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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 17 July 1997, at 10 a.m.

<u>President</u> :	Mr. GALUSKA	(Czech Republic)
later:	Mr. HENZE (Vice-President)	(Germany)

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a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this
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Nations, Geneva.

The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEMES (continued):

- (a) MAINSTREAMING THE GENDER PERSPECTIVE INTO ALL POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (agenda item 4 (a)) (continued)

Draft agreed conclusions (E/1997/L.30)

Mr. HENZE (Germany) introduced the draft agreed conclusions on mainstreaming the gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system (E/1997/L.30) and thanked all the delegations which had participated in preparation of the draft in a highly constructive spirit.

The conclusions should become an important point of reference for the entire United Nations system, including at the intergovernmental level, because their purpose was to translate gender mainstreaming into action. With the adoption of the document, the Council would endorse the fundamental principles of such mainstreaming. Responsibility must be exercised at the highest levels and must be accompanied by accountability mechanisms. The draft also provided guidance to the United Nations system and its intergovernmental machinery through a set of specific recommendations. He called on Governments and the United Nations system as a whole to implement those recommendations fully, thus fulfilling commitments made at Beijing during the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The PRESIDENT announced that the Council would vote on the draft agreed conclusions at a later date.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (continued):

- (i) PROCLAMATION OF INTERNATIONAL YEARS (agenda item 6 (i)) (continued)

Draft resolutions (E/1997/L.31, L.35 and L.37)

Mr. MAKEEV (Observer for Kyrgyzstan) introduced the draft resolution entitled "Proclamation of an international year of mountains" (E/1997/31). The purpose of the draft resolution was to draw the international community's attention to the mountains which covered one fifth of the Earth's landscape and were home to 10 per cent of the world's population. While they remained poorly understood, they were clearly of great

importance for sustainable development. The draft resolution had already been endorsed by 40 sponsors and his delegation hoped that the Council would adopt it by consensus.

Mr. GARCIA MORITAN (Argentina) introduced the draft resolution entitled "The year 2000: International Year of Thanksgiving" (E/1997/L.35) and announced that Uganda should be added to the list of sponsors and that China, which had inadvertently been included, should be removed from that list. The purpose of the draft resolution was to achieve full tolerance and strengthen universal peace; by so doing, it would contribute to international cooperation and would be of particular benefit to the most vulnerable developing countries. He hoped that the members of the Council would give their full support to the draft resolution.

Mr. Henze (Germany), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. BOUAH-KAMON (Côte d'Ivoire) introduced the draft resolution entitled "Proclamation of the year 2000 as the International Year for the Culture of Peace" (E/1997/L.37). In an increasingly violent world, it was essential to promote a lasting culture of peace in the minds of men. The programme of activities would focus on respect for cultural diversity, tolerance, solidarity, dialogue, reconciliation and international cooperation. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was designated to coordinate those activities and their funding, which would be covered through voluntary contributions. The draft resolution had 39 sponsors, including all the African States which were participating in the Council's work, and his delegation hoped that the Council would adopt it by consensus.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (agenda item 8)
(E/1997/96 and 98)

Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) said that he wished to refer to the question of strengthening the coordination of United Nations emergency humanitarian assistance, which was the subject of Council resolution 1995/56. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and its Working Group had addressed the indicative list of issues for consideration by the governing bodies of the United Nations institutions, which was annexed to that resolution. In particular, IASC had considered problems associated with coordination, resource mobilization, internally displaced persons, evaluation, strengthening local capacity, relief and

development linkages and staff development. It had agreed on a set of suggestions aimed at strengthening the system's response to emergencies and at moving towards a more strategic approach to humanitarian assistance and it planned to continue that process, which would be facilitated by the Secretary-General's reform proposals. Those reforms would strengthen and streamline the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, strengthen the IASC and prioritize the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), which would henceforth address both emergencies and immediate rehabilitation requirements. The Secretary-General had also decided that responsibility for the coordination of response to natural disasters should be retained by the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator whereas disaster mitigation should be transferred to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). He stressed his own intention to work closely with the Administrator of UNDP in that regard.

Coordination of humanitarian action did not mean adding another layer of bureaucracy. It meant ensuring that humanitarian agencies put victims first - in other words, that they had access to victims and could provide them with protection and assistance as part of a common response strategy. Another fundamental challenge for the humanitarian community was to help nurture the conditions necessary for peace.

Coordination, which was essential if the system was to work rapidly and flexibly, required access to the Security Council and interaction between the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and concerned Governments, both at Headquarters and in the field. When all United Nations system components were mobilized around common objectives, there was greater assurance that the latter would be realized. Recent Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and IASC decisions to encourage a more strategic approach in countries in crisis and the Secretary-General's decision to designate a focal point for post-conflict peace-building efforts were important steps in that direction.

There was a need to strengthen the links between relief and development assistance. The Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) and UNDP had recently brought together resident and humanitarian coordinators in order to explore practical measures.

Improved accountability was necessary in order to meet the challenges of increasing numbers of crises with the finite resources available. Already,

NGOs had taken steps to develop common standards and performance indicators which would help determine the overall impact of multisectoral interventions on their intended beneficiaries. However, the Council's own review and several other studies such as the Multi-Donor Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, had demonstrated the importance of improved accountability on the part of all those involved in crisis management. The Secretary-General had noted in his reform proposals that the Emergency Relief Coordinator needed to be both supported by, and held accountable to, Governments. Perhaps a governing board for humanitarian affairs should be established to give policy directives on humanitarian issues and oversee the coordination of humanitarian response. The Secretary-General had also recommended that the Council should establish a humanitarian affairs segment to provide guidance on such issues.

In the field, humanitarian agencies were often learning the hard way that assistance could easily become a tool of war. At the Headquarters level, therefore, those agencies would continue to inform the Security Council of their concerns and would endeavour to promote respect for the principles of international humanitarian law. He paid tribute to the national and international humanitarian and relief personnel who had lost their lives in upholding those principles.

Mr. GRAFF (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the countries members of the European Union, said that the Secretary-General's review of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance (E/1997/98) was extremely useful, particularly as it concluded with proposals which the European Union would be pleased to consider.

In recent years, the United Nations system had often been called upon to carry out humanitarian activities within the framework of conflicts whose origin was political. It was therefore essential for such intervention to retain its impartial nature; humanitarian assistance could be supported, but never replaced, by political action.

Humanitarian workers had also been placed at far greater risk over the past few years, and the Secretary-General had rightly noted that the tendency to consider such workers as easy targets had led to a significant increase in

the loss of human life. The European Union would continue its active support for measures to ensure the protection of those who risked their lives to provide assistance to populations in distress.

It had therefore become essential to ensure good cooperation in the field between the various institutions of the United Nations system, and the European Union reaffirmed its full support for action taken in that regard by the United Nations. Furthermore, if coordination mechanisms were to remain credible and effective, the system's operational agencies must demonstrate a strong sense of responsibility. It would also be necessary in the future to ensure the transition from emergency assistance to sustainable development assistance.

The European Union agreed with the Secretary-General that early warning could provide a means of preparing for and even preventing, crises. However, if system performance was to improve, the various agencies must demonstrate greater coherence and complementarity in planning operations. The European Union also took the view that joint assessment, monitoring and follow-up remained essential elements of all humanitarian action.

With regard to the financing of such action, the consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), which remained the primary source of funding, should also be one of the principal ways of establishing a coherent strategy and transparent priorities. That procedure should therefore be further developed in order to encourage coordination and effective resource mobilization.

The Secretary-General had rightly emphasized the importance of humanitarian activity by NGOs. The European Union was pleased that IASC had worked with NGOs to improve the speed and quality of humanitarian assistance and considered that such activity should be pursued.

Mr. SFEIR-YOUNIS (World Bank) said that the World Bank worked closely with the United Nations agencies, particularly the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), on all humanitarian matters. The Bank was particularly active in the area of post-conflict economic and social reconstruction. Nearly one quarter of International Development Association (IDA) resources were committed to countries which had undergone internal conflict. The World Bank had prepared a policy paper which established general guidelines for its activities in that regard and had been approved by its Board of Executive Directors.

That paper made it clear that assistance with reconstruction required a comprehensive approach which included the following: jump-starting the economy through investment in key productive sectors, creation of conditions for the resumption of trade and savings, macroeconomic stabilization, rehabilitation of financial institutions, re-establishment of the framework of governance, repair of physical, and rebuilding of social, infrastructures, assistance targeted to the victims of war, support for demining programmes and normalization of financial borrowing arrangements. Within that framework, the Bank took a five-stage approach which encouraged a return to normalcy and a transition to a lasting peace.

There was broad consensus on the modalities and goals of post-conflict reconstruction. The World Bank, for its part, was prepared to intensify its efforts in that area and to work closely with all the agencies concerned.

Mr. AHSTER (Canada) said he welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General's recently unveiled reform proposals included the decision to retain the post of Emergency Relief Coordinator. In order for the Coordinator to carry out his task with the desired efficiency, his responsibilities must include the entire system of humanitarian operations. Efficiency also required that the IASC should be small and able to reach rapid consensus on coordination arrangements or, where that proved impossible, to make clear recommendations to the Secretary-General. The Committee should also maintain and strengthen its links with key humanitarian agencies outside the United Nations system, notably the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies and the NGOs.

There was a need for clarification regarding the role of the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs vis-à-vis IASC and its proposed Steering Group. Clear terms of reference should be drawn up for those mechanisms in order to ensure complementarity.

The Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator should be provided with an efficient support structure in Geneva, including senior staff seconded from IASC agencies, and a strong presence in New York in order to maintain direct access to the Security Council. It should also have closer contact with the various United Nations offices responsible for political issues and peacekeeping and with the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

With regard to funding, the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator must be able to rely on a predictable source of funding from the regular budget. The Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) had proved an effective coordination tool for fund-raising, and the Emergency Relief Coordinator must provide strong leadership in setting priorities within a broad strategic framework.

Clearer allocation of responsibilities and greater coordination would allow agencies in the field to be more accountable to both donors and recipients of assistance. Consideration should be given to establishing a governing board for humanitarian issues which would provide policy guidance and assess performance.

One area in which the Secretary-General's report had revealed gaps was coordination of assistance to internally displaced persons. The inter-agency discussions had led to several recommendations on that matter, which he urged the Secretary-General to consider carefully.

Ms. KIMBLE (United States of America) said she was aware of the tremendous effort made by IASC members in drawing up the interim report prepared in response to Council resolution 1995/56. It was important for that work to continue and for the next report submitted to the Council to include a detailed discussion of the humanitarian reforms announced by the Secretary-General; in particular, it should include a recommendation on responsibility for assistance to internally displaced persons.

On the basis of the IASC discussions, she wished to make several suggestions concerning the new Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator. First, that Office must not simply reconstitute DHA. Its structure, staff and funding should reflect the need to improve the effectiveness of its core functions: coordination of humanitarian emergency response, support for the Secretary-General, advocacy of humanitarian issues with the Security Council and coordination with the United Nations political and peacekeeping departments. The Coordinator should play a strong role in interacting with humanitarian agencies and Member States; he should also travel to the field and work closely with UNDP to ensure that long-term development-related aspects of humanitarian emergencies were adequately addressed.

In order to fulfil those functions, the Coordinator should be supported by a group of senior staff seconded from IASC member agencies and the New York

Office should be restructured and streamlined. In order to strengthen the links between the Coordinator and humanitarian operational agencies, the current functions of the DHA Complex Emergency and Policy Analysis Divisions could be transferred to Geneva, where the Complex Emergency Division could be merged with the Relief Coordination Branch.

The Office of the Coordinator should avoid becoming involved in operational activities in order not to repeat the failure of DHA. Non-core DHA activities such as disaster prevention, demobilization and demining should be transferred to other parts of the United Nations system.

The role of IASC as the primary operational decision maker for complex emergencies should be affirmed and strengthened, and it should be provided with a stronger, impartial secretariat. Decision-making should be simplified and speeded up, and IASC should provide guidance on the functioning of the Coordinator's Office.

The respective responsibilities of the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Assistance, the Executive Committee on Peace and Security and IASC should be clarified in order to avoid overlapping. There was also a need for mechanisms to allow a frequent exchange of views between Member States, the Coordinator and IASC. Of course, specific proposals concerning the structure of the Coordinator's Office should be finalized only upon approval by IASC.

Humanitarian assistance would fail in its mission unless the new proposals provided maximum protection to humanitarian workers and the victims whom they assisted.

Mr. GRAISSE (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that as a major provider of humanitarian assistance, WFP supported an integrated approach in responding to relief and development needs. It had reviewed its capacity to respond to humanitarian crises and had been an active participant in IASC consultations, as called for by Council resolution 1995/56. It had also contributed to coordination mechanisms by seconding staff to DHA and developing memorandums of understanding or similar technical cooperation agreements with UNHCR, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and nine major international NGOs.

While IASC had played an important role in fostering common humanitarian policies, certain problems, such as the protection of internally displaced persons, remained to be solved and WFP believed that the role and capacity of IASC should be strengthened; it should receive effective administrative and financial support, its members should be bound by and accountable for its decisions, it should consult more regularly with the Emergency Relief Coordinator and its decisions should be adopted by consensus whenever possible. Where there was no consensus, matters relating to the implementation of coordination arrangements should be decided by the Coordinator and other important matters should be referred to the Secretary-General. There should also be a more systematic flow of relevant information between the Committee and the Council, via the Coordinator. Lastly, the IASC secretariat must be impartial if it was to carry out its mandate effectively. With regard to coordination arrangements, the lead agency concept had advantages, but also a number of disadvantages relating to operational efficiency: the lead agency tended to concentrate on its own areas of competence, and there were often delays in agreement on identifying a lead agency and developing a comprehensive strategy.

Over the past few years, WFP had taken several measures to increase its capacity to plan for, and respond rapidly to, emergency situations and, in particular, had set up an international emergency food reserve and an immediate response account. It had also established various in-house mitigation and rapid response facilities, including standby agreements with several donors, NGOs and the United Nations Volunteers for the immediate provision of personnel, equipment and services. It was adjusting its emergency interventions to incorporate rehabilitation and development components, and its funding mechanisms were being reviewed to ensure that requirements during the transitional phases could be met. With regard to resource mobilization, WFP supported the proposals made in the Secretary-General's report and emphasized the need to reconsider the structure of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund. With regard to security, WFP, which had lost over 10 staff members since 1992 in security incidents, was committed to cooperating with the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator in strengthening the United Nations security system, particularly for local and

female staff. He had no doubt that the Secretary-General's proposals, once implemented, would make possible great progress towards the achievement of full coordination.

Mr. CHUMAREV (Russian Federation) said that, in view of its limited resources, the United Nations system should focus its activities on areas in which its effectiveness had been demonstrated. One such area was response to complex crises. There were several ways in which the coordination of humanitarian assistance could be strengthened. It was important to ensure full implementation of General Assembly resolution 46/182, particularly with regard to the Secretary-General's leadership role, to increase the importance of the emergency relief coordinator, to maintain the neutrality and objectivity of that office, and to allow the Secretariat to coordinate the humanitarian activities of the Coordinator. All those proposals should be studied in depth and supported by all the regional groups and United Nations partners in humanitarian assistance. His delegation emphasized that all United Nations humanitarian assistance agencies must work together if IASC was to ensure coordinated action and it awaited with interest the comprehensive report which the Council had requested of the Secretary-General in its resolution 1995/56.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the increasing numbers of crises and disasters over the past few years made it all the more necessary to examine the experience of the United Nations system in the humanitarian field and to chart a path which would allow it to act more effectively in the future. As a result of IASC consultations in which UNDP had participated, it had been possible to reach consensus on several fundamental principles. First, there had been agreement on the need to adopt a strategic approach in order to provide coherent, comprehensive assistance which could not substitute for political action but should include reconciliation, relief, return, reintegration, recovery and reconstruction, in order to ensure rapid, sustainable stability for all. It had also been recognized that resource mobilization and deployment must be undertaken in the context of that strategic approach. In that connection, UNDP was committed to working with the Emergency Relief Coordinator to expand the Consolidated Appeals Process in order to mobilize the necessary resources for a comprehensive approach to

coordination of relief and development as a means of addressing causal factors and facilitating sustainable recovery. It hoped to maintain dialogue with Member States and its partners in order to improve the resource mobilization process. Piecemeal funding resulted in a piecemeal response which was less than effective and could even be harmful. There had been agreement on the desirability of a unitary approach to coordination based on the resident coordinator system, bearing in mind that alternative coordination arrangements might be established on a temporary basis.

Pursuant to Council resolution 1995/56, UNDP had undertaken a thorough review of its organizational capacity for humanitarian assistance. It had revised its funding and programming mechanisms in order to respond more rapidly and effectively as needed and was implementing reforms aimed at maximizing internal synergy by streamlining administrative procedures, increasing transparency and accountability and decentralizing decision-making, financing and technical support. It had strengthened its ability to assist the resident coordinator system in addressing needs associated with crises and disasters and had developed new operational partnerships with various organizations. Partnering did not mean simply dividing the work; it was an agreement to join forces and provide mutual support. In that spirit, UNDP had entered into two new agreements for operational cooperation, one with UNHCR and the other with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and it looked forward to a relationship of close cooperation with the new Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

UNDP had sharpened its development focus on factors that contributed to crises. Activities aimed at poverty reduction, environmental management, good governance, local capacity-building and sustainable human development made it possible not only to prevent crises but also to resolve them. The basic framework and direction of the United Nations system had been established, and it was time to bring that process to conclusion by developing satisfactory arrangements for coordination of assistance in addressing the needs of internally displaced persons, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants and demining. Implementation of the Secretary-General's initiatives on reform would provide a new opportunity for increasing cooperation and building upon existing alliances.

Mr. GYGER (Observer for Switzerland) said that IASC discussions had had the advantage of revealing problems in all their severity and increasing awareness of what remained to be done. In order for the United Nations system to respond as effectively as possible to the needs of populations victimized by crises or disasters, humanitarian agencies must cooperate with each other and with the other bodies of the United Nations system. The latter form of cooperation would require ongoing dialogue with political bodies such as the Security Council and coordination of emergency, recovery and development activities, with full respect for the needs and principles of humanitarian activity, which could be guided only by the needs of the victims.

Switzerland welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General's reform proposals appeared to lead towards effective reform of the offices responsible for humanitarian coordination. Those proposals should be implemented as rapidly as possible, with energy and determination. Above all, however, staff involved in operational activities must fulfil their responsibility for coordination by moving beyond their individual interests. Like the Secretary-General, his delegation thought it would be a good idea to establish a governing board which would allow interested States to participate in the development of general guidelines for humanitarian activities. Switzerland, which hosted the principal humanitarian agencies in Geneva, would continue its active involvement in discussion of the ongoing reform proposals.

Mr. KOEZUKA (Japan) welcomed the efforts of IASC and DHA in preparing the report which the Council had before it. That report, which had been a response to Council resolution 1995/56, should have included options, proposals and recommendations for strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance. However, owing to the ongoing reform process, those elements had been omitted. As suggested in paragraph 11 of the report, the Council should continue its study of those issues on a medium- and long-term basis.

Mr. HILDAN (Observer for Norway) said that recommendations reflecting the series of reforms proposed by the Secretary-General the previous day should be added to the interim report. One of those reforms, the establishment of an Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, which would replace DHA, seemed particularly interesting and should serve as a point of

departure for a complete restructuring of the United Nations system for crisis intervention. Generally speaking, he supported the proposals made by the representative of the United States, particularly the following: operational activities of lesser importance from the point of view of the basic responsibilities of the Emergency Relief Coordinator should be delegated to other United Nations bodies; the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator must be funded on a stable, predictable basis within the framework of the ordinary budget; the Coordinator's advocacy role must be strengthened; humanitarian activities in the field must be consolidated; and the Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) must become a genuine mechanism for priority-setting and coordination. There should also be precise recommendations and a specific allocation of responsibilities concerning the protection of, and provisional assistance to, internally displaced persons.

Mr. CAMPBELL (Australia) said that he welcomed the improvement in coordination of humanitarian assistance since 1991, particularly as a result of the establishment of IASC, CAP and assessment and coordination teams. However, humanitarian assistance could not take the place of political action in complex emergency situations. The United Nations could and should concern itself with both of those problems, and he hoped that the reforms announced the previous day by the Secretary-General would be a step in that direction. The suggestions made by the representatives of the United States and Canada were useful and should be given careful study in the preparation of any proposal on the future role of the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and related support structures.

Mr. DECAZES (Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that his Order, which had been assisting the needy, whatever their circumstances, for nine centuries, had acquired valuable and varied experience in emergency aid and disaster relief over the past few years. In 1992, it had established a highly qualified and well-prepared volunteer corps whose task it was to assist the victims of natural disasters and armed conflicts. Once it had been decided to launch an operation, a rapid deployment team was sent to the disaster zone, where it provided primary health care until the arrival of a more fully equipped emergency team. During the dramatic events in Rwanda in 1994, that corps had launched its first wide-scale operation on behalf of the refugees in the Bukavu area. In most of its relief operations, the Order of

Malta worked closely in the field with other international agencies, particularly UNHCR and the World Health Organization (WHO). While there were no stock responses to disasters and emergency situations, standards of preparedness should be established, and the Sovereign Military Order of Malta could make a useful contribution in that regard.

Mr. ZIARAN (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the increasing numbers of natural disasters and emergencies called for a strengthening of international capacities for intervention. Past experience had shown that a comprehensive and strategic approach was needed and that international humanitarian assistance should be streamlined and made more effective and development-oriented. For that reason, the Council, in its resolution 1995/56, had called for a review of United Nations capacity to respond to humanitarian crises and disasters. The reform package presented by the Secretary-General the previous day offered interesting proposals on the United Nations humanitarian system, and discussion of that important matter should continue. His delegation awaited with interest the comprehensive report of the Secretary-General on the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance, which would be considered along with the reform package.

Mr. PRENDERGAST (Jamaica) said he was disappointed that the report under consideration did not mention natural disasters or disaster response. As a small island State which was especially vulnerable to natural disasters, particularly hurricanes, Jamaica had a constant need for rapid response, emergency planning and intervention, emergency preparedness and disaster mitigation. He hoped that the proposals presented the previous day by the Secretary-General, particularly those which concerned the humanitarian sector and were aimed at increasing effectiveness, would be considered in greater depth, together with the proposals of other delegations on the role of the Office of the Emergency Relief Coordinator which was to replace DHA.

The PRESIDENT said he agreed that the question of disaster relief was not covered in the report under consideration.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said he thought that the question of natural disasters should be the subject of a future report. He drew the attention of delegations to the "interim" nature of the report under consideration and to the fact that the Secretary-General himself had stated

that issues not addressed therein might be pursued in a subsequent report to the Council, should it so request. He suggested that the Council should request that such a report should be submitted to it at one of its future sessions.

The PRESIDENT said that, if there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to request that a report should be submitted to it at a future session on the basis of paragraph 11 of the Secretary-General's report, "review of the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance" (E/1997/98).

It was so decided.

Mr. AKASHI (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs) said he welcomed the constructive discussion to which the interim report had given rise and the general satisfaction with the reform package announced the previous day by the Secretary-General. The Secretary-General's proposals regarding the capacity of the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance would be further developed after consultation with the agencies concerned. Various delegations, in their remarks, had emphasized the crucial role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the importance of humanitarian activities and their coordination. There were still certain grey areas with regard to relations between IASC and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs, and he hoped that consultations with the members of the Executive Committee and IASC member agencies would make it possible to provide the necessary clarification.

The PRESIDENT reminded the Council that it had agreed not to adopt any conclusion or resolution on agenda item 8. It had therefore concluded its consideration of that item. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to take note of the two reports of the Secretary-General, issued as documents E/1997/98 and E/1997/96.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.