

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
29th meeting
held on
Friday, 1 November 1991
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)

CONTENTS

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

CRITICAL HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 83: INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION
(continued)

AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 85: INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF
ANGOLA (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 91: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
REHABILITATION OF LIBERIA (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned
within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC2.750,
2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/46/SR.29
18 November 1991
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

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

CRITICAL HUMANITARIAN SITUATION IN THE HORN OF AFRICA (continued) (A/46/3)

AGENDA ITEM 83: INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION (continued) (A/46/3, A/46/266 and Add.1-E/1991/106 and Add.1, A/46/336, A/46/520)

AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/46/3, A/46/217-E/1991/94, A/46/288, A/46/306, A/46/316, A/46/369, A/46/452, A/46/457, A/46/458, A/46/557, A/46/568)

(a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 85: INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF ANGOLA (continued) (A/46/396)

AGENDA ITEM 91: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REHABILITATION OF LIBERIA (continued) (A/46/403)

1. Mr. GONFING (Chad) said that the current international economic situation was marked by an acute economic crisis of the third world countries in general and the African countries in particular. That difficult economic situation was being worsened by the steady deterioration in the terms of trade and by the burden of external debt, which threatened to frustrate for a long time the legitimate aspiration of the African peoples to development. Only an active solidarity which channelled the "peace dividend" into the economic restructuring of the poor countries would make it possible to overcome misery and poverty. In a period like the present, which was characterized by the détente between the two super-Powers and in which the winds of democracy are blowing in both the East and the South, the United Nations was more than ever called on to play a basic part in the maintenance of international peace and security and in promoting the social and economic development of the developing countries.

2. His country was grateful for the constant attention the United Nations had given it for more than a decade, during which it had suffered war and natural disasters. There had been three noteworthy stages in the cooperation between Chad and the United Nations: the adoption of a special programme of reconstruction in 1982, the adoption of an interim plan in 1985 and the adoption in 1990 of an orientation plan which included the holding of sectoral round tables proposed by the Government of Chad. Several of those round tables, the purpose of which was to determine the strategies of the various sectors of the integrated economic development policy, had already been held.

(Mr. Gonfing, Chad)

3. Chad was once again confronting an emergency situation, as the Secretary-General had indicated clearly in his report (A/46/316). To overcome that situation, the Government of the Republic of Chad intended to convene a conference of donors to Chad in Paris shortly, in which it would submit an emergency plan intended in particular to deal with the reorganization of the army and the reintegration of the voluntary returnees. Those returnees had never been registered as refugees, which prevented the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from assisting them when they returned to the country from neighbouring countries.

4. Chad, a land-locked country suffering from drought and desertification and with limited financial resources, had only one export product; it was a poor country with a rudimentary economic infrastructure. However, studies had indicated the existence of minerals which could help it rise out of poverty. In the meantime, while the search for those resources continued, Chad hoped that it would be given special treatment because of its special situation, which had been made worse in recent months by floods and the cholera epidemic.

5. Mr. BIAOU (Benin) expressed full agreement with the statement made by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the States members of the Group of 77. Natural disasters were one of the main concerns of the contemporary world, in view of their frequency and their tragic consequences. The proclamation of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was not an end in itself and the Member States of the United Nations should make an effort both individually and collectively to achieve the goals of the Decade.

6. The steps taken so far at the national and international levels encouraged the hope that new methods for the prevention of natural disasters would gradually be adopted. Since 1 January 1990 about 100 committees and national coordination centres for the Decade had in fact been established and many international, regional and national meetings had been held to study the many aspects of disaster mitigation. His delegation supported the six actions proposed by the Scientific and Technical Committee on the Decade for reducing substantially the number of victims of natural disasters by the year 2000 and establishing a much more solid basis for social and economic development.

7. His delegation also agreed that a world conference on natural disaster reduction should be held in 1994. Since the proclamation of the Decade many natural or man-made disasters had taken place in every continent, among them the catastrophic floods Benin had experienced in July 1990. Over a 10-year period, Benin had experienced four floods which had had tragic consequences and had worsened the situation of the country, which was among those least developed.

8. His delegation appealed for larger voluntary contributions to UNDR0's budget and proposed that the possibility of establishing mandatory contributions should be considered, in view of the fact that no State was exempt from natural or man-made disasters. In addition to providing UNDR0

(Mr. Biaou, Benin)

with the necessary financial resources, it was essential to include among the priorities of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction the execution of reconstruction and rehabilitation projects and the adoption of preventive measures to mitigate the effects of future disasters. Those measures should be included in agenda item 21 of the United Nations Conference for the Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in the coming year. The possible natural disasters envisaged in the context of the Decade were indeed closely related to factors such as climatic change, deforestation, erosion, desertification, drought, air and water pollution and biological diversity. Natural or man-made disasters were in fact the phenomena most destructive of the environment and causing severe economic problems.

9. The International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction offered all nations an unprecedented opportunity to show that they could conquer nature by solidarity and concerted action.

10. Mr. PEREIRA (Cape Verde), speaking also on behalf of Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Sao Tome and Principe, referring to the question of international assistance for the economic rehabilitation of Angola, said that for many years the people of Angola had suffered economic hardship because of the political instability that had existed in the country since independence. In addition, the situation had been aggravated by natural disasters and, although Angola possessed vast natural resources, in the past few years political instability had prevented it from using them. Fortunately, with the signing of the peace accord, the internal conditions had been created for all Angolans to benefit from the country's rich resources. Nevertheless, the Angolan people were in dire need of immediate economic assistance and both the international community in general and individual States had a duty to come to their aid.

11. At the previous session, the General Assembly had adopted a resolution on economic assistance to Angola in which it had appealed for help in the economic rehabilitation of the country. In response to that appeal, the international community had provided Angola with financial, material and technical assistance. As noted in the Secretary-General's report, assistance had been provided in various fields, from macroeconomic management to a financial reform programme and assistance to displaced persons. Although all those activities were very helpful, Angola's economic problems continued to be the main obstacle to the consolidation of social stability in the country. Accordingly, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Cape Verde appealed to all countries and to the international community at large to provide Angola with the economic assistance which it needed so badly.

12. Mr. ELNUR (Sudan), speaking on agenda item 84 (b), special programmes of economic assistance, said that the combined effects of a depressed economy, successive natural disasters and armed conflict in Sudan had resulted in the displacement of large numbers of the population, creating socio-economic problems that it was beyond the Government's powers to solve.

(Mr. Elaur, Sudan)

13. In 1988, the Sudan had appealed to the international community, through the Secretary-General, for help in alleviating the plight of the thousands of people whose lives were threatened. The General Assembly had adopted a number of resolutions on assistance to the Sudan, the most recent being resolution 45/226 of 21 December 1990. That had marked the beginning of Operation Lifeline Sudan, which had made it possible to save many lives and had established the precedent of an agreement between two warring parties to allow the passage of relief goods to affected civilians on both sides. The second phase of the Operation had continued to develop in 1990 and 1991, in conditions that had been aggravated by persistent drought, the ongoing war in the southern part of the country and the negative impact of the Gulf crisis.

14. In the face of those unfavourable circumstances, the Government had redoubled its efforts and implemented a number of adjustment programmes. In 1990, the irrigated area had been expanded to allow for increased food production, while cotton was grown in rain-fed areas. The Government had also requested cooperation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in conducting an assessment of the food shortfall, which had been estimated at 1.2 million tons. The international donor community had responded to the Government's appeal for supplies to cover the shortfall, and the World Food Programme (WFP) had assumed responsibility for coordinating assistance while the national authorities had provided every facility possible for the relief activities, including a highly favourable exchange rate. In fact, the Sudan was doing everything in its power to remedy the situation. However, it had to face enormous difficulties, including the vastness of the country, an inadequate communications network, shortages of fuel and spare parts and bureaucratic procedures.

15. In those difficult circumstances, the visits of Mr. Ingram, Executive Director of WFP, and Mr. Jonah, Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, had made it possible to reach agreement on the dropping of relief supplies by air to the refugees returning from Ethiopia and to launch the third phase of Operation Lifeline Sudan. For purely humanitarian reasons, the Government of the Sudan was seeking to facilitate the task of WFP, the non-governmental organizations and the donor countries, despite the fact that the other party to the conflict failed to show the same good will and that most of the returnees were carrying arms with which to fight the Government.

16. As far as western Sudan was concerned, the food situation was satisfactory, although the lack of an effective transport network made it difficult to move supplies. Hence the importance of the project for the rehabilitation of the railway sector, under the auspices of the World Bank, which could have been put into effect had some donor countries not withdrawn their support for it. It was to be hoped that the situation would develop favourably and that, with the assistance of the United Nations system, donor countries and non-governmental organizations, the Sudan would be able to overcome its current difficulties.

17. Mr. CORREIA (Angola) said that his country was grateful to the international community for its efforts to implement General Assembly resolution 45/233 of 21 December 1990. There was no doubt that, with the restoration of peace in Angola, donor countries would gradually recover from any fear and lack of trust they might still feel. It was strange, and indeed sad, that a country with so many natural resources should need emergency assistance from the international community to satisfy its population's most basic needs. The situation was due, above all, to a 16-year war fomented and imposed upon the people from outside the country.
18. Angola needed aid to reconstruct its ruined infrastructure, reactivate its economy and cope with the problems of assisting hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons, not forgetting the demobilization of hundreds of soldiers, in accordance with the Estoril Peace Pact. The assistance of the United Nations system and the entire international community would be vital in that respect.
19. Angola, which had not always chosen the best economic path, had, in the past four years, embarked on a broad programme of economic and financial restructuring with a view to establishing a more effective, productive and competitive economic system. It had been a member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank since 1989. IMF had provided valuable technical assistance and the Bank had granted loans amounting to \$23 million. There was no doubt that, with help from all sides, the Angolan economy would recover and closer trade ties would be established with the countries of the region. In that way, not only would a community of some 150 million persons be restored to calm and prosperity, but the whole southern region of the continent would benefit from greater peace and stability.
20. Mr. AL-ERYANI (Yemen) said that, increasingly, the international community was attributing greater importance to economic assistance to the developing countries, whose general situation had deteriorated in the past few years as a result of natural disasters, among other things. In the current climate of détente in international relations, it would be easier to make progress in the field of negotiation and cooperation with a view to providing special assistance to the countries most exposed to such disasters. It was not enough to show solidarity with them; it was necessary to adopt more extensive preventive measures and to help them financially, in cases of emergency, particularly from the point of view of food supplies and health care, so that they could, first, alleviate the sufferings of their peoples, and, then, elaborate wide-ranging social and economic policies aimed at raising the standard of living of the population in accordance with a carefully established order of priorities.
21. The activities undertaken by United Nations bodies to meet emergency situations were very positive, in particular the effective work of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO). In that regard, there were two basic and mutually reinforcing objectives: to establish regular coordination between the donor countries and the specialized agencies, on the one hand, and the developing countries, above all the least developed

(Mr. Al-Eryani, Yemen)

among them, on the other, and at the same time to strengthen the infrastructure of the main sectors of activity in the countries concerned with a view to implementing the necessary plans to correct the shortcomings in their economies. It was also very important to intensify information and dissemination efforts to ensure that world public opinion was kept fully abreast of events and was able to take speedy action whenever necessary.

22. After commending the assistance of all kinds that had been given to the world's needy, in particular to the Palestinian people living in the territories occupied by Israel, his delegation noted that Yemen had had to face many problems of underdevelopment, the legacy of the colonial era and the reactionary regime of the Imams, which had divided the country and left deep scars in the Yemeni people. But thanks to the enormous efforts made to overcome that legacy, the unity of the Republic had been achieved without resort to other than peaceful and democratic means. Following that preliminary step, maximum efforts were being made to build a new country with a modern society, in keeping with existing possibilities.

23. In order to achieve those goals, the cooperation of the entire United Nations system and the assistance of the international community was more necessary than ever, because both the reconstruction and rehabilitation programmes and the economic and social development and planning programmes, clearly described in the Secretary-General's report (A/46/217), required resources for their execution that were attainable only through a considerable increase in bilateral and multilateral assistance. It was to be hoped that in 1992, such an increase would help to alleviate the sufferings of the peoples of all the developing countries. His delegation was convinced that improving the potential capacity of the developing countries to raise the standard of living of their inhabitants would eventually benefit the world economy as a whole.

24. Mr. SIDDIQUI (Bangladesh) said that no issue on the agenda was of greater interest to his country than the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 44/236, which had begun on 1 January 1990. The first two years of the Decade had seen a series of tropical cyclones, volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, droughts and other natural disasters. On 30 April 1991, southern Bangladesh had been struck by the worst cyclone in living memory. Some 140,000 persons had died, and millions had been left homeless and without drinking water, food, clothing or medicine. The cyclone had had consequences for the entire economic infrastructure, and the budgetary impact of relief operations and proposed rehabilitation programmes was projected at 1.3 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP).

25. The recently elected democratic Government had been working without respite to mitigate the desolation and suffering, but it was more aware than ever of the importance of disaster preparedness and prevention measures and of the establishment of an early-warning system. Of particular importance were the recommendations of the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Decade,

(Mr. Siddiqui, Bangladesh)

which were explained in full in the Secretary-General's report (A/46/266). It was also important to coordinate the efforts of the Governments concerned, the United Nations system, the scientific and technical community and other relevant organizations and to elaborate and implement specific projects that would translate recommendations into activities so as to advance the goals and objectives of the Decade. In that context, it was essential to give top priority to financing the activities of the Decade so that the momentum generated would not be lost.

26. Lastly, Bangladesh promised its fullest cooperation in all initiatives taken by UNDRO and the secretariat of the Decade, which, despite limited manpower and resources, had been carrying out effective work.

27. Mr. VASILE (Romania) said that recent years had seen an increasing number of natural and man-made disasters and emergency situations throughout the world, causing great loss of life, enormous human suffering and heavy material damage. Those disasters had occurred mostly in the developing countries and their impact had been intensified by the serious economic difficulties already facing those countries. The need for prompt assistance to mitigate the adverse effects of those events had highlighted the urgency of strengthening the United Nations capacity in the area of special economic and disaster-relief assistance. Protecting the environment, avoiding its further deterioration and preventing technological and other man-made disasters were other challenges in that area.

28. Romania was pleased to note that during its more than 20 years of existence, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator had been increasingly effective in coping with disaster and emergency situations. The valuable role of UNDRO must be retained and, indeed, enhanced, given its growing involvement in disaster prevention, in ensuring preparedness and in providing technical advice and assistance for relief activities. Future efforts to strengthen UNDRO must take into account the deficiencies of the United Nations system in the area of humanitarian and special relief assistance, together with the need for a closer linkage between emergency assistance and rehabilitation and development efforts in the affected countries.

29. Romania was convinced that the efficiency of UNDRO activities could be greatly enhanced by strengthening its cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other United Nations organs, organizations and specialized agencies. It commended the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator for his latest initiatives concerning the implementation, in cooperation with UNDP, of a disaster management training programme, the publication of a disaster management manual, the establishment of an inter-agency roster of disaster specialists, the participation in disaster telecommunication programmes and efforts to upgrade the UNDRO information management systems.

(Mr. Vasile, Romania)

30. He referred to the relatively recent national disaster that had taken place in the eastern part of Romania, in Moldavia. In the summer of 1991, flooding in that area had resulted in great loss of life and serious destruction. The total assessed damage had amounted to 3 billion lei. His delegation took the opportunity to express its profound gratitude to the international community, UNDR0 and international and non-governmental organizations for the relief assistance they had provided to Romania to help it to cope with the painful aftermath of that disaster.

31. Ms. HASSAN (Somalia) said that her delegation had read with great interest the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/457) on emergency assistance to Somalia. Somalia wished first of all to express its sincere appreciation to the Member States, in particular to Germany, Greece, Italy, Liechtenstein, Norway, Sweden and Turkey, and to a number of institutions in the United Nations system, namely the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Development Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the International Fund for Agricultural Development for their generous and timely assistance. That humanitarian gesture had come at a time when the situation in the country had been dramatic, as indicated in the Secretary-General's report. Somalia welcomed the assurances given by the World Bank that it stood ready to extend assistance for reconstruction when the security situation permitted.

32. The security assessment mission that had visited Somalia from 7 to 11 May 1991 on the initiative of the Secretary-General had made an evaluation of the situation in that country. The Secretary-General's report on emergency assistance to Somalia (A/46/457) provided full details on that mission. It should be stressed, as indicated in the report, that the human tragedy in Somalia affected the population of all regions of the country. There had been total destruction of the country's human and physical infrastructure in both urban and rural areas. Thousands of lives had been lost. Hundreds of thousands of people had fled to neighbouring countries as refugees or had been displaced to unfamiliar locations within the country, while those who remained in their normal habitat had to face a host of hardships generated by that state of disruption.

33. Her delegation was encouraged that a resumed United Nations presence in the form of a limited group of staff had been established in the north and the centre of the country. The Secretary-General's report claimed that a situation of instability persisted which posed many obstacles to relief and rehabilitation operations. However, her delegation wished to point out that there were areas, especially in the north-east and central parts of the country and in some parts of the south, which were safe and where the assistance could be resumed without much hindrance. It was to be hoped that, with the overall improvement in the security situation in Somalia, it would be possible for entities of the United Nations system to resume their normal activities in all regions of Somalia. That would contribute to the immediate alleviation of the untold sufferings endured by the millions of unfortunate

(Ms. Hassan, Somalia)

victims of circumstances in the country. However, for a fair and equitable distribution of relief supplies, it would be of vital importance to use a larger number of locations, since there were immense difficulties in transporting those supplies from one region to another, or even within the same region.

34. Mr. MAYORGA CORTES (Nicaragua), speaking also on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Panama, said that the Central American countries welcomed the admission of Panama as a full member of the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America, under the decision adopted at the summit held by the Presidents of the Central American republics in July 1991 in San Salvador. Central America expressed its gratitude for the adoption by the General Assembly of resolution 45/231, in which it had decided to extend the Plan for an additional three-year period beginning in 1991. The Central American countries also wished to express appreciation to the Governing Council of UNDP for its decision to earmark for activities carried out under the Plan a sum of \$20 million from special programme resources.

35. The Central American countries considered that the rate of execution of the Special Plan was satisfactory, as well as the specific content of its programmes and projects. Under the Special Plan, portfolios of investment and technical cooperation projects had been formulated for an amount of some \$2,300 million, which had been used to secure resources in the form of disbursements or firm pledges for an amount of \$312 million. The \$16.2 million provided by UNDP had made it possible to finance 58 technical cooperation projects for an amount of \$138.4 million. Direct co-financing operations for the purposes of technical cooperation accounted for the remaining \$122.2 million, which meant that the UNDP contribution had been multiplied by a factor of 7.6. Taking into account the amount of external resources mobilized directly (\$312 million), the amount of UNDP special resources used so far had been multiplied by a factor of nearly 20.

36. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the Special Plan (A/46/458) highlighted the close interconnection between the progress achieved in the process of peace, democratization and institutional consolidation in Central America and the programmes and projects that were being implemented under the Special Plan. It was also apparent from the report that Central America faced major challenges in the area of economic and social development and the relaunching of the integration process. The Central American countries considered that the Secretary-General's report contained the information needed to evaluate the significant contribution of UNDP to the strengthening of peace and development in Central America. The report highlighted, as part of the strategy of the Special Plan, not only the continuation of the activities already initiated in relation to refugees, returnees and displaced persons, agricultural development, infrastructure, tourism and the strengthening of subregional and national institutions, but also the incorporation of three new priority areas: social development; environment and sustainable management of natural resources; and policies and activities directed to the private sector, particularly to stimulate

(Mr. Mayorga Cortes, Nicaragua)

production sectors, promote investment and technological development and foster external trade in goods and services.

37. His delegation stressed the importance within the context of the Special Plan of the institutional strengthening of the Central American integration bodies; to that end, support was to be provided to the Permanent Secretariat of the General Treaty on Central American Economic Integration so that it could perform the functions assigned to it under the Special Plan in respect of the modernization of macroeconomic policies, the intensification of Central American integration, including trade, and the coordination of international cooperation.

38. Without underestimating the importance of all the projects approved by the Special Plan, it was worth stressing the importance of other initiatives taken concurrently with the implementation of the Special Plan. One of the most significant had been the allocation amounting to ECU 120 million made by the European Community to contribute to the reactivation of interregional trade flows. Mention should also be made of coordination in the field of health between the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

39. In few parts of the world was it as clear as in Central America that there was a process of transition from conflict to cooperation, and from war and violence to dialogue, which constituted a transition to peace, democracy and development. In order to place that situation in its proper perspective, figures could be quoted from a report submitted recently in Panama by a UNICEF consultant at a seminar on the social dimensions of adjustment in Central America. In that report it was indicated that over the past decade some 160,000 Central Americans had lost their lives in the various armed conflicts that had occurred, while 2 million people had been forced to seek refuge in other countries. Six of every 10 Central Americans went hungry; 57 per cent of the population of working age was unemployed; 40 per cent of the population had no health services; and 52 per cent of children of school age had no access to education. Between 1986 and 1989, the percentage of Central Americans living in poverty had increased from 60 per cent to 76 per cent. The average income of the inhabitants of the Central American isthmus was now 20 per cent lower than in 1978. One in 10 Central American children died before reaching the age of five. Of the nine who survived, six were malnourished. Of the 28.7 million inhabitants of the countries of Central America, 10 million had no access to drinking water, and the situation was particularly serious in the rural areas, where 60 per cent of the population had no drinking water.

40. Together with the regression mentioned earlier, there had been very important achievements, especially in the political arena. All Central American Governments currently in office had been elected in free elections. As well, peace had come to Nicaragua and progress had been made towards settling the conflicts in El Salvador and Guatemala; those events warranted optimism for the future of the subregion. All Central American countries were

(Mr. Mayorga Cortes, Nicaragua)

committed to respecting human rights without exception. The people of Central America were predicating their future actions on those achievements and on the political will to overcome the subregion's economic and social plight, in the hope that the United Nations system and UNDP in particular would provide timely help.

41. Mr. COSTA PEREIRA (Portugal) said that his Government was following with great interest the evolution of the situation in Angola, and hoped that a date would be set very soon for the convening of the round-table conference of donor countries called for in General Assembly resolution 45/233. He welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to send to Angola a high-level mission, in the framework of the Special Relief Programme for Angola, to discuss ways and means of expanding humanitarian assistance to all those in need.

42. The signing of the peace agreement after many years of suffering would, he was sure, pave the way for the economic rehabilitation and development of Angola. Portugal rejoiced at those hopeful signs and looked forward to greater cooperation by the international community and the various United Nations agencies, and hoped that particular attention would be paid to requests of the Angolan authorities, so that the peace process could be consolidated. For its part, Portugal was doing its utmost to assist Angola in various social and economic areas; its official development assistance to Angola the previous year had amounted to more than \$10,250,000. Portugal was convinced that the economic development of Angola would have a positive effect on the stability of the whole of southern Africa and hoped that again in 1991 a consensus resolution could be adopted on the item.

43. Ms. CAREY (Bahamas) said that no disaster was entirely "natural" since human activity invariably aggravated their devastating consequences, which were growing and having a serious impact on economic development. Her country, which was an archipelagic State of 700 small islands covering some 100,000 square miles of ocean, was very vulnerable to such things as hurricanes. Although a national committee had been established some time before and had been quick to take emergency measures, it had not yet been possible to fully assess the damage caused by the tropical storm that had just pounded the Bahamas or to determine the exact cost of rehabilitation.

44. Her delegation found the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction indeed timely, as it presented a challenge to the international community to enhance its cooperation to ensure effective mechanisms for disaster mitigation, and provided a unique opportunity to utilize the means readily available to limit, if not eliminate, loss of life and destruction.

45. Regrettably, there were great impediments to improvements in disaster reduction, such as the lack of funds to install, and operate the appropriate equipment and systems. What was required for those impediments to be overcome were technical cooperation and development programmes with emphasis on technology transfer, procurement of equipment and facilities and the development of human resources. In that regard, the Science and Technical

(Ms. Carey, Bahamas)

Committee had been doing commendable work, as had the World Meteorological Organization and UNESCO. It was to be hoped that international scientific and technical organizations would address the priorities of the Decade as they evolved, as such organizations were effective mechanisms to facilitate exchange of specialized knowledge so that the protection effort would be geared not only to providing short-term relief, but also towards long-term preventive measures.

46. Her delegation believed that Member States should be encouraged to establish national committees to promote policy measures related to the Decade. The Government of the Bahamas was fully conscious of the importance of the coordination of a disaster mitigation strategy and, in response to the General Assembly's request, had established a national committee. Moreover, it welcomed the suggestion of the Special High-level Council of the International Decade of bringing together representatives of national committees in a world conference on natural disaster reduction in 1994, which would contribute to the mid-term review of the Decade.

47. A recent Caribbean survey had revealed weaknesses in communication and coordination systems and the need to build an effective disaster-preparedness capability as an integral part of the regional development strategy. In that regard, her delegation commended the work of the Pan Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project, which had successfully undertaken a variety of initiatives to increase capacity for disaster management, including training of personnel, technical assistance, surveys of vulnerable areas, and improvement of telecommunications systems. The goal of reducing the impact of disasters was a long-term undertaking, and the Bahamas hoped that the activities of the Decade would continue where the project ended in order to capitalize on the trained personnel, the equipment and other facilities in place.

48. The need to protect humanity from the devastating impact of natural disasters was one of the major challenges of the 1990s. It was more pertinent than ever for the United Nations system, in implementing Decade activities, to give higher priority to the integration of disaster prevention into development strategies through the development of specific measures geared to the economic and social circumstances of each country affected. The Bahamas called upon the international community to maintain its efforts in placing the necessary emphasis on pre-disaster preventive planning and, since implementation of Decade activities was only feasible through extrabudgetary resources, as pointed out in General Assembly resolution 44/236, urged that a solution should be found to the problem of funding. Governments must commit themselves to voluntary contributions, and financial institutions, public and private corporations, and non-governmental organizations must all assist in the process if the financing for the Decade, or \$3 million per year for the remaining eight years, was to be raised. The achievement of its goals would depend on all nations' decisive action and their ability to work collectively.

The meeting rose at 4.55 p.m.