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SECOND COMMITTEE
27th meeting
held on
Thursday, 29 October 1981
at 3 p.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 27th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VERCELES (Philippines)

later: Mr. RINGNALDA (Netherlands)

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 - (c) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 71: TRAINING AND RESEARCH (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.18

1. Mr. RINGNALDA (Netherlands), speaking in his capacity as Vice-Chairman, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.18 on the United Nations University. He said that informal consultations concerning draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.10 had led to a consensus and proposed that the Committee should also adopt by consensus the draft currently before it.

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

Draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.19

2. Mr. RINGNALDA (Netherlands), speaking in his capacity as Vice-Chairman, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.19 on the mobilization of personal savings and said that the text had been drafted after informal consultations concerning draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.9. Paragraph 1 of draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.19 referred to suggestions made during the debate. He proposed that the Committee should adopt the new draft by consensus.

Draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.7/Rev.1

3. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan), introducing the revised draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people, announced that Bangladesh and the Niger wished to become sponsors. The final phrase of paragraph 4 had been inserted, after consultations, because United Nations bodies other than UNDP were offering assistance to the Palestinian people. The new paragraph 5 had been added because the draft resolution adopted at the thirty-fifth session contained a similar paragraph, which it had been considered useful to reproduce in the revised text.

Draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.6/Rev.1

4. Mr. ESAN (Nigeria), introducing the revised draft resolution entitled "World Communications Year: development of communications infrastructures", said that the text, which had been drafted through a process of informal consultations, was a compromise that had enabled the sponsors to reach a consensus. There were two amendments to be made: in the fifth preambular paragraph, the word "voluntary" should be inserted before "resources"; in paragraph 6, the word "further" should be deleted.

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AGENDA ITEM 72: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)
(A/36/Add.28, Add.31 and Add.32 (part I and Corr.1 and 2, and part II), A/36/38, 73 and Add.1, 183, 208 and Add.1, 259, 261, 262, 263, 264, 265, 266, 267, 268, 269, 272 and 273; E/1981/16 and Corr.1, 37 and Corr.1, and 86; A/C.2/36/L.4)

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR
- (b) SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE PROGRAMMES
- (c) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION

5. Mr. BUI XUAN NHAT (Viet Nam) said that his country, because of its geographic position, had suffered innumerable natural disasters. In 1980, it had been hit by a series of typhoons and floods, which had caused great loss of life and substantial material damage. His delegation therefore attached particular importance to the work of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) and thanked it for its tireless efforts in co-ordinating assistance requested by his Government. Usually the developing countries were not in a position to take precautionary measures for the prevention of disasters or to overcome their consequences. The international community had a duty to give such countries prompt assistance in emergencies. His delegation was of the view that UNDRO should play the role of a focal point for disaster relief matters. Practical measures should be taken to co-ordinate the activities of UNDRO with those of the UNDP resident representatives and other organizations concerned. UNDRO's activities should support and supplement the work of such organizations, not duplicate it. International assistance in general and assistance from organizations in particular should not be conditioned by political considerations. Economic assistance should not be used as a political weapon. His delegation agreed with the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) and the Secretary-General that there was scope for a considerable enhancement of the performance of UNDRO and of its contribution to the performance of the United Nations system as a whole.

6. Viet Nam believed that under General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), the mandate of UNDRO was to serve as the focal point for disaster relief matters. His delegation therefore supported the JIU recommendation that the basic function of UNDRO should be confined to natural disasters. His delegation also supported the five main categories of action taken by UNDRO in connexion with pre-disaster planning, as indicated in paragraph 17 of document A/36/259. In order to carry out its functions successfully, UNDRO should be in close contact with the Governments of the countries concerned. With regard to the proposal regarding the establishment of a co-ordinating committee, with responsibility for emergency assistance, his delegation believed that that would be premature. It would be better for the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to continue considering how to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations to respond to emergencies.

7. Mr. HANSPAL (India) commended the United Nations system for its efforts to assist the countries which had been the victims of natural and other disasters, such as the States of southern Africa struggling against apartheid. India fully supported the programme of assistance to the Palestinian people and the relevant resolutions adopted by the General Assembly.

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(Mr. Hanspal, India)

8. The Secretary-General's report on the work of UNDRO showed that the United Nations system was in a better position today to cope with natural disasters and other emergency situations and to assess the needs of the victims of such disasters. However, although there had been considerable growth in the volume of funds placed at the disposal of participating agencies, those resources were still inadequate. It would be only fair to emphasize the need for a balanced approach to the problem of co-ordinating the relief activities of the United Nations system. While the system's role was significant, the role of the countries themselves should not be underestimated. His delegation believed that there was no need to review the mandate of UNDRO, which should preserve its role as the focal point in the United Nations system for disaster relief matters. India could not accept the JIU recommendation to limit the scope of UNDRO's activities to natural disasters.

9. The question of co-ordination of disaster relief had to be looked at carefully, lest any effort at co-ordination should become self-defeating. It was essential not to tamper with the sovereignty of the host countries and to co-operate closely with their Governments. Some fundamental principles relating to the efficiency, speed of action, flexibility and independence of action of the organizations concerned should also be borne in mind. Furthermore, it was essential to avoid over-bureaucratization and to focus on matters of priority concern, such as the mobilization of adequate resources. His delegation was opposed to the setting up of a central body to co-ordinate relief efforts in emergency situations; such a body was not needed. It was also unnecessary to set up ad hoc groups, which were bound to follow Parkinson's law in perpetuating themselves. On the other hand, his delegation agreed that the management of UNDRO should be streamlined.

10. Pre-disaster planning was another area in which efforts should be made and which required resources and technical expertise. Communities in developing countries prone to natural disasters should be given assistance to improve their ability to cope with such tragedies. While the Governments of those countries should certainly co-operate closely with the Co-ordinator, it was equally incumbent upon the United Nations system and the donors to ensure that the type of assistance rendered should suit the needs of the people affected. It should be noted that the new International Development Strategy placed a welcome emphasis on the international community's responsibility to provide developing countries with adequate and timely assistance in the event of disasters. A new international economic order could not be established without giving due priority to adequate measures for dealing with emergencies which cost millions of human lives. His Government had undertaken special bilateral aid programmes to assist affected countries, especially in Africa. It also felt that UNDP should play a more active role in that sphere by including in its regional and interregional programmes technical co-operation activities for disaster preparedness and prevention.

11. Mr. OULD SID'AHMED (Mauritania), referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region (A/36/208 and Add.1) and to the report of the Economic and Social Council on the same subject (A/36/3/Add.31), said that Mauritania was well able to testify to the high quality of the work of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office. Having been established

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(Mr. Ould Sid'ahmed, Mauritania)

in the aftermath of the severe drought which had affected the Sahel from 1968 to 1973, destroyed its livestock sector and upset the social and economic balance of the region, UNSO had functions in three areas: (a) the co-ordination of the activities of the United Nations system related to the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region, (b) the maintenance of working relations with the Sahelian countries and the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS), and (c) the mobilization of the necessary resources for the implementation of projects related to drought-stricken countries. Following an extension of its mandate, UNSO had become the main body responsible for co-ordinating the efforts of the United Nations system in that sphere.

12. With respect to the first area of UNSO's functions, he said that he had noted with satisfaction document A/36/208/Add.1 and the favourable reactions to it. He hoped that the report which the Secretary-General was to submit to the Council at its second regular session in 1982 would be the starting-point for effective co-operation between UNSO and the rest of the United Nations system. With regard to the second area of UNSO activities, he was pleased to note that close working relations had been established between UNSO and CILSS, as mentioned in paragraph 93 of document A/36/208. He also welcomed the constant development of relations between UNSO and the various States members of CILSS. Mauritania would have liked UNSO to have more resources available to finance projects submitted to it by States members of CILSS but was well aware of UNSO's current limitations, which were due in part to the voluntary nature of the contributions it received. Turning to the third area of UNSO activities, he said that UNSO's efforts to mobilize resources either in the form of contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities or by involving donors directly in one or more specific priority projects, had been reasonably successful. In that connexion, he quoted paragraph 29 of document A/36/208. He noted, however, that by taking into account the cumulative effects of ever-higher inflation, one could see the extent of the gap between the needs of the Sudano-Sahelian countries and the resources available although the growth in the number of countries contributing to the Trust Fund was encouraging. He said that technical co-operation among developing countries, the institutional framework of which had been set forth in the Caracas Programme of Action, should play a major role in the recovery and development of the Sahel. He welcomed the fact that more and more developing countries were contributing to the Trust Fund and expressed the hope that, in the near future, some projects could be implemented entirely by developing countries.

13. He said that the annual pledging conference for United Nations operational activities to be held the following week would give possible donors an opportunity to show their solidarity with the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region. He hoped that the international community would be more generous than it had been in the preceding year, a wish that would not be difficult to fulfil, since no pledges had been made in 1980. It was true that in the past two years the situation in the Sudano-Sahelian region had more or less returned to normal, a fact which was perhaps the reason for the reduced interest in the problems of the region. Under UNSO's methods of work donors were assured that their contributions would be used judiciously. The decisions concerning the allocation of funds and the financing of

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(Mr. Ould Sid'ahmed, Mauritania)

various projects were taken in collaboration with the States concerned, and UNSO submitted periodic reports to donors on how their contributions were used. His delegation therefore hoped that the international community and the United Nations system would renew its interest in the problems of the Sahel and that the generosity of contributions to the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the region would live up to the expectations of the Sudano-Sahelian countries.

14. Mr. EVDOKEEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his country, which understood the needs of States affected by natural and other disasters, continued to provide disinterested assistance to States, including those of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, those of the Sudano-Sahelian region and a wide group of countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

15. The Soviet Union had on several occasions stressed the need to eliminate first of all the causes of the economic difficulties of developing countries. For example, the suffering of the people of the Middle East was caused by Israel's aggression, its occupation of the territory of various States and its policy of genocide against the Palestinian people. In southern Africa, the racist Pretoria régime was desperately trying to hold back the irreversible process of national liberation in order to maintain its domination over Namibia. The Soviet Union roundly condemned that régime's acts of aggression against the countries of southern Africa and held it responsible, along with Israel and the imperialist Powers which supported it, for damaging the economy of those countries. Until an end was put to those situations, which caused enormous suffering, it would be impossible to give effective assistance to the peoples of the countries in overcoming their economic difficulties.

16. Understanding the difficulties of the countries of southern Africa, the Soviet Union endeavoured to co-operate with them and to come to their aid. In Mozambique, that co-operation had resulted in the completion of many projects and the start, inter alia, of geological prospecting work and the construction of plants to repair agricultural machinery. Soviet experts also worked in many sectors of the Mozambican economy. The USSR also co-operated in economic and technical fields with Zambia, where it had sent doctors as well as teachers who helped provide professional training for Zambian nationals. Zambia received additional aid through the Soviet Red Cross and Red Crescent in the form of drugs, food and industrial products. Assistance was also given to Botswana and Lesotho in providing training for nationals.

17. Turning to the question of reorganizing the Office of United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, he said that there already existed adequate machinery within the United Nations system to co-ordinate international emergency assistance. Therefore the Soviet Union could not accept the change proposed in the Davidson report, any more than it could agree that the methods used by the United Nations system to provide disaster assistance were applicable to man-made situations. Similarly, it could not agree to the proposals contained in document 1981/16 on the establishment of an international early-warning system, since they could lead to interference in the internal affairs of States. Neither could it approve the

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(Mr. Evdokeev, USSR)

Secretariat's proposal on mandatory consensus among organizations and institutions in the system to settle the question of assistance to specific countries, since that would be a way of justifying the attempts of various capitalist Powers to deprive some countries which they did not like of multilateral aid.

18. The Soviet delegation also reaffirmed its support for the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit regarding limitation of the activities of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator. As JIU recommended, that Office should concentrate mainly on co-ordinating the relief efforts of the organizations and agencies of the system: it should be responsible to the UNDP Governing Council, should reduce its staff and should be funded entirely from voluntary contributions. Pre-disaster planning and preparedness operations should no longer be under UNDRO. Equally unacceptable were proposals likely to swell the staff of the United Nations Secretariat and the secretariats of the agencies within the system. While attaching special importance to humanitarian assistance, the Soviet Union would like the rationalization of the machinery and procedures already available within the system to be given priority over the establishment of new ones. The system's capacity for delivering emergency relief should be strengthened with the use of available funds. Turning lastly to draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.4 concerning international efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations he said that, as it had stated on many occasions, his delegation held that that draft could not serve as a basis for finding a compromise solution to the problem.

19. Mr. BA-ISSA (Democratic Yemen) said that it was impossible to separate the specific problems confronting developing countries as a result of their geographical situation and of the disasters to which they were exposed from the problems of development. Natural disasters, added to man-made ones, seriously impeded the development of the countries affected. Furthermore, they often hit poor countries which lacked the means to contend with the consequences by themselves. The result was a humanitarian problem whose solution required the mobilization of all available resources at the international level. Given the economic crisis and the deterioration of the situation of developing countries, particularly the least developed ones, it was essential to make every effort to plan for and prevent disasters and to mitigate the attendant social and economic effects.

20. His country was aware of the problems faced by countries struck by disaster because it had itself experienced emergencies. Situated in an extension of the Sudano-Sahelian region, Democratic Yemen sometimes experienced periods of drought, but also suffered from floods which impeded collective development efforts. In March and September 1981, torrential rains had fallen on his country, causing much loss of human life and serious material damage and costing, according to initial estimates, \$20 million. To face that emergency, local relief services had united their efforts, with UNDRO support. He warmly thanked UNDRO and other United Nations bodies such as WFP, which had also responded promptly to its appeal, as well as a number of countries which had shown their solidarity. Natural disasters had a serious impact on development and absorbed substantial resources, particularly in the light of the increased cost of the materials the country must import for reconstruction work.

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(Mr. Ba-Issa, Democratic Yemen)

21. His country therefore hoped that co-operation between UNDRO and the other United Nations agencies which provided relief would continue to grow in order to avoid overlapping and take maximum advantage of the system. It also would like pre-disaster planning and preparedness activities to be strengthened. To that end, priority should be given to problems concerning the structure and mandate of UNDRO, to expanding its role and to enhancing its effectiveness. In conclusion, he stressed the importance assigned to disaster relief in the new International Development Strategy and recalled that the major objective of efforts undertaken in that field was to support national disaster prevention measures.

22. Mr. Ringnalda (Netherlands) took the Chair.

23. Mr. KHALIL (Egypt) said that the importance of the role of United Nations agencies could not be overemphasized in a world torn by man-made or natural disasters, especially in the light of the close relationship between disasters and development problems. He stressed in that connexion the role of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, which was divided into four phases: prediction, pre-disaster planning, relief co-ordination and reconstruction.

24. He noted that prediction and control usually involved scientific research. Co-ordination with specialized agencies such as WHO, UNESCO, etc., was therefore essential, since they had the necessary scientific tools, and also because UNDRO co-ordinated their activities. UNDRO also had an advisory role in disseminating disaster-control technology. In the pre-disaster planning phase, UNDRO dispatched advisory missions to different countries and organized meetings and seminars dealing with the various aspects of disaster planning. He also thought in that connexion that current training projects should be systematized in a co-ordinated and comprehensive programme aimed at training all the necessary personnel within an established time-table, as proposed in paragraph 24 of document A/36/73/Add.1. That phase must also include co-ordination between UNDRO and other United Nations agencies, and he cited as an example the co-operation taking place between UNDRO and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements in Egypt.

25. In his view, disaster relief co-ordination should remain at the core of UNDRO activities. He stressed the need to obtain the approval of the Government concerned before providing relief, especially in the case of man-made disasters that might occur on the border between two countries. He emphasized the importance in that connexion of sending an UNDRO representative to the scene and of unofficial requests for assistance made through any United Nations body. His delegation favoured the adoption of the systematic evaluation procedures referred to in paragraph 29 of document A/36/73/Add.1. In his view, it would not be realistic for rehabilitation and reconstruction activities to be left exclusively to the competent development agencies, as indicated in paragraph 30 of document A/36/73/Add.1, because they required the specific competence of UNDRO. That was another area in which co-ordination between UNDRO and the other agencies was important.

26. Referring to General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), he noted that it was neither logical nor practical to limit one of the basic functions of UNDRO to

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(Mr. Khalil, Egypt)

exceptional situations, namely, sudden natural disasters, as recommended in document JIU/REP/80/11, while excluding from its mandate the "creeping" disasters such as those caused by drought, epidemics and famine. Instead of limiting UNDR0's mandate, it would be more constructive to define it clearly. As for the recommendation of the Joint Inspection Unit concerning the elimination of the UNDR0 Trust Fund, he drew attention to General Assembly resolution 35/107, under which the Trust Fund was to be maintained for a further two-year period, as from 1 January 1982. In conclusion, he stressed that what mattered was not simply to highlight the negative aspects of a given agency but rather to find the causes and correct them in a constructive manner.

27. Mr. MOSHENVULA (Zaire) said that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/36/73) and the comments of the Secretary-General thereon (A/36/73/Add.1) showed that since the establishment of UNDR0 much progress had been achieved in the elaboration of basic operational procedures to ensure co-ordination in international disaster relief operations. He welcomed the growing role which UNDR0 was playing as the central body entrusted with mobilizing, directing and co-ordinating the relief activities of the various United Nations bodies. He was also gratified to note that the 1980-1983 medium-term plan stated that in 1982-1983 resources for prevention work would increase from 10 to 15 per cent (A/36/73, para. 30). Since the developing countries were more prone to disasters than the developed countries, a situation which hindered their socio-economic development, he believed that the international community must endeavour to increase special disaster economic assistance and that such assistance should not be regarded as humanitarian aid but rather as an economic necessity to meet current needs. In that connexion, he pointed out that the new International Development Strategy included provisions relating to disaster relief.

28. There were, however, certain short-comings in the functioning of UNDR0: there was a high turnover of staff and many vacant posts; management methods, evaluation and monitoring were deficient; finally, the available staff were not fully utilized because of rigid administrative centralization. In addition, some United Nations bodies had not accepted the lead agency role of UNDR0 and few important activities had been carried out jointly. He also drew attention to the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit concerning the role of UNDR0 with respect to sudden natural disasters, the Trust Fund and co-operation between UNDP and UNDR0. In view of the need for an intergovernmental governing body to give policy guidance to the Co-ordinator and to take appropriate decisions, his delegation wished to refer to the recommendation in paragraph 149 of document A/36/73 whereby the Co-ordinator should report directly to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. He also observed that UNDR0 should be provided with the services of a Relief Co-ordination Unit comprised of representatives of the agencies responsible for emergency assistance in order to take full advantage of the possibilities of the United Nations system.

29. Since the floods which had hit his country in 1979, Zaire had established a National Disaster Relief Committee presided over by the Office of the First Commissioner of State, with the participation of all other ministries concerned. It would therefore be easy to co-ordinate, in co-operation with the UNDR0

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(Mr. Moshenvula, Zaire)

representative in Zaire, all future activities in that field. He supported the conclusions and recommendations in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/36/73).

30. Mr. DJABOUTOUBOUTOU (Benin) said that his country attached very great importance to special economic assistance programmes and recalled that at the previous session the General Assembly had adopted resolution 35/88 in which it had requested the Secretary-General to take steps to re-evaluate the specific economic problems encountered by Benin and to establish an international programme of assistance to meet the specific economic and development needs of the country. It was in pursuance of that resolution that the Secretary-General had arranged for an interagency mission to visit Benin, the report of which was annexed to the report of the Secretary-General on special economic assistance to Benin (A/36/269).

31. Benin, which was one of the 31 least-developed countries, had acceded to independence in 1960 and had then experienced a 12-year period of neo-colonialism until the revolutionary process had been initiated in 1972. Since then, the economic situation had improved, even though the objectives set in the three-year economic and social development plan 1977-1980 had been severely imperilled as a result of the unfavourable international economic situation and other events. The People's Republic of Benin had also suffered from the drought which, during the 1976-1977 agricultural season, had had disastrous effects on agricultural production, food consumption and stock-raising.

32. As the Secretary-General indicated in his report on economic assistance to Benin, the assistance sought by that country was directed primarily to strengthening its physical and social infrastructure and its modest but growing industrial sector. In addition, the programme provided for emergency action in the health sector, food aid, improvement of the living conditions of the population, and reduction of the large deficit in the country's balance of trade.

33. He wished to thank the Secretary-General for his unceasing efforts to implement the various resolutions and decisions aimed at helping Benin to improve its situation. He also thanked the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions for the clarity of his report and the statement he had made to the Second Committee. Lastly, he expressed his gratitude to all countries which continued to give their contributions and support to Benin's just cause.

34. Mr. SALLU (Sierra Leone) said that his delegation attached very great importance to the item under consideration, to the extent that it was directly linked to the economic and social development of developing countries prone to more or less serious natural disasters, and he welcomed the efforts made by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, in particular the work on the study, prevention and control of natural disasters and the collection and dissemination of information in that field.

35. Without wishing to minimize the usefulness of the assistance provided by UNDRO in times of disaster, his delegation believed that it was by strengthening its pre-disaster planning capacities that UNDRO would be able to provide the

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(Mr. Sallu, Sierra Leone)

greatest and most long-lasting aid to disaster-prone countries. Consequently, it considered that the provision of adequate resources to the technical assistance subaccount would enable UNDR0 to carry out its responsibilities more effectively. His delegation could not therefore support the recommendation on that subject by the Joint Inspection Unit aimed at eliminating the subaccount. With regard to the recommendation of JIU to phase out the Trust Fund, his delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that a decision on the future of the Fund could be taken only when the General Assembly had made known its views on the role and functions of UNDR0, after due consideration of all the issues involved.

36. With respect to co-operation between UNDR0 and other emergency aid bodies, his delegation would welcome any proposal that would allow UNDR0 the flexibility to carry out its specific functions, while allowing it to co-operate, where necessary, with other bodies. His delegation believed that both the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Administrator of UNDP would provide sufficient guidelines to UNDR0 in that regard. It seemed to him that the services of a permanent interagency co-ordinating committee would be of no great use, since assistance from all relief bodies was not necessarily needed in all emergency situations. His delegation also endorsed the comments of the Secretary-General of the United Nations concerning the reporting procedures of UNDR0, but it emphasized the importance of consultations with the Governments of donor countries and other bodies such as the League of Red Cross Societies. Finally, he noted the willingness shown by the Co-ordinator to take measures to remedy the short-comings highlighted by the Joint Inspection Unit in document A/36/73; he also welcomed the measures adopted by the Secretary-General to strengthen UNDR0.

37. With regard to subitem (b) of agenda item 72, he thanked the Secretary-General for the numerous reports submitted concerning, in particular, special economic assistance programmes. He wished, however, to emphasize that grave economic situations were not limited to the countries listed and reserved the right to make more specific comments or proposals on the situation of each country or group of countries as and when the need arose. In that connexion, he would like due consideration be given to the question of extending the list of least developed countries.

38. With regard to subitem (c) of agenda item 72, he noted with appreciation the work being done by the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office and welcomed the exemplary co-operation between UNSO and the countries of the region under the umbrella of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel. He believed that the establishment of the Institute of the Sahel in 1977 had been a good decision. His delegation also noted with satisfaction the progress achieved in the implementation of priority projects in the area of medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation in the Sudano-Sahelian region. Finally, he thanked the donor countries and organizations which had provided contributions to UNDR0 and UNSO. He would like, however, to see an increase in unearmarked contributions so that those two organizations could be more responsive to the needs of recipients. Sierra Leone would study draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.4, relating to international efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations, in a constructive spirit.

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39. Mr. Verceles (Philippines) resumed the Chair.

40. Mr. KHOJANE (Lesotho) said that the countries receiving special economic and disaster relief assistance could be classified under three categories: countries with natural calamities such as drought; island and land-locked developing countries; and countries with special economic problems. Most of those countries were in the category of least developed countries and two thirds of them were in Africa. His delegation therefore believed that the solution to the problems of the least developed countries, including Lesotho, was the immediate implementation of the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1980s for the least developed countries, adopted at the Paris Conference in 1981, and the provisions of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade adopted at the thirty-fifth session of the General Assembly. In that connexion, his delegation had been encouraged by the undertakings of France, Sweden and Denmark, during the Conference on the Least Developed Countries, to increase their official development assistance contributions to meet the targets of the Strategy and by a similar commitment on behalf of the States members of the European Economic Community during the general debate in the Committee at the current session. His delegation also welcomed the commitment of the majority of developed countries to devote 0.15 per cent of their gross national product to the least developed countries in the coming years. The developed planned-economy countries were also expected to play a significant role in assisting the developing countries.

41. He noted the favourable response of the international community, especially during the past three years, to requests for assistance to Lesotho under General Assembly resolution 32/98. His Government was grateful to all the donor countries, regional and intergovernmental organizations and to United Nations bodies and agencies for the assistance rendered and commended the United Nations for its efforts generally to secure world assistance for various countries and peoples needing special aid. His Government believed, however, that economic and social assistance and disaster relief should be only temporary measures until the developing countries became economically self-reliant. His delegation was concerned about the difficulties encountered by individual developing countries and the inability of the market forces to generate economic development. That was one of the reasons why the idea of economic co-operation among developing countries was gaining ground, although it would have to be backed by international efforts through programmes for special economic and disaster relief assistance and official development assistance and through bilateral assistance arrangements.

42. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had played a very important role in the transfer of assistance from developed to developing countries. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) also had a special part to play in the industrial development of the developing countries and must be given the means to carry out its task. While bilateral co-operation should be encouraged, his delegation believed that multilateral co-operation through the United Nations system should be accorded priority.

43. Mrs. WALDER-BRUNDIN (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the delegations of the Nordic countries, said that in recent years the poorest countries had been the hardest hit by natural or man-made disasters. The Office of the United Nations

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(Mrs. Walder-Brundin, Sweden)

Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) had a very important part to play in mobilizing assistance, collecting and disseminating information on disaster situations, co-ordinating assistance and pre-disaster planning. With the growing number of emergencies and the complexity of many emergency situations, there was a need for increased co-operation and co-ordination among the organizations involved in emergency relief. The question of international efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations had been discussed at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council, but without agreement being reached on a draft resolution. In view of the importance of the issue, she trusted that the General Assembly would adopt a resolution during the current session. The draft resolution transmitted by the Economic and Social Council to the General Assembly (A/C.2/36/L.4) offered a sound basis for further discussions, with due regard to the opinions expressed by delegations during informal discussions at the Council's summer session. The delegations of the Nordic countries had already expressed their views on the issue in the Council. They considered that the setting up of a Relief Co-ordination Unit should be arranged with the full concurrence of the Government of the country in which disaster had struck. The Unit should also co-operate with the Government concerned in order to ensure the most efficient assistance. Regarding the establishment, on an ad hoc basis, of a co-ordinating committee composed of representatives of agencies with responsibility for emergency assistance, the Nordic countries felt that it should meet only to discuss emergencies of such scope and nature that they did not fall clearly within the mandate of one organization; there was no question of creating a new institutional unit at Headquarters level. The Nordic countries' proposals on how to improve emergency relief efforts, did not involve any change in the existing mandates of participating agencies or the creation of any new institutions. It was essential that the development plans and programmes of developing countries, especially those which were disaster-prone, should include programmes for disaster prevention and preparedness. The United Nations organizations concerned could provide the disaster-prone developing countries with the tools and financial means so that they would be prepared in the event of disaster.

44. The Nordic delegations were keenly interested in the subject and were ready to take an active part in discussions on it so that the Committee could adopt by consensus a resolution on international efforts to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations. She also referred to the problem of desertification which in many cases was the result of over-exploitation of arable land, water resources and grasslands, as well as deforestation to meet the needs of the growing populations in many developing countries. In view of the close relationship between people, environment, resources and development, it was essential for ecological aspects to be included in development projects, in order to ensure the protection of the environment. To that end, the developing countries themselves must give priority to measures for combating desertification, with assistance from the international community as a whole.

45. Mr. SEMEDO (Guinea-Bissau) thanked the States which had supported his country and expressed his gratitude to the Secretary-General for sending a mission there in 1981 in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 35/95. As indicated in the report (A/36/263), his country's most pressing problems were energy and food. The

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(Mr. Semedo, Guinea-Bissau)

Government was giving priority to agriculture, with a view to ensuring that the people were properly fed, despite the serious problem of drought. But it was only with the help of the international community that the country had been able to make good its 50-per-cent deficit in food. In that respect he thanked all the countries and organizations which had given Guinea-Bissau food aid, 20 per cent of which had been distributed to the people, the rest being sold and the proceeds paid to the National Development Fund to finance rural development, food security and infrastructure projects.

46. Mr. CLARK (United States of America) said that the international community must continue to seek ways to improve its capacity to meet emergency humanitarian needs. Such assistance had a single objective: to provide Governments and peoples stricken by disasters with the capabilities to survive. There was no "North-South" or "East-West" issue and his delegation accordingly welcomed draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.4, which had emerged from the Economic and Social Council; the draft was not perfect but might serve as a common denominator.

47. His Government had paid careful attention to the report of the Joint Inspection Unit (A/36/73) as well as to other relevant documents and to the discussion which had taken place in the Economic and Social Council on the question. At a time of scarce resources and competing demands for assistance, it was imperative to ensure that what was available was used efficiently and that every form of waste was eliminated. The JIU report had provided a useful analysis of the performance of UNDRO, which had clearly encountered difficulties in meeting the heavy responsibilities which it had been given by the General Assembly. Moreover, the co-operation which UNDRO had received from disaster-affected Governments and from other donors and institutions had not always been adequate. Notwithstanding its achievements, UNDRO had not always used its human and material resources efficiently. It was, however, encouraging to learn that morale at UNDRO had risen during the previous several months and that a number of the management recommendations based on the JIU report, the AMS study and the comments of the Secretary-General were being implemented. That work should be continued and, while his delegation could not subscribe to the 50-per-cent cut in the staff of UNDRO suggested in the JIU report, it considered that a more rigorous policy should be adopted as regards the creation of posts.

48. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly had requested that consideration should be given during the current year to the question of the mandate of UNDRO. JIU had suggested that that mandate should be restricted to sudden natural disasters. UNDRO had concentrated its efforts in that area. In addition, UNDRO had been actively involved in some of the other emergency situations envisaged in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI); in that connexion, his delegation had found UNDRO's roles both in the co-ordination and information dissemination function and in the preparedness area to have been useful. The project currently under way in the Caribbean aimed at alleviating the effects of hurricanes was being financed with the help of the European Economic Community and the United States. The project was an excellent example of such activity and there was little question that UNDRO should continue to fulfil its function in that area.

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(Mr. Clark, United States)

The second major area of UNDRO involvement was in areas not clearly within the mandate of other organizations; that area of activity encompassed persons displaced within their own countries, generally as a result of war, civil strife or other unsettled circumstances. His Government considered that to be a legitimate function of UNDRO; the usefulness of that activity was, however, directly related to the objectivity which UNDRO brought to the task of analysis. Its independence and competence must be safeguarded and its reports must be more than a mere recital of needs proposed by Governments. In the view of his Government the mandate of UNDRO should not be restricted. UNDRO should however be able to count on the assistance of other agencies and to utilize outside consultants for missions involving longer-term emergencies, as such missions occurred on an irregular basis.

49. On the question of action taken by the United States in the field of special economic assistance and disaster relief, the record showed in the case of United States aid to the Sahel, for example, that \$107.5 million had been requested from Congress for the recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region in 1982. In that connexion, he welcomed the progress that was being made towards ensuring that the institutional mechanisms necessary for the implementation of the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region were in place; it was imperative that there should be a well co-ordinated, interdisciplinary approach to the issue.

50. Ms. ZHANG Zhongan (China) said that most of the countries which needed special economic assistance were still suffering the consequences of their colonial past, further aggravated by unfavourable geographical conditions. Others had had to reconstruct economies damaged by protracted wars of liberation while others again, as in southern Africa or the Horn of Africa, were subjected to enormous economic pressure from racist and hegemonist Powers. However, those States could not overcome their difficulties through their own efforts alone, inasmuch as their economies were extremely vulnerable to the effects of the world economic crisis, before which they were completely helpless. The international community must therefore be further mobilized to provide them with generous assistance. China was a developing socialist country but had nevertheless rendered assistance to a number of developing countries with special economic problems, including some countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region, and in that connexion had scrupulously respected the sovereignty of recipient States. China would continue such activities within the limits of its capabilities.

51. The United Nations Relief Co-ordinator had done a great deal of work in co-ordinating the effort to meet humanitarian needs in emergency situations, in particular, following the hurricanes which had ravaged the Caribbean and the serious drought in the Horn of Africa. UNDRO's activity had not stopped there, as the Office had also contributed in other areas, in particular, in two provinces in China; her delegation expressed its appreciation in that regard. Some of the problems confronting UNDRO stemmed in part from lack of clarity in its mandate. China considered that UNDRO's mandate, as stipulated in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), should be confirmed but hoped that serious consideration would be given to the various proposals which had been advanced. UNDRO's co-ordinating role was constantly expanding as the range of related activities broadened. In

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(Ms. Zhang Zhongan, China)

order to improve the situation, greater clarity should be introduced into the mandates of the agencies concerned while efforts must be made to mobilize the strengths of all concerned. It was the view of her delegation that co-ordination would be strengthened by making the maximum use of existing agencies and by avoiding the creation of new agencies, so as to avoid staff increases and unnecessary financial expenditures.

52. Mr. CASSANDRA (Sao tome and Principe) noted that General Assembly resolution 35/93 concerning assistance to his country had been adopted by consensus but that the aid so far received had fallen far short of real needs. The poor over-all economic and social situation prevailing in Sao Tome and Principe had been exacerbated by a legacy of transport and technical equipment inherited from the nineteenth century as well as by the lack of recent official national income statistics which would reflect the current situation in the country. In that connexion, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities had recently completed a census, the results of which would unfortunately not be available before the end of the year. Other major areas of concern were communications, investment and technical infrastructure.

53. Sao Tome and Principe was obliged to import its fuel as well as increasing quantities of food products; cocoa accounted for 90 per cent of total export earnings but the world price of cocoa had fallen from \$1,500 a ton in March 1980 to around \$850 a ton in mid-1981. The country therefore needed increased assistance from the international community to meet the needs of the population and to maintain the development trend of recent years. His delegation wished to express its gratitude to those countries and international agencies that were rendering assistance to Sao Tome and Principe.

54. Mr. TOPANDE-MAKOMBO (Central African Republic), commenting on the world economic situation, said that it had been thought for a while that the economic and social problems of the developing countries could be solved by helping their economies to "take off". The theory was that once a certain threshold had been reached there would be regular and accelerating growth. Reality had proved to be more complex but nevertheless, judging from the outcome of the Ottawa summit meeting of Western countries, the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed countries in Paris and the Cancun summit meeting, the industrialized countries had no intention of changing their attitude towards the South, thus adding injustice, exploitation and inequality to paternalism and arrogance. His delegation considered that the cause of poverty must be sought at the structural level. Unfortunately, the North had become too accustomed to a dialogue with spokesmen of the South who reflected their own image and did not represent the new generation, which had been educated with different values; two thirds of the population of the Third World were less than 30 years old. The day would come, however, when the North would "sing a different tune" and it would become clear that the main obstacle to North-South co-operation was primarily cultural and only secondarily economic.

55. His own country was among the least developed in Africa. In addition to being land-locked, which was a substantial obstacle to foreign trade, it had

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(Mr. Topande-Makombo, Central
African Republic)

suffered from the disastrous administration of the old imperial régime, which had contributed to a steep decline in agricultural, industrial and mining production, to the paralysis of internal transportation, and to financial bankruptcy. In order to save the situation, the Central African Republic had initiated an ambitious and urgent economic and social recovery plan, 1980-1981, to cover the restoration of public finances, economic recovery and reorganization of the production sectors. Rigorous measures had been taken in connexion with the financial system, customs and public expenditure. A substantial number of public enterprises had been converted to mixed enterprises and the administration had been reorganized. Priority had been given to reorienting investment towards the transportation, agricultural and health planning sectors.

56. In order to fulfil the programme, his Government had sought the collaboration of friendly countries and the entire international community. Following a meeting of donors in Bangui in June 1980, funds had been made available and a number of projects had been started immediately. Notwithstanding such aid, the goals set for 1980 had been attained only to the extent of 53 per cent. In that context, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 35/87, which contained an appeal for collective aid for the reconstruction, rehabilitation and development of the Central African Republic. His Government had welcomed such a manifestation of support and was happy with the results achieved by the inter-agency mission which had been sent in January and February 1981 to follow up the resolution; it was firmly convinced that, with the help of the international community, it could implement the programme of action which it had initiated, since the current catastrophic situation was the result not of a natural disaster but of the disastrous administration of the previous régime.

57. In addition to the urgent assistance which it was seeking, his country invited investment from all friendly countries in order to assist industrial development based on the improved use of its agricultural and mining resources, on the creation of a substitute industry - mainly processing and assembly - the establishment of a basis for subregional and regional self-development and the decentralization of economic activity. The programme would be implemented through a series of administrative, financial and regulatory measures and through the establishment, with the assistance of the World Bank, of a national office of geological and mining research. In conclusion, he renewed his urgent appeal to the international community, whose response had not so far been commensurate with a situation which had continued to deteriorate since the visit of the inter-agency mission at the beginning of 1981.

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

Draft resolution A/C.2/36/L.8

58. The CHAIRMAN announced that Jamaica had joined the sponsors of the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.