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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 18th MEETING

<u>Chairman:</u>	Mr. SENGWE	(Zimbabwe)
later:	Mr. ALOM (Vice-Chairman)	(Bangladesh)
later:	Mr. SENGWE (Chairman)	(Zimbabwe)
later:	Mr. ALOM (Vice-Chairman)	(Bangladesh)
later:	Mr. SENGWE (Chairman)	(Zimbabwe)

Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and
Budgetary Questions: Mr. MSELLE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 114: PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued) (A/51/6 and A/51/16 (Parts I and II))

Proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 (continued)

1. Mrs. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the General Assembly must decide on the structure of the medium-term plan, since, in its decision 50/452, it had authorized the Secretary-General to begin preparation of the plan without having provided specific guidelines on its structure. The medium-term plan, once approved, was the principal policy directive of the Organization and constituted the framework for the elaboration of the programme budget. Great care must therefore be taken in the exercise, particularly since the new, concise format was to respect all mandated activities, an aspect of particular validity at a time of economy measures.

2. Decisions on the structure and content of the programme framework must be precise vis-à-vis the forthcoming negotiations on the outline of the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999; in that connection, she endorsed the recommendation of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) (A/49/958, para.7) on the need to indicate the relationship between the programme framework and the budget outline. The exercise must be considered in the context of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213, which attached great importance to improving the consultative process for the formulation of the medium-term plan, with a view to promoting intergovernmental analysis of the plan and its revisions. Accordingly, she wondered why the Secretariat had not made provision to enable all intergovernmental bodies, including the Main Committees, to decide on the programmes that fell within their competence. That would allow the Fifth Committee to focus on consideration of the administrative and budgetary aspects of the programmes and on the structure.

3. In view of the difficulties attending the current medium-term plan referred to by the Controller, consideration should be given to a new format. The Group of 77 and China were confident that the exercise could be concluded satisfactorily on the premise that the plan should be adjusted in accordance with General Assembly decisions.

4. She welcomed the conclusions and recommendations of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) at its thirty-sixth session. CPC should continue to strengthen its programmatic functions; that would enhance its capacity to formulate specific recommendations arising from legislative mandates. Such mandates should be strictly interpreted. CPC would be in a better position to fulfil its responsibilities if Secretariat proposals were more attuned to earlier decisions taken by Member States. In particular, the Secretariat should refrain from including in its proposals elements that were far removed from previous intergovernmental agreements and that appeared to prejudice the outcome of future negotiations.

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5. With respect to the proposals now before the Committee, the Group of 77 and China agreed with CPC that the Perspective (A/51/6 (Perspective)) could not be part of the medium-term plan, but believed that the Note (A/51/6 (Note)) offered a sound basis for negotiation. They did not understand the rationale for some of the proposals and had difficulty with the programme framework. In particular, they considered that there should be a list of all legislative mandates for programmes and questioned the reasons for the elimination of a major group of subprogrammes. Information should be provided on current subprogrammes, and an explanation given for the elimination of subprogrammes. The Secretariat should also propose a level of priority among subprogrammes. The priorities indicated in the Note should include disarmament.

6. The Group of 77 and China reaffirmed that no programme could be changed without approval by the General Assembly and that the restructuring exercise could not affect existing programmes. Particular attention should be paid to cooperation and development problems in a new medium-term plan.

7. Mr. IRAGORRI (Colombia), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, said that the mandates authorized by Member States provided the only basis for the medium-term plan. The Non-Aligned Movement, however, considered that some aspects of the proposed medium-term plan failed to take those mandates into account. The strength of the Organization lay in each and every one of its objectives and there should be no discrimination between them. Those objectives could be attained only through compliance with the principles established in the Charter.

8. The Perspective not only failed to reflect the positions of Member States, but actually opposed them or ignored decisions taken by the General Assembly and CPC. It could not, therefore, serve as the basis for the Committee's deliberations; only the Note would allow consensus to be reached.

9. Subprogramme 1.3 (Disarmament) should constitute a separate programme, reflecting the various resolutions adopted by the General Assembly. It should be based on the principles and priorities adopted at the first special session on disarmament - in particular, the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. There was an obligation to conclude negotiations on nuclear disarmament in all its aspects under strict international control. To that end, the subprogramme should reflect the need for the Conference on Disarmament to establish an ad hoc committee. The complete elimination of other weapons of mass destruction must also be accorded priority. New ideas regarding the extension of the role of disarmament as a tool of preventive diplomacy and peace-building must be approached with caution, since such an approach might divert attention from the implementation of existing agreements. With regard to subprogramme 1.6 (General Assembly affairs), he fully supported the proposal submitted by the representative of Papua New Guinea on behalf of the Special Committee on decolonization.

10. The Non-Aligned Movement commended the efforts of CPC in reaching consensus on programme 2 (Peacekeeping operations), and endorsed the relevant conclusions and recommendations of that Committee.

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11. Programme 19 (Human rights) was of particular importance. The Non-Aligned Movement had promoted the inclusion of a subprogramme on the right to development, as a follow-up to the Declaration on the Right to Development. It would, however, have preferred to have a separate subprogramme for the question, instead of having it included with research and analysis under subprogramme 19.1. In particular, it was important to know what percentage of resources would actually be dedicated to the right to development. With regard to paragraph 19.3, he said that subparagraph (b) should be redrafted to mention specific human rights organs. Moreover, subparagraph (j) contained an unacceptable generalization. While he recognized the need for coordination between peacekeeping operations and humanitarian assistance, those activities should be clearly differentiated. Peacekeeping operations could not be carried out on any basis other than a determination, under the Charter, that there was a threat to international peace and security.

12. Mr. Alom (Bangladesh), Vice-Chairman, took the chair.

13. Miss MONTAÑO-DURÁN (Bolivia), speaking on behalf also of Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica (for the Central American countries), Ecuador, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela as members of the Rio Group, said that programme planning was not an abstract or academic exercise, but an imperative for both the Secretariat and Member States. The medium-term plan was intended to express legislative mandates, from which its objectives and strategies must derive. It was extremely important because, once adopted, the medium-term plan constituted the Organization's principal policy directive, serving as a framework for the programme budget, and represented a powerful tool for Member States to ensure the implementation of the decisions of legislative bodies.

14. The structure of the proposed medium-term plan followed the prototype suggested by the Secretary-General, on which the General Assembly had yet to take a decision. That omission should be made good. The new plan should cover a four-year period, so as to embrace two programme budgets, and should consist of an introduction and a programme-based element.

15. The Rio Group endorsed the views of the Advisory Committee on the prototype, as contained in document A/49/958, in particular paragraph 6 thereof. In particular, the Group emphasized the importance of congruence between the programme framework and organizational lines and of recognizing that the structure of the medium-term plan emanated from legislative mandates. The Advisory Committee had also pointed out that, under regulation 3.6 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, the medium-term plan was to be presented by programme and objective, and not by organizational unit. Should the new structure for the medium-term plan be adopted, the respective regulations would need to be updated.

16. She noted with appreciation that CPC had achieved consensus on the programme narratives for 21 of the 25 programmes and that partial agreement had been reached on two others; there were thus only two programmes on which no agreement had been reached. Such results were possible only when there was genuine political will on the part of Member States.

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17. The Rio Group agreed with CPC that the Perspective could not form an integral part of the medium-term plan. The Note, however, faithfully reflected the consensus reached by Member States. In terms of substance, the Perspective did not reflect legislative decisions or provide a balanced view of the interests of all Member States or of the concerns of developing countries. In terms of format, it did not accord with the directives established by CPC, in particular, the indication of priority areas. The Rio Group welcomed the decision to submit programmes to the Main Committees, and awaited the views of those organs with interest. They were perfectly competent to determine political relevance and to guarantee that legislative mandates had been adequately reflected in the narrative to the plan.

18. The Rio Group could not accept a medium-term plan in which economic and social development activities were of secondary importance. Economic and social development were at the forefront of the concerns of the Rio Group countries and should be reflected in the activities of the Organization. The Group regarded the work of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and of the regional economic commissions as being of the greatest importance. In particular, they wanted the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean to remain a centre of excellence, collaborating with Governments in the development process, and in the formulation of follow-up to and evaluation of public policy and the provision of technical assistance. It fully supported the work of the United Nations in the promotion and protection of human rights and commended the work of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, whose work had enhanced the capacity of the United Nations to face the major challenges in that field, particularly in the wake of the World Conference on Human Rights which had declared human rights to be universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated.

19. The Rio Group attached particular importance to disarmament in all its forms, as confirmed in the Treaty of Tlatelolco, and considered that disarmament questions should be dealt with as a separate issue in the medium-term plan. The Group placed great value on the work of the United Nations in the field of decolonization and considered that the medium-term plan should reflect the continuing role of the Organization in that field. In that connection, she expressed concern that certain subprogrammes were to be eliminated in the forthcoming budget; that might be interpreted as a lack of interest in issues that were of vital importance to the United Nations.

20. One of the main advantages of the Note on the proposed medium-term plan (A/51/6 (Note)) as compared with the Perspective (A/51/6 (Perspective)) was that it listed the priorities for the forthcoming medium-term plan. The Rio Group agreed with the priorities set forth in paragraph 61 of the Note, but considered that the question of disarmament, in all its forms, particularly nuclear disarmament, should be added to those priorities.

21. Mr. GAIKWAD (India) said that his delegation fully associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

22. His delegation welcomed the Note on the medium-term plan submitted by the Secretary-General (A/51/6 (Note)) and was prepared to negotiate on the basis of

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that text with a view to reaching agreement on an introduction to the medium-term plan that would enjoy consensus.

23. Some of the programmes that would comprise the new medium-term plan had already been discussed in detail, and a substantial measure of agreement had been reached on some of them, in the Committee for Programme and Coordination. It was important that the programmes in the medium-term plan should reflect the mandated activities of the United Nations and specify concisely how the Secretariat visualized the attainment of those objectives. In a number of programmes, such as programme 1, the narrative presented by the Secretary-General went beyond the scope of intergovernmental agreements, as was the case, for example, on issues relating to preventive diplomacy and post-conflict peace-building and on the coordinating role of the Department of Political Affairs.

24. His delegation considered that disarmament should be reflected as a separate and distinct programme in the plan. The priority was global disarmament leading to the elimination of nuclear weapons. The medium-term plan should also reflect the need to implement and strengthen disarmament treaties relating to other weapons of mass destruction and the important issues of conventional disarmament.

25. On programmes relating to economic and social development, including programme 6 (Africa: New Agenda for Development), the recommendations of CPC should be endorsed. His delegation also called on the Member States to give their fullest support to programme 9 (Trade and development). His delegation welcomed the efforts of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD to rationalize and streamline the structure and budget of the Organization. The abolition of the separate Division on Least Developed Countries in the UNCTAD secretariat did not imply that less importance was attached to the problems of the least developed countries, small island States or landlocked countries and should not mean the abolition of special programmes or subprogrammes for them. His delegation therefore urged the Member States to accept the UNCTAD programme as recently approved in Geneva.

26. On programme 19 (Human rights), his delegation welcomed the recent assurances given by the High Commissioner for Human Rights that the right to development would receive high priority in the forthcoming medium-term plan. The concerns of his delegation on some areas of the programme which it considered to be not entirely in line with the provisions of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action had already been expressed by the representative of Colombia on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement during the discussions in the Third Committee the previous week. His delegation intended to work with other delegations to see how its concerns could be addressed to enable the programme to be adopted by consensus.

27. In conclusion, he said that, in the view of his delegation, all the recommendations of CPC on document A/51/6 (Perspective)) and the programme narratives should be endorsed. His delegation would work with others to reach agreement on the remaining programme narratives.

28. Mr. SHIN (Republic of Korea) associated his delegation with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

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His delegation had some reservations about the structure and substance of the Perspective (A/51/6 (Perspective)) and was prepared to engage in discussions on the medium-term plan submitted by the Secretary-General on the basis of the Note (A/51/6 (Note)). In the view of his delegation, the Perspective failed effectively to address the concerns identified by CPC which had recommended, at its thirty-fourth session, that it should include an analysis of persistent problems and challenges, as well as emerging trends, and that it should indicate broad priority areas for the work of the Organization.

29. At the same time, his delegation questioned the Secretary-General's views on the role of the United Nations at a time of great uncertainty and rapid change. It did not consider that the four concepts of globalization, fragmentation, democratization and marginalization, which the Secretary-General had identified as the primary factors by which to define the operations of the United Nations, were entirely appropriate. It shared the view that the Perspective must be based on the consensus opinion of Member States.

30. His delegation endorsed the Note believing that, in both form and substance, it reflected the concerns of the majority of Member States and took into account the guidelines provided by CPC in giving a balanced picture of persistent problems and emerging trends. Member States should therefore begin negotiations on the basis of that document with a view to making it an integral part of the medium-term plan. It would, however, require some amendment and modification.

31. In general, his delegation was satisfied with the priorities identified in the Note, but agreed with other delegations that both the disarmament issue and the question of effective and coordinated response to global issues such as drugs, crime and the environment, should also be considered as potential priority areas.

32. While CPC had failed to make specific recommendations concerning the introductory part of the medium-term plan, it had contributed substantially to the deliberations of the Fifth Committee. Every effort should be made, on the basis of the documents currently available and with the support of the Secretariat, to reach agreement and to adopt a new medium-term plan by the end of the current session. His delegation looked forward to being an active participant in that joint endeavour.

33. Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe) resumed the Chair.

34. Mr. FATTAH (Egypt) said that the views expressed by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China fully reflected the position of his country.

35. As the proposed medium-term plan under discussion was the first such document to be considered in the circumstances of the new world order, it was highly important that the Member States should reach agreement as to what they wanted and expected from the United Nations in the coming years. The majority of the Member States wanted the Organization to give effect to the principles that had prompted them to join the United Nations, as reaffirmed by the Heads of State at the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations, namely international

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security and peace based on an effective system of collective security, on economic and social development, on justice and on the sovereign equality of States.

36. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's response to the views of the majority of Member States concerning the Perspective (A/51/6 (Perspective)) and considered the Note that had subsequently been submitted (A/51/6 (Note)) to be a sound basis for negotiation on the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

37. There was a need to define the institutional link between the general framework of the medium-term plan and the outline for the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 so that the Member States could satisfy themselves that the outline faithfully reflected the objectives of the medium-term plan. His delegation fully endorsed what was stated in that connection in paragraph 7 of the report of ACABQ (A/49/958).

38. Before the programmes comprising the medium-term plan, in particular those related to development, were discussed, his delegation wished to express concern at the growing trend to retreat from the obligations and undertakings that had been agreed on, over the previous five years, at a series of international conferences. Those important meetings had produced work programmes designed to enhance the value of collective efforts and to put development once more at the forefront of international priorities, in particular economic and social development in Africa. His delegation called on all parties to display the necessary flexibility and willingness to abide by what had been negotiated with a view to the adoption of a clear medium-term plan and programmes with specific objectives, rather than to try to exploit what was termed the "reform" of the United Nations in order to reduce its capabilities.

39. In conclusion, he said that his delegation was confident that the medium-term plan and the programmes to be adopted would faithfully reflect the principles of the Charter and the wishes of the majority of Member States, and thereby preserve the credibility of the Organization.

40. Mr. IVANOV (Bulgaria) said that his delegation shared the position of the European Union as expressed by the representative of Ireland at an earlier meeting.

41. His delegation regarded the Note (A/51/6 (Note)) as a satisfactory starting point for building a consensus among all groups of Member States on the crucial stage of priority-setting for the next two bienniums. The interaction between CPC and the Member States, on the one hand, and the Secretariat, on the other, had produced a document that was more concise, better structured and more action-oriented than its predecessor. His delegation felt that the new format of the medium-term plan, which related programmes and subprogrammes to specific departments and divisions of the Secretariat, would provide a good test of the evolving new management structure and culture of the United Nations.

42. His delegation was pleased to note that the promotion of sustained economic growth was to be accorded the necessary priority on a par with the maintenance of international peace and security. It therefore welcomed the set of measures

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outlined in subprogramme 5.4 (Sustainable development) which was intended to develop a comprehensive framework for the more effective integration of the social, economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development embracing the relevant sectoral and cross-sectoral components of Agenda 21 and incorporating the results of other major United Nations conferences held in recent years.

43. As a follow-up to that subprogramme, he wished to highlight the importance of subprogrammes 10.4 (Handling globalization and the environment) and 10.5 (Global and regional servicing and support). In that connection, his delegation felt that the capacities of the Secretariat and of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for economic and social information gathering and policy analysis should be strengthened and be more focused on the delivery of quality products to Member States.

44. His delegation shared the belief that the programme resource requirements for operational activities for development should be granted due priority and supported the idea that the system resources previously allocated to outdated and low priority programmes should be reallocated to economic development with an emphasis on realistic project evaluation, strict performance compliance and strengthened oversight and investigation capabilities to preempt fraud and the mismanagement of the dwindling resources of the Organization.

45. Mr. MOSQUERA (Cuba) said that his delegation associated itself fully with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and looked forward to hearing the replies which the Secretariat had been asked to provide to the requests that had been made.

46. Previous speakers had referred to the importance of the process of planning, programming, budgeting and evaluation. It was impossible to make an objective analysis of the new medium-term plan without bearing in mind, for example, the impact of the decisions taken on the programme budget for the forthcoming biennium. It was impossible to consider the proposed programme budget without knowing to what extent it reflected the outcome of departmental self-evaluation and programme evaluations. It was, moreover, not clear how the implementation of programmes was to be monitored to ensure that they fulfilled the objectives set.

47. In its resolution 41/213, the General Assembly had focused priority attention on the planning, programming and budgeting process and had decided to strengthen the mandate of CPC in that area. His delegation considered that the effective functioning of CPC was of the greatest importance and that its failure to reach agreement on certain programmes was due not to its own shortcomings but to the fact that some of its members had tried to force through decisions which were incompatible with the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation, under which the medium-term plan should be the programmatic reflection of legislative mandates.

48. The fact that one group of proposals by the Secretariat was incompatible with the letter and spirit of the mandates which had given rise to them was an additional cause of the difficulties and apparent ineffectualness of CPC. His

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delegation could not subscribe to criticisms of CPC which took no account of the context of the negotiations and of the fact that the consensus mechanisms had not worked. The implementation of a new medium-term plan should include a strengthening of certain functions of CPC, including those of evaluation. In that connection, his delegation wished CPC to submit specific proposals to the General Assembly at its fifty-second session concerning measures to strengthen its evaluation functions.

49. His delegation also wished the Secretariat, during the current session, to propose an evaluation timetable, as provided for in regulation 6.2 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation. Any departure from the Regulations should be fully explained to the General Assembly. The Joint Inspection Unit, in accordance with its mandate, should also submit a proposal on ways of improving programme evaluation and on the areas to be covered; that should be done in coordination with the Office of Internal Oversight Services in order to avoid duplication of efforts and resources.

50. As the representative of Costa Rica had said on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, it was necessary for the General Assembly at its current session to reach a specific decision on the new format of the medium-term plan. His own delegation was not convinced of the real advantages of relating programmes to the structure of the Secretariat. That approach seemed to be guided more by corporate than political considerations and might not fully ensure that effect was given to the objectives on which the General Assembly had decided. The identification of Secretariat structures with specific programmes raised other difficulties since some programmes were the responsibility of more than one department. It was essential that the Secretariat should spell out the possible advantages of that approach, bearing in mind the overriding importance of fulfilling the objectives and priorities of the Member States.

51. His delegation also had serious difficulties with the proposed structure of the programmes and regretted that, as had been stated on behalf of the Group of 77, the Secretariat had overlooked the concerns of Member States in that connection. His delegation proposed that disarmament should be an independent programme and requested the Secretariat to submit a document on that matter. Decolonization, too, should be a separate programme, and programmes 24 and 25 might be merged into a single programme covering all administrative services. At a time when the task of decolonization was only half completed, it was difficult to understand how that subject could be omitted from the medium-term plan. The Special Committee on decolonization and the Non-Aligned Movement had made specific proposals on the matter which ought to be approved without delay.

52. Further clarification was needed on the structure of the subprogrammes; it was difficult to understand why a number of important subprogrammes had been omitted including some which had been mandated by General Assembly resolutions. It was also surprising that the proposal contained no indication of priorities at the subprogramme level, in clear violation of rule 3.17 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning. The Secretariat should therefore indicate to delegations the proposed subprogramme priorities before the submission of the corresponding programme.

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53. His delegation welcomed the Secretariat's efforts to increase consultations on the proposed medium-term plan. However, it regretted the absence of any arrangements for the proposed plan to be considered by the principal organs of the General Assembly. In that connection, it would be interesting to know why no proposal had been made for the agenda item on programme planning to be considered also by the other Main Committees. The lack of guidance from the Secretariat and the policy positions adopted by certain countries prevented the Main Committees from taking decisions on the matter, in violation of the provisions of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning and of section II, paragraph 3(d), of General Assembly resolution 41/213. Any resolution adopted by the Committee should contain specific guidelines for the item's future consideration by the Main Committees.

54. His delegation took note of the priorities indicated by the Secretariat and supported the proposal of the Group of 77 and China that disarmament in all its aspects should also be a priority. It had certain reservations, however, about whether to accord the same priority to emergency humanitarian assistance because of its ad hoc and changing nature.

55. In conclusion, he said that his delegation was of the view that, despite the current budgetary constraints, the Secretariat should provide the personnel resources necessary for the proper implementation of programmes.

56. Mr. SELLASSIE (Ethiopia) said that his delegation associated itself with the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 was an essential management tool for the work of the United Nations and a useful framework for the preparation of the programme budgets for the bienniums 1998-1999 and 2000-2001. Given its limited resources, the United Nations must identify its priority objectives and set corresponding targets to be achieved within available resources. To that end, the objectives and targets should be more focused and, where possible, quantified.

57. His delegation welcomed the balanced analysis contained in those sections of the proposed medium-term plan which dealt with persistent problems, emerging trends, challenges, the role of the Organization, the directions to be pursued and priorities. The fact that development issues were given top priority in the area of international cooperation reflected the common understanding that peace and security could not be achieved without sustainable development.

58. On the other hand, his delegation supported the view expressed by some members of CPC that the Perspective (A/51/6 (Perspective)) failed to address the concerns of the developing countries in that it omitted a number of important issues. A document of that nature should stress the development challenges facing the world community, especially the poorest nations, and emphasize the Organization's role in economic and social development. In its current form, therefore, the Perspective should not be part of the medium-term plan.

59. He wished, finally, to underscore the need to involve the Main Committees of the General Assembly, particularly the Second and Third Committees, in the preparation of the medium-term plan.

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60. Mr. DEINEKO (Russian Federation) welcomed the new format of the proposed medium-term plan, which had been developed with the participation of Member States and on the basis of the recommendations of CPC and ACABQ. He noted with satisfaction the closer relationship between programmes and the organizational structure of the Secretariat; that should improve accountability and responsibility for the implementation of mandated activities and provide for more results-oriented actions.

61. The Perspective should be a concise document based on specific priorities agreed upon by Member States for the period of the medium-term plan and the plan itself should provide a more detailed description of the programme elements of those priorities and of the actions to be taken at all levels to implement them. Only under those conditions could the medium-term plan serve as a solid foundation for the preparation of the budget.

62. At the same time, however, the Perspective should not just be a listing of the ideas and priorities agreed upon by Member States. The Secretary-General should also have the opportunity to present his vision of those ideas. The Perspective document before the Committee (A/51/6 (Perspective)) was based on four global trends which, in the Secretary-General's view, would influence the world's development in the next millennium: globalization, fragmentation, democratization and marginalization. The Secretary-General had only been partially successful, however, in achieving his goal of setting out the pivotal elements of the Organization's activities and the perspectives agreed upon by Member States. In future, a less academic and more coherent and practical approach should be adopted.

63. As for the ideas contained in the Perspective, his delegation agreed with the need for coordinated multilateral efforts to find adequate responses to modern global challenges. In its principal activity, namely, peacekeeping, the Organization should give more room to multidimensional peacekeeping operations, with special emphasis on their political and humanitarian components. Mandates should be realistic and adequate resources should be provided for their implementation. At the same time, active United Nations involvement in the settlement of conflicts which were not yet ripe for mediation or resolution might compromise the Organization's peacemaking role.

64. In the social and economic fields, his delegation shared the ideas concerning the importance of sustainable development and the strengthening of public institutions and democracy. It noted, however, that the Perspective paid no attention to specific ideas for further reform of the United Nations covering both intergovernmental structures and programme coordination mechanisms.

65. The Perspective, moreover, offered no conceptual vision for the systemic development of international law and failed to elaborate on the important issue of creating effective instruments for putting into effect the rules of international humanitarian law in times of armed conflict. His delegation would also have preferred to see the problems relating to anti-terrorism and the control of the illegal arms trade presented in greater detail. In its current form, therefore, the Perspective was hardly a strategic and effective instrument for the preparation of the budget.

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66. On the other hand, the Secretary-General's Note (A/51/6 (Note)) was a concise, coherent and priority-targeted strategic document which his delegation was prepared to accept as a basis for agreement by Member States. The Note, however, hardly touched upon the problem of the large group of countries currently undergoing the transition to democracy and crucial economic transformations. Their problems were mentioned only marginally; that was incorrect and politically short-sighted.

67. Mr. ZHANG Wanhai (China) said that, while his delegation agreed in principle with the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of CPC on its thirty-sixth session (A/51/16 (Parts I and II)), it took note of the fact that CPC had been unable to achieve consensus on a number of issues. His delegation supported the statement made by the representative of Costa Rica on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and wished to reiterate its position on the following questions.

68. First, the medium-term plan should reflect the focus and priorities of the work of the United Nations for the years to come, and should be acceptable to the majority of Member States. It should serve as the principal policy directive of the United Nations. Although his delegation respected the views expressed by the Secretary-General in the Perspective (A/51/6 (Perspective)) regarding globalization, fragmentation, democratization and decentralization, it could not fully subscribe to his analysis of those concepts and felt that they did not sum up adequately the major global trends. Given the serious flaws in the Perspective, it was natural that it should have been rejected. His delegation welcomed the strict observance in the Note (A/51/6 (Note)) of the format that CPC had recommended at its thirty-fourth session, namely the discussion in distinct sections of persistent problems, emerging trends, the challenges to be faced by the international community, the role of the Organization and the directions to be pursued. Like the majority of delegations, his delegation supported the inclusion of the Note in the medium-term plan in place of the Perspective which had been submitted earlier.

69. Second, no programme could be changed without the authorization of the General Assembly. The Secretary-General's recommendations could only serve as a basis for discussion, not as a basis for the Secretariat or its departments to propose changes.

70. Third, the provisions of General Assembly resolution 41/213 regarding the procedures for the formulation of the medium-term plan should be respected and effectively implemented. To downgrade the role of CPC in planning, programming and budgeting activities, or to call for its outright abolishment as some delegations had done, contravened the spirit of that resolution and was unacceptable to his delegation.

71. Mr. Alom (Bangladesh), Vice-Chairman, resumed the Chair.

72. Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia) said that his delegation associated itself with the positions of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement, as expressed in the statement made by the representatives of Costa Rica and Colombia. His Government had always considered the medium-term plan to be extremely important as it constituted the principal policy directive of the

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United Nations and provided the framework for the biennial programme budgets. Noting that CPC had considered the Note by the Secretary-General (A/51/6 (Note)) to be consistent with the format it had recommended for outlining the broad areas of priority for the period of the medium-term plan, he said that his delegation endorsed the proposal that the Note should be considered for inclusion in the first part of the proposed medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001.

73. His delegation understood that the priorities set out by the Secretary-General in the Note reflected an integrated approach towards the linkage between peace and development. The medium-term plan for the years 1998-2001 should be designed to enable the United Nations to respond to the emerging trends and challenges of the twenty-first century. In that context, the issue of development was extremely important, especially for the developing countries, and it was therefore right that the plan should focus on development issues.

74. Since the major problems of development were global in scope, his Government believed that they could only be dealt with effectively through constructive dialogue for the promotion of international cooperation for development. Such a dialogue should be based on the imperatives of mutual interests and benefits, shared responsibilities and genuine interdependence.

75. His delegation reaffirmed its strong confidence in the capability of CPC to discharge its vital role as the main subsidiary body of the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly for planning, programming and coordination. The function of CPC in reviewing the programmes of the Organization as defined in the medium-term plan had become even more indispensable.

76. Mr. REPASCH (United States of America) welcomed the new and streamlined format of the proposed medium-term plan. For it to be effective, however, three requirements must be met: it should clearly establish priorities among programmes and activities; it should provide clear programme objectives directly tied to performance indicators; and it should be clearly linked to the programme budget.

77. Regrettably, the proposed plan met none of those basic criteria. Both the Perspective and the Note contained far too many priority objectives and proposed activities to serve as useful, realistic tools for guiding the work of the United Nations in the years ahead. While his delegation accepted the Perspective for what it was, namely, the Secretary-General's views on the future role of the United Nations, it did not accept the Note as an integral part of the proposed medium-term plan. A plan which gave no indication of programme priorities was, in fact, not a plan at all and could not provide a basis for the strategic decision-making which every organization, especially the United Nations, must undertake. Programme descriptions which did not describe what was expected in terms of outcomes made it impossible for Member States to determine whether objectives had been achieved and whether legislative mandates continued to be valid. The deficiencies of the proposed medium-term plan in those areas culminated in a lack of linkage with the reality of available resources, as reflected in the budget. While the Organization might understandably wish to solve the world's problems, it must operate within a finite set of resources.

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78. He did not propose to repeat the views which his delegation had already expressed in the discussions on the medium-term plan in CPC. His delegation had some serious reservations about aspects of some programmes and continued to believe that the programme descriptions did not provide a clear indication of priorities, but it would nevertheless urge members of the Committee to consider seriously the consensus agreements reached in CPC as the bases for agreements in the Fifth Committee.

79. His delegation opposed the proposal made by some delegations that programmes 24 and 25 should be merged; that would repudiate and contradict the mandate given by the General Assembly for the establishment of internal oversight services as an independent programme and activity in the United Nations. It also regretted the failure of CPC to fulfil its responsibility to review old mandates and recommend priorities so that limited and valuable resources could be allocated accordingly.

80. Mr. HANSON (Canada), speaking also on behalf of the delegations of Australia and New Zealand, said that the three delegations had been troubled by the deficiencies of recent medium-term plans and plan revisions. Such plans were valuable to the extent that they translated legislative mandates into concrete goals and objectives to be achieved during the period of the plan. Equally disturbing was the inability of the General Assembly to agree on the most recent proposed revisions to the current medium-term plan.

81. The three delegations had therefore welcomed General Assembly decision 50/452, which authorized the Secretary-General to begin preparation of the next medium-term plan on the basis of the new format which he had proposed at the forty-ninth session. The advantages of the new format included stronger links and greater congruence between the medium-term plan, the programme budget and the organization structure of the Secretariat. More importantly, it provided for clearer and more precise statements of programme objectives in order to establish benchmarks for the objective evaluation of programme implementation.

82. The three delegations particularly welcomed the Secretary-General's Perspective, which presented a clear vision of the major trends and persistent problems to be faced by the Organization in the medium term. It also presented the broad priority areas of the Organization's mandated programme activities and recognized the need for continuing change and reform to enable the Organization to meet the challenges which lay before it.

83. It was clear that, in preparing the Perspective, the Secretary-General had been fully conscious of the fact that the Organization was passing through a unique phase in its history. In response to the approaching new century and new millennium, the Perspective set a new standard of excellence in General Assembly documents. It presented a thoughtful analysis of major global trends and problems, each of which had both positive and negative aspects. It offered, moreover, an integrated view of the world in which the Organization would have to carry out its mandates and of the way in which those mandates would have to be approached. It thus provided much food for thought and merited careful study in the capital of every Member State.

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84. It was unfortunate that CPC had been unable to reach agreement on the content of the Perspective and consequently had been unable to consider the document, as submitted, as an integral part of the medium-term plan.

85. The three delegations' appreciation of the Perspective, regrettably, could not be extended to the Note, which was neither shorter nor more concise than the Perspective and which, moreover, lacked the integrating analytical framework that made the Perspective a true perspective. Without such an integrating vision, the Note was a mere note. It contained much language that had been imported from working documents which were still being negotiated in other forums. As it was presented, there was a risk that its consideration by the Fifth Committee could prejudice negotiations which were still under way elsewhere. Moreover, as far as persistent problems, emerging trends, challenges, the role of the Organization, the directions to be pursued and priorities were concerned, the Note contained little of substance which was not far better presented in the Perspective.

86. He hoped that the Committee would be able to resolve any remaining ambiguity with regard to the endorsement of the new format for the medium-term plan and that the difficulties which two years earlier had prevented the approval of the proposed revisions to the current plan would not persist. The medium-term plan was not a legislative mandate in itself, but it could be a powerful tool for Member States and the Secretary-General alike for the planning, programming, budgeting, control and evaluation of the implementation of legislative mandates.

87. Mr. MIRMOHAMMAD (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that his delegation associated itself with the statements made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the Non-Aligned Movement. His delegation supported the programmatic functions of CPC, which he believed should be strengthened. The conclusions and recommendations of CPC were a good basis for achieving consensus. The Perspective submitted by the Secretary-General could not be part of the medium-term plan, but the Note could provide a good basis for further deliberations and, once it had been agreed upon, could form an integral part of the medium-term plan.

88. His delegation believed that disarmament should be treated as a separate and distinct programme; that decolonization continued to be an issue of vital importance for the United Nations; and that all aspects of human rights should be addressed in a balanced manner. In that connection, his delegation would like to see a separate subprogramme under programme 19 (Human rights) dedicated to the right to development.

89. With regard to the treatment of human rights in peacekeeping operations, he wished to reiterate that such activities did not constitute a dimension of peacekeeping operations by way of generalization. Accordingly, such a generalization was unacceptable to his delegation. As for the priorities proposed in the Note, his delegation believed that disarmament in all its aspects, particularly nuclear disarmament, should be treated as a priority. It was not convinced that humanitarian assistance should be a priority.

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90. With regard to the outline of the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, his delegation endorsed the recommendation in the report of the Advisory Committee (A/49/958) on the need to indicate the relationship between the programme framework and the outline of the budget. That exercise should be considered in the context of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213, which emphasized the intergovernmental consultation process.

91. Mr. Sengwe (Zimbabwe) resumed the Chair.

92. Ms. PEÑA (Mexico) asked whether the relevant documentation on programme 9 (Trade and development) and programme 11 (Human settlements) would be available in time for the Committee to consider them under its proposed programme of work. Her delegation recalled that the Secretariat had undertaken to submit revised versions of programmes 9 and 11 to the General Assembly as requested by CPC.

93. Mr. TAKASU (Controller), making some preliminary comments on agenda item 114, said that a number of delegations had voiced strong criticism of and scepticism about the medium-term plan. Nevertheless, there seemed to be a consensus that the Organization should continue to formulate medium-term plans as a framework for the budget. As a result of past criticisms, the Secretariat had elaborated a new system of medium-term planning with a format based on the structure of the Organization rather than on programme areas. The new system violated a number of current programme planning regulations, thus eliciting criticism that there was no relationship between the medium-term plan and the budget and the performance of the Secretariat. The new format currently before the Fifth Committee was based on the prototype contained in document A/49/301, which had subsequently been endorsed by CPC and the Advisory Committee. Under the new format, programmes corresponded to major departments and offices, and subprogrammes corresponded to organization units within departments and offices.

94. There also seemed to be a consensus that the first part of the medium-term plan should provide a general overview of the challenges and opportunities facing the United Nations. The overview should have a visionary quality and therefore depart from the actual language of General Assembly resolutions. In that respect the Secretary-General had faithfully responded to the wishes of Member States. However, the second part of the plan should adhere very closely to specific legislative mandates.

95. With regard to the intergovernmental review of the medium-term plan, he explained that a list of programmes had been prepared showing to what extent each programme had been reviewed, if at all. The intention of ensuring the full involvement of intergovernmental bodies had been respected, but for a number of reasons certain programmes had not been reviewed. For example, in some cases, there was no specialized intergovernmental body to oversee a particular programme.

96. With reference to the specific queries raised in connection with programmes 9 and 11, he assured the Committee that those programmes had been formulated by the Secretariat, submitted to CPC, and would shortly be made available to the Fifth Committee for consideration.

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97. On the issue of programme structure, he reminded the Committee that the General Assembly had authorized the Secretary-General to proceed with the preparation of the medium-term plan on the basis of the recommendations of CPC and the Advisory Committee, both of which had welcomed and endorsed the prototype new format. Many delegations had proposed that certain topics should be treated as separate programmes; that was indeed the prerogative of Member States. The view had also been expressed that, as a result of the new structure, certain programmes had been abolished. In fact, only one programme - that dealing with apartheid - had actually been eliminated following a decision by the General Assembly.

98. Some delegations had expressed dissatisfaction that the Secretary-General had failed to respond to General Assembly decisions by not according priority to certain programmes. The Secretary-General had, in fact, proposed six broad priority areas for the consideration of the General Assembly, as indicated in paragraph 61 of the Note (A/51/6 (Note)), but ultimately it was for the Member States to set the Organization's priorities. Other delegations had criticized the Secretary-General for failing to indicate priorities among subprogrammes, as stipulated by programme planning resolutions. However, the new programme planning structure made it difficult to establish clear-cut priorities because it differed markedly from the old area-based format.

99. Some delegations had alleged that the new system of medium-term planning was not linked to the programme budget. He requested delegations to refrain from commenting on that aspect of the process until they had seen the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, based on the medium-term plan. The Secretariat could not allocate resources until Member States had had an opportunity to set their priorities.

100. While it was true that many programmes did not provide specific or quantifiable performance indicators that made it possible to evaluate the Secretariat's performance, it was important to bear in mind that the medium-term plan and the programme budget of the United Nations differed radically from the budgetary objectives of private corporations or even national governments. Many United Nations activities, such as peace and security or economic analysis, simply did not lend themselves to the formulation of clear-cut performance indicators. It was important to bear in mind the characteristics, diversity and complexity of the Organization's work. In addition, Member States should remember that the regular budget was used merely to maintain the Organization's permanent structure, not to support non-operational activities.

101. Ms. INCERA (Costa Rica), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and supported by Ms. BUERGO RODRIGUEZ (Cuba), said that, since the subprogramme priorities requested had still not been received from the Secretariat, it would be difficult to discuss the matter under the proposed programme of work.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.