, the amount was still \$25 million short of the target of \$150 million approved by the Council for the four-year period 1978-1981. While for the time being the liquidity situation of the Fund could be considered satisfactory, there was a disquieting trend among donor Governments to make their payments towards the end of the year, rather than during the first quarter as the Council had requested.

19. The Governing Council had approved the recommendations made by three groups of countries to set up trust funds for specific regional or global activities. The three Funds established were for the protection of the Mediterranean Sea against pollution, the Kuwait Action Plan and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora. The amounts pledged were close to \$10 million. Support by UNEP would be of limited duration, since the parties concerned were expected gradually to take on increasing responsibility for the activities covered by the Trust Funds.

20. Since 1975, the Environment Fund had accumulated the equivalent of \$17.1 million in non-convertible currency, \$15.9 million of which was in roubles. Work had continued on organizing activities which would require the equivalent of \$11.6 million, and during 1980-1981 expenditure in roubles was expected to amount to the equivalent of \$4.8 million annually. Part of the resources of the Fund were used to meet the costs of 14 staff members and supporting services rather than for programme implementation. He hoped that the General Assembly, despite its policy of zero budget growth, would authorize the transfer of some of those posts to the regular budget. In order to achieve its objectives fully, the Fund must be able to count on the necessary resources; he trusted, therefore, that Governments would make the small additional effort required to reach the target of \$150 million for the period 1978-1981.

21. The Committee had before it various other documents related to agenda item 60. Document A/34/296 contained his report on international conventions and protocols in the field of the environment. Closely related to that subject was the draft resolution entitled "Marine pollution" (A/C.2/34/L.2) which the General Assembly had decided to consider at its thirty-fourth session (decision 33/421).

(Mr. Tolba, UNEP)

22. Document A/34/557 contained the report on co-operation in the field of the environment concerning natural resources shared by two or more States submitted by the Secretary-General pursuant to General Assembly resolution 33/87. That report made seven recommendations which would enable the Assembly to take a decision on the principles governing shared natural resources. The Governing Council of UNEP, in its decision 7/11, had expressed the hope that the General Assembly would take note of the report of the Intergovernmental Working Group of Experts on Natural Resources Shared by Two or More States, adopt the 15 draft principles for the guidance of States in their interrelations in respect of shared natural resources, and request States to respect the principles in their relations with one another.

23. The reports contained in documents A/34/405 and A/34/406, which had been submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/88 and complemented each other, described the work undertaken by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office under the additional mandate conferred upon it by the General Assembly to assist, on behalf of UNEP, the 15 countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region in implementing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. The two reports indicated that the arrangements agreed upon between UNDP and UNEP, and endorsed by the General Assembly at its thirty-third session, were fully operational.

24. Governments' points of view on the additional measures and means of financing for the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification were summarized in document A/34/575. Governments' attitudes were basically of three types: one group of States had expressed its general support for measures and means of financing as proposed in the study, although believing that some might require further clarification and investigation and, most of all, the political will of the States if they were to be implemented. Other States had opposed the measures proposed on the grounds that, in their view, existing resources and existing bilateral and multilateral channels of assistance would permit the problem of desertification to be satisfactorily addressed. A third group of countries was of the view that the proposal called for further study before a final decision upon them could be taken. Based on the analysis of those responses, the Secretary-General had made specific recommendations which would, he hoped, help Governments to give clear guidance on the immediate steps to be taken. The urgency of reaching a solution to the problem of financing the Plan of Action was accentuated by the status of the special account to combat desertification established in March 1979: although a majority of States had supported the establishment of that account, no contributions to it had so far been received.

25. He hoped that his summary of the principal activities of UNEP would allow the Committee to provide UNEP with precise guidance, which the Programme would strive to follow.

26. Mr. MUELLER (German Democratic Republic) said that the current ecological situation was marked not only by a quantitative increase in phenomena harmfully affecting the environment but, in addition, by qualitatively new problems which had

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(Mr. Mueller, German Democratic Republic)

arisen in relation to maintaining the ecological equilibrium and which must be solved so as to create favourable living conditions for present and future generations. In that connexion, questions relating to the cessation of the arms race and effective disarmament measures must be given high priority. His delegation held that UNEP should contribute to solving those problems, and therefore welcomed the decision taken at the seventh session of the Governing Council to include the topic "Environmental effects of military activities" in its report for 1980 on the state of the environment. At the same time, it called on all States which had not yet done so to ratify the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques.

27. One of the most important tasks facing UNEP was the relationship between the environment and development, a question inseparable from the struggle to restructure international economic relations on a democratic basis, to overcome economic backwardness and underdevelopment and to eliminate the exploitation of natural resources of developing countries by transnational corporations. The same could be said for the elimination of all forms of aggression and foreign oppression; in that regard his delegation welcomed the Governing Council's decision 7/2 entitled "Environmental conditions of the Palestinian people".

28. Large-scale co-operation in the field of environmental protection and improvement could be developed between States on the basis of international détente. The convening of the first all-European congress on the environment, under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Europe, proved the existence of extensive opportunities for future international co-operation. Without doubt, the meeting would make a considerable contribution to the elaboration of long-term measures for co-operation in the environmental field by all European States.

29. The German Democratic Republic considered that the draft principles on natural resources shared by two or more States provided a good basis for developing co-operation between States. The conclusion of bilateral and multilateral agreements between States sharing natural resources was an appropriate method for the settlement, under the terms of international law, of issues relating to the conservation and management of such resources.

30. UNEP support for States in the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification was an important task in which positive results had been achieved. The Plan of Action must, however, be implemented primarily at the national level: international activities could only be supportive in character and should be funded through bilateral channels and by making use of existing resources within the United Nations system.

31. The German Democratic Republic had continued to provide assistance to developing countries within the framework of the United Nations Environment Programme. One example was the recent opening of the third training course on ecosystem management, which was taking place at the Dresden Technical University

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(Mr. Mueller, German Democratic Republic)

under the auspices of UNEP and UNESCO. Moreover, in June and July 1979, a course had been held on surface water management. The success of those projects demonstrated that the voluntary contributions to the Environment Fund made by the German Democratic Republic in national currency effectively served the attainment of the Programme's objectives.

32. Mr. KANTE (Guinea) said that, among the problems of the environment, the causes and consequences of drought particularly merited systematic study. Regrettably, the fact that the causes and consequences formed part of the same process made it difficult to draw an absolute distinction between them. The low rainfall in many countries caused drought which, in turn, forced the population to behave in ways which aggravated the phenomenon, particularly through their use of woodlands, in order to survive. Such systematic and uncompensated deforestation was one of the chief causes of disturbances in the climate and rainfall, which had devastating consequences for agriculture and animal life.

33. In the current decade, drought had particularly affected Africa: for some years, in Ethiopia, millions of human beings, in addition to cattle and goats, had died from lack of water; millions of wild animals were suffering the same fate in Kenya; and the same cause had decimated flocks in Mauritania, Mali, the Upper Volta, the Niger, the United Republic of Tanzania, etc. It was estimated that over the past 50 years, 650,000 square kilometres of land suitable for agriculture had been invaded by the Sahara. In order to prevent the continuing succession of drought and its catastrophic effects it was essential, inter alia, to restore the woodlands; hence the crucial importance of water management. In that regard, the Revolutionary People's Republic of Guinea appreciated at their true worth the efforts of the specialized agencies of the United Nations responsible for the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region. It was also aware of its own responsibility in such efforts, since Guinea was the reservoir of western Africa, containing the sources of the major rivers which watered the neighbouring African countries of Mali, Senegal, Mauritania, the Gambia, the Niger, Nigeria, the Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone and Liberia, all of which had to various degrees suffered the effects of drought. Natural frontiers did not coincide with the frontiers between nations and drought was a generalized phenomenon which should be viewed in terms of survival.

34. Since his country was the natural guardian of the main sources of the Niger, Senegal, Gambia, Bafin and other rivers, his delegation considered it its duty to draw the attention of the international community to the alarming drop in the water level in the major river basins. The average deficit in the flow in the Konkouré, Koliba, Niger and Makona river basins represented a loss of 125,000 million cubic metres of water in 20 years. A reduction in precipitation had also been recorded in the Fouta Djallon basin region, where those rivers had their sources.

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(Mr. Kante, Guinea)

35. That situation explained the concern of the Government of Guinea to preserve natural resources, with a view not only to the economic development of the country but also to the preservation of a shared resource. Guinea's new forestation policy was directed towards converting the entire country into a protected zone. In that regard, the Council of Ministers of the Organization of African Unity, at its thirty-third regular session, had adopted resolution CM/Res.756 (XXXIII) on the biological management of the Fouta Djallon plateau. In that resolution, the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme was requested to integrate the pilot project for the development and rehabilitation of the Fouta Djallon plateau with the transnational project for the establishment of a green belt to the South of the Sahara. It was also decided that OAU should co-ordinate the mobilization of the resources needed for the financing of the project, and the Administrative Secretary-General of OAU had been called upon to establish contacts with the Secretary-General of the United Nations so that the latter might mobilize, through UNEP, FAO and UNESCO, the necessary human and financial resources.

36. His delegation hoped that that resolution would obtain all the support necessary for the rapid and effective implementation of that important project, which would be of benefit to all the peoples of the Sudano-Sahelian region.

AGENDA ITEM 58: UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH (continued)  
(A/C.2/34/L.7)

37. Mr. DMITRIEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation had no objection to the report of the Executive Director of UNITAR (A/34/14), and indicated his satisfaction with the activities of the Institute whose programme, in his delegation's view, had in recent years taken on a more balanced character and a more practical orientation.

38. He wished to point out, however, that UNITAR documents contained an imprecise and at times tendentious interpretation of the position of the socialist countries. A series of incorrect statements regarding the position of the socialist countries with respect to the new international economic order had been brought to the attention of the administration of UNITAR. More use should be made of data from the socialist countries in UNITAR's analytical work.

39. In giving its support to UNITAR, his delegation wished to express the hope that contacts with Soviet intellectuals and scientists would be intensified. As an example of such co-operation, he cited studies on planning methodology in various countries prepared by experts from the Soviet Union, the German Democratic Republic and Bulgaria, which had been an important contribution to the UNITAR project on the problems of the new international economic order.

40. His delegation recognized the importance of UNITAR in the preparation of studies on the maintenance of peace, the reduction of tension and disarmament, and would not oppose the adoption of the draft resolution contained in document A/C.2/34/L.7 without a vote.

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(Mr. Dmitriev, USSR)

41. Mr. RAMADAN (Egypt) said that his delegation wished to join the sponsors of the draft resolution, and expressed his appreciation to the Executive Director of UNITAR for his work.

42. Mr. ENOKI (Japan) said that his delegation did not oppose the draft resolution. He reminded the Committee of the statement made by his delegation at the previous session concerning the need to avoid duplication of activities with other bodies, and hoped that it would be reflected in the future work of UNITAR.

43. Mr. AURISCH (Federal Republic of Germany) praised the work done by the Executive Director of UNITAR in preparing his instructive report, which gave grounds for thinking that the Institute was following the right lines in its studies on the use of resources, North-South relations and the new international economic order. The Federal Republic of Germany supported the adoption of the draft resolution without a vote.

44. Mr. CEESAY (Gambia) paid tribute to the valuable work done by UNITAR, and stated that his delegation wished to join the sponsors of the draft resolution.

45. Miss MENON (Singapore) announced that the delegations of Venezuela and the Ivory Coast had indicated a desire to join sponsors of the draft resolution.

46. The draft resolution in document A/C.2/34/L.7 was adopted without a vote.

47. The CHAIRMAN suggested that the list of speakers on agenda item 60 (United Nations Environment Programme) should be closed at 6 p.m. on Monday, 29 October.

48. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.