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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 27 July 1999 at 10 a.m.

<u>President</u> :	Mr. WIBISONO (Vice-President)	(Indonesia)
later:	Mr. SYCHOV (Vice-President)	(Belarus)

CONTENTS

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (continued)

SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS:

- (a) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN
- (b) SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
- (c) CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE
- (d) NARCOTIC DRUGS
- (e) UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES

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In the absence of Mr. Fulci (Italy), Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia),
Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (agenda item 7) (continued)
(E/1999/L.35)

Draft resolution on a long-term programme of support for Haiti (E/1999/L.35)

Mr. PRIEDKALNS (Latvia), member of the Ad Hoc Advisory Group on Haiti, introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group's Chairman, said that it was the product of informal consultations by the Group with all interested parties. After drawing attention to the main heads of the draft resolution, he said that Haiti, a founder member of the United Nations that, in five years' time, would be celebrating the bicentenary of its independence, required international partnership at a difficult period of its existence. It was essential that short-term assistance should be converted into long-term strategies. The adoption of the draft resolution would herald a new era, in which the Council would associate itself with the alleviation of poverty and the improvement of the quality of life in Haiti.

The draft resolution was adopted.

Mr. LELONG (Observer for Haiti) welcomed the adoption of the draft resolution, which would be most beneficial for his country. It was gratifying that it incorporated the main recommendations of the Advisory Group's report (E/1999/103), which set innovative guidelines for countries emerging from crisis. He trusted that Haiti would rise to the challenge of translating the draft resolution into action.

SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (agenda item 14):

(a) ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN (A/54/38 (Part I), A/54/123-E/1999/66, A/54/156-E/1999/102 and Add.1; E/1999/27, 54, 57 and 105)

(b) SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (A/54/66-E/1999/6, A/54/128-E/1999/70; E/1999/26)

(c) CRIME PREVENTION AND CRIMINAL JUSTICE (A/54/69-E/1999/8; E/1999/30; E/1999/NGO/6)

(d) NARCOTIC DRUGS (E/1999/28 and 67)

(e) UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR REFUGEES (E/1999/21 and Corr.1)

The PRESIDENT reminded delegations that in accordance with past practice it was understood that, with regard to issues on which there had been a previous debate in another body, persons taking the floor should address

only the question of action on recommendations contained in the reports of the subsidiary bodies. If there had been no previous debate on an item, delegations might wish to enter into a discussion of the substance.

Ms. KING (Assistant Secretary-General, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on Gender Issues and the Advancement of Women), drew attention to the 1999 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development, an executive summary of which appeared as document E/1999/44. The third in the series, the Survey was for the first time devoted to a single theme: how the world of work was being transformed from the gender point of view. The main findings were that women had been incorporated into paid employment in greater numbers over the past two decades, usually under conditions inferior to those of men; that precarious forms of employment had proliferated over the same period, appearing to hasten the process of women's incorporation into paid employment; that the costs of economic adjustment had been borne disproportionately by women living in poverty; and that, with an emerging social protection gap, the welfare demands placed on the family, and particularly on women, appeared to have increased, especially in developing countries.

It was difficult to make broad generalizations about whether the overall impact of globalization on gender equality had been positive or negative. It had been responsible for new opportunities that women might find empowering, yet it had also brought increased economic volatility, job insecurity and loss of livelihood.

The Secretary-General's report on the improvement of the situation of women in rural areas (A/54/123-E/1999/66) found that, while the proportion of the workforce engaged in agriculture was on the decline, women's share in that workforce was on the increase, particularly in the Middle East and Africa; that privatization and integration into global markets in the developing world had worsened the terms of trade for agriculture, increasing the burden of subsistence for the rural poor, but had, increased the opportunity for wage employment for women, particularly in Asia and Latin America; that female-headed households were a diverse category and in some cases, owing to remittances from the husband or other male family members, tended to be better off than other households, with the possible exception of those headed by widows and single women.

Despite the fact that women in rural areas had lower levels of literacy, education, health and nutritional status than men, they continued to make a significant contribution to agricultural production throughout the world and had primary responsibility for food security in most households. Most of their work, however, was unaccounted for, thereby causing a net loss to the national economy.

With regard to the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), the Secretariat fully supported the mandate and need for INSTRAW to continue its unique work of research and training. It also fully supported any kind of pragmatic revitalization of that institution, which was long overdue. The situation was very grave. If funds were not forthcoming by the end of December 1999, the Institute faced closure, as was made clear in the notes by the Secretary-General (E/1999/102 and Add.1). It was for the Council to decide on the Institute's fate. She therefore looked forward to seeing a decisive and action-oriented resolution that would give the Secretary-General clear guidance on the way forward. The Secretariat would welcome collaboration and an exchange of views with interested Member States and stakeholders on ways of revitalizing the Institute.

She fully supported the proposal in the report of the President of the Board of Trustees of INSTRAW (E/1999/105) that the Institute's funding must be placed on a firm basis; that was essential to long-term planning, quality staffing and increased visibility. It was to be hoped, therefore, that old pledges would be paid up and new pledges made and kept. She expressed appreciation to all the States that had contributed over the past 20 years. The Secretariat would do all in its power to meet States' requests. The outcomes, however, would be commensurate with the voluntary funds paid in and the degree of guidance that was received.

She drew attention to paragraph 6 of the Secretary-General's note (E/1999/102/Add.1), which contained the Secretary-General's views on the urgent need for Member States to make adequate voluntary contributions to the Institute, and to paragraph 10, which stated that it had not been possible to circulate an announcement for the post of Director. She was happy to report that a former deputy Director, a woman of great experience and ability, had been appointed ad interim for a period of four months.

Ms. TORRES (President, Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW)), introducing the reports of the Board of Trustees (E/1999/57) and of the President of the Board (E/1999/105), said that, at its nineteenth session, the Board had approved a strategic plan and work programme for the coming biennium. The plan included efforts to collaborate more intensively with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the Commission on the Status of Women to facilitate an increased flow of information. It also aimed to initiate innovative approaches for the dissemination of relevant and timely information on gender by making use of facilities on the information highway.

The strategic plan and work programme of the Institute had been designed to be consistent with the system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women 2002-2005 and to provide fresh insights into issues addressed by the Beijing Platform for Action. Instead of developing its own training programmes, INSTRAW planned to develop into a global resource centre on research and training practices, systematically assembling and disseminating research findings and training practices, an approach that would be facilitated by close collaboration with intergovernmental structures. Even in 1999, with the limitations on its operations imposed by financial difficulties, it had been able to implement its work programme. It could do more with increased support for its various programmes.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, she requested the Council to adopt a new resolution instituting measures for the revitalization of INSTRAW along the lines indicated in her report (E/1999/105). It was important to secure the Institute's financial base, so that its mandate could be completed without impediment. There was a continuing need to improve gender equality and the status of women in various parts of the globe. She hoped that the Council would join in efforts to revitalize and strengthen the Institute for the advancement of women worldwide.

Mr. LUCAS (United Nations Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the elimination of violence against women (A/54/69-E/1999/8), said that in its resolution 52/86 the General Assembly had adopted the Model Strategies and Practical Measures on the Elimination of Violence against Women in the Field of Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The Model Strategies reflected the

need for an active policy of gender mainstreaming in all areas relating to the elimination of violence against women. The report summarized the information provided by Member States on the progress achieved in overhauling their legislation to ensure that women were treated fairly by the criminal justice system. It also provided information on the related aspects of the work of the Centre for International Crime Prevention. A concerted criminal justice response to domestic violence and the elimination of violence against women, which violated human rights and personal integrity, impeded freedom and limited women's contribution to social progress, had long been on the agenda of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice. The Secretariat looked forward to the Council's further guidance in the matter.

Mr. MARTINS (President, International Narcotics Control Board) said that the Council had recently elected six new members of his Board. A paramount requirement for membership was independence: members served in their personal capacity, not as government representatives. They must not hold a position or engage in any activity liable to impair their impartiality. Governments were under an obligation to ensure that nominees could act independently; the Board then applied its own procedure to guarantee that its members remained independent throughout their term of office.

In the interests of effectiveness and credibility, the composition of the Board ought to take into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution and to include people possessing a knowledge of the drug situation in the producing, manufacturing and consuming countries. In addition, the 1961 Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs attempted to ensure that appropriate medical and pharmacological experience was also represented on the Board.

Unfortunately, the high standards set by the Convention had not been entirely met by the results of the recent elections. There was still no equitable geographical distribution of members: eastern Europe, and particularly Africa, where drugs had become a significant problem, were under-represented. Nor was there a good balance in the professional backgrounds of the members. The newly elected Board would contain medical doctors, drug control administrators and drug law enforcement officers but no legal practitioners, although a member with experience in applying and interpreting the law was essential when analysing government performance. The imbalance should be rectified, at the latest, at the next elections.

Over a year had passed since the landmark special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem and some countries had already achieved impressive results in implementing the goals of the Global Programme of Action. The progress achieved by Bolivia and Peru in the eradication of coca bushes was encouraging. The Board was confident that the momentum generated by the special session could be maintained and that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs would monitor the implementation of the Programme with conscientiousness. The Board would cooperate with the Commission in that task through its monitoring of the implementation of the international drug control treaties.

Although international drug control treaties enjoyed near-universal ratification, universal compliance had yet to be achieved. The Board remained concerned that the Government of Lebanon had not yet withdrawn its reservations on the provisions against money-laundering in the United Nations Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances of 1988. The de facto and, in some cases, de jure decriminalization of drug use in some countries was a further cause for concern. Moreover, serious deficiencies in national drug control systems and a prolonged failure of some Governments to cooperate with the Board had led to invocations of the relevant articles of the Convention on Psychotropic Substances of 1971 which, if pursued, would lead to a recommendation to the Council to ban imports and exports of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances to those countries. The Board had, however, finally managed to establish a dialogue with several of the Governments concerned and the procedure had been terminated or suspended in some cases.

Despite the significant progress made over the past hundred years in international drug control, major challenges remained, such as the need to address the significant global imbalance in the availability of drugs for appropriate medical and scientific purposes. Numerous countries in the developing world experienced serious shortages of pain-management drugs; it was necessary to examine how the United Nations might provide concrete assistance in that regard. In several - mainly industrialized - countries, psychotropic-substance consumption had reached an unprecedented level; overly liberal prescribing practices which might lead to abuse should be addressed.

The tendency to subject to public vote highly technical questions concerning the medical use of certain psychoactive substances was a cause for concern; such issues should, rather, be decided by science. Moreover, drug control trials - such as those involving the administering of heroin to severely dependent addicts - should be monitored by an independent, international body.

Mr. LATORRE (Observer for the Dominican Republic) said he was concerned at the dire situation of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) which had its headquarters in his country. Not only was INSTRAW one of only three United Nations bodies to be located in the developing world, but women in developing countries were the most vulnerable population group and must continue to benefit from close contact with the Institute. It would hardly be reasonable for a key institution for the advancement of women to cease to exist less than a year before "Beijing Plus Five", especially in view of the international commitment to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. The reasons which had led to the Institute's establishment were as pertinent as ever they had been.

The problem was not one of the location of the Institute but of funding, and of ensuring that resources were managed effectively and with probity. Programme priorities must be re-evaluated, with greater emphasis on results-oriented research and on service provision. Administrative costs should be minimized, and those aspects of the Institute's governance relating to United Nations intergovernmental processes covered by the conference services budget. Furthermore, a permanent director must be appointed at the earliest opportunity. Donor countries must be urged to continue to contribute to the strengthening of the Institute. The Council had the power to promote its revitalization and to ensure that it contributed even more effectively to the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Mr. HERNANDEZ (United Nations Joint Inspection Unit (JIU)) introduced the note by the Secretary-General containing an evaluation of INSTRAW carried out by the JIU (A/54/156-E/1999/102). Following fact-finding missions to Santo Domingo and New York, the Unit had concluded that the Institute stood as an example to the entire system of what could be achieved with scarce resources. INSTRAW's acute financial crisis had been brought

about mainly by the recent withdrawal of support by some donors. If the Institute were closed down, however, the United Nations would be sending a very negative signal to the world about its commitment to the advancement of women. The demise of INSTRAW would also negatively affect progress towards gender equality. The JIU was in favour of the continuation of the Institute; the report contained recommendations to that effect for consideration by the Council.

The report detailed some shortcomings in the administrative services provided to INSTRAW by the United Nations Secretariat. In that connection, the Institute should be compensated at the earliest opportunity for the inappropriate use of its funds. INSTRAW, it appeared, was also an innocent victim of the system-wide fight for funds. Those institutions which did not have access to regular budget funding suffered a disadvantage which had grown more serious in recent years. It was a matter of concern that the voluntary funding concept was not applied on a fair and equal basis. There appeared to be no good reason why the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR), for example, should be able to supplement its voluntary funds by a subsidy from the regular budget, while other United Nations research institutes were denied such an option.

INSTRAW's Strategic Plan and Work Programme for 2000-2003 detailed institutional reforms which were designed to create a more sustainable financial base for the Institute. Member States should acknowledge INSTRAW's "value for money" over the longer term and should renew their support to the Institute.

Mr. Sychov (Belarus), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. JESSEN-PETERSEN (Assistant United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)), introducing the report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (E/1999/21 and Corr.1), said that the nature of human displacement had undergone far-reaching changes in recent years. Forced displacement tended to result above all from conflicts of an internal nature, typically involving deeply divided communities. Flagrant and intolerable violations of humanitarian law had affected large numbers of civilians causing untold suffering and triggering flight. The term "displaced" currently embraced both refugees and internally displaced persons as well as other victims of conflict. Drawing an operational distinction between such

categories was becoming increasingly difficult, when humanitarian assistance and protection were needed in a hostile environment affecting all population groups equally.

Massive forced displacement had also caused outflows of populations in which people of concern to UNHCR were mixed with armed and other elements which might even be excluded from international protection under the existing rules. Flows had also occurred into insecure environments such as northern Albania, where widespread banditry - together with the presence of armed elements - had exposed humanitarian workers to grave risks and obliged UNHCR to encourage refugees to move away from border areas. While the host Governments clearly had the primary responsibility for maintaining law and order in refugee-populated areas, the ability to discharge that responsibility varied widely. The issue of staff safety must continue to be at the forefront of UNHCR concerns, especially in view of the trend towards more insecure situations.

Increasingly, humanitarian agencies were being denied access to affected areas for long periods, as in rebel-held areas of Sierra Leone. Governments and the parties to conflicts often deliberately denied access to humanitarian workers in direct contravention of international law.

The speed of current movements, and the need to respond equally rapidly, was a relatively new feature. In Kosovo and the neighbouring countries, UNHCR had been obliged to shift from a major relief operation for internally displaced persons inside Kosovo to a massive refugee relief operation in neighbouring countries, only to have to respond, within a matter of weeks, to the spontaneous return of more than 700,000 refugees and internally displaced persons. Its strategic priorities in the region were to continue to facilitate spontaneous repatriation, organize voluntary repatriation movements, provide humanitarian assistance to returnees to ease reintegration, and to monitor protection inside Kosovo, particularly for ethnic Serb and Roma minorities. It would also continue to support asylum countries in the region to help them deal with the residual refugee population and for rehabilitation needs. At the same time UNHCR, was working with countries that had participated in the humanitarian evacuation programme to help those refugees who wished to return to Kosovo. Meanwhile, UNHCR would maintain its regional approach to displacement in the region of and around the former Yugoslavia.

Because of the need to respond urgently to large-scale movements of refugees, the High Commissioner had called on the support of military forces, because of their logistical capacity and ability to move available assets rapidly. While there might be no alternative to the involvement of the military in such situations, the humanitarian response must always retain its civilian and independent character.

The multitude of actors in the humanitarian field and the complexity of recent peace agreements posed new challenges to international cooperation. The mammoth job of consolidating peace and reconciliation while encouraging reconstruction and development would require a sustained commitment by the international community and the development of comprehensive approaches to ensure the sustainability of return. Such a commitment was especially needed in Africa, where many programmes were failing to meet essential needs for lack of funding.

Bridging the gap between humanitarian assistance and longer term development was essential, not only to achieve adequate reintegration of returnees but also to eliminate the causes of further displacement. In Kosovo, a recently-concluded survey of returnees demonstrated that sustainability of return would depend on the rapid implementation of basic reconstruction activities. In other situations, however, the relief to development transition could not await the arrival of peace. Planning had to begin during the conflict, so as to reduce the lead time before mainstream development institutions could start work. An initiative taken recently by the High Commissioner, in close coordination with the World Bank and the United Nations, had contributed significantly to UNHCR's thinking and action to narrow the institutional and financial gaps in such situations.

The challenges he had outlined were exacerbated by uneven levels of funding to Consolidated Appeals (CAPs). Some countries had been critically underfunded, crippling urgent relief programmes, and some large voluntary repatriation programmes had had to be cut down, leaving refugees stranded abroad. Even more significantly, UNHCR protection, solutions and coordination activities had all suffered from underfunding. Current projections indicated a shortfall at the end of 1999 of up to US\$ 275 million, as against a total planned expenditure of US\$ 1.2 billion. Some programmes had already had to slow down and others had been requested to review their priorities in view of the limited resources.

Turning to major operational developments, he said he would begin with Africa, where UNHCR continued to mobilize international attention and support for the plight of over 6.5 million refugees and displaced persons. The High Commissioner had travelled extensively to Africa over the past year, most recently to attend the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Summit in Algiers where she had appealed to African leaders to renew their commitment to aid refugees and displaced persons on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

The signing of the ceasefire agreement in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had raised hopes for lasting peace there and in the region as a whole. Diplomatic efforts must continue, however, to encourage the leaders of rebel movements to sign the agreement as being the only way to bring about national reconciliation.

Fighting in the east of the country had unfortunately continued, forcing over 40,000 new refugees to cross into the United Republic of Tanzania. Fighting in the north in recent days had triggered an influx of some 18,000 persons into the Central African Republic, including some 6,000 former soldiers, a matter of great concern. UNHCR had emphasized that its assistance would be primarily devoted to civilians, with special attention to women and children. It hoped that the two Governments concerned would work out modalities for the return of the disarmed soldiers to the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

The internal war in the Republic of the Congo had triggered fresh refugee flows. Over 25,000 Congolese refugees had crossed into the Democratic Republic of the Congo and, a further 25,000 refugees had sought refuge in northern Zambia, obliging UNHCR to launch an emergency programme at a cost of US\$ 2.4 million. Gabon, too, was witnessing an influx refugees from the fighting in the Republic of the Congo. Some 20,000 refugees were estimated to have crossed into Gabon, where a UNHCR emergency team had been deployed and was working with the authorities to find suitable sites for shelter.

In Burundi, the slow progress of the peace process had dampened hopes that large-scale repatriation could soon begin. Returns from the camps in Tanzania, had virtually ceased. Faced with growing concern by the Government of Burundi about military activities in the border region, UNHCR was continuing to support the strengthening of the local Tanzanian police and was working with the authorities to ensure the civilian nature of the camps.

The High Commissioner was pleased to note the continued successful reconciliation process in Rwanda, despite the fighting across its western border. UNHCR hoped to consolidate its reintegration programme before 2000. Strong donor support was needed for an inter-agency joint reintegration unit's key efforts to smooth the transition from relief to development.

In West Africa, UNHCR had supported the peace talks between the Government of Sierra Leone and the Revolutionary United Front, culminating in the signing of the peace agreement, which should pave the way for the voluntary return of refugees from Sierra Leone. In its capacity as Humanitarian Coordinator, it was facilitating international aid agencies' access to rebel-held areas and reactivating repatriation planning in the various countries of asylum. UNHCR had been instrumental in the organized repatriation of thousands of Liberian refugees, which would end in December 1999, and hoped to phase out its reintegration activities in Liberia by mid-2000. Repatriation would not be sustainable, however, unless donors provided the necessary funds for longer-term reconstruction and development programmes.

The resumption of hostilities in Angola had brought the total of Angolan refugees in the region to 263,000, with the newly internally displaced persons totalling 1.5 million. Lack of access had blocked the delivery of urgently needed relief to displaced persons in UNITA-held areas. In the Horn of Africa, border fighting between Eritrea and Ethiopia had left thousands homeless, and the return of Eritrean refugees living in Sudan had been prevented by political obstacles. However, the organized repatriation of Somali refugees from eastern Ethiopia to north-west Somalia had been resumed.

Before turning to the situation in North Africa, he wished to express the High Commissioner's condolences on the death of King Hassan II of Morocco, a great statesman who had been instrumental in resolving many conflicts. On the Western Sahara, UNHCR welcomed the Secretary-General's continuing efforts to resolve the political issues still hindering the implementation of the United Nations Settlement Plan, which currently aimed at the return of refugees by March 2000, so that they could vote in the July referendum. Registration was continuing in the camps near Tindouf.

Despite relative stability in Afghanistan, the High Commissioner was concerned at the lack of funding which prevented UNHCR from adequately

addressing the needs of millions of refugees in Pakistan and Iran and the reintegration of returnees, whose numbers were expected to soar by the end of 1999. The small rotating international presence, all that the current security situation allowed, was too modest to have a significant impact on the returnees' needs. UNHCR had suggested that the United Nations should launch an Afghan Women's Initiative to assist it, emulating similar initiatives elsewhere.

In Central Asia, the Tajikistan situation remained fragile, although a recent Swiss Government-UNHCR evaluation mission had found that the UNHCR repatriation programme had contributed to the peace progress. With the completion of the organized voluntary repatriation of Cambodian refugees from Thailand, efforts were concentrated on reintegration inside Cambodia, where the widespread presence of landmines and destroyed infrastructure posed major challenges.

Protection for Karen and Karenni refugees had improved with the recent UNHCR presence on the Thai-Myanmar border; the border camp population had been registered, and thousands of new arrivals housed in camps, with the Royal Thai Government's cooperation on the establishment of admission criteria and relocation of camps at risk. In order to ensure the sustainable reintegration of Muslim refugees who had returned to Northern Rakhine State in Myanmar since 1994, UNHCR was proposing the establishment of a five-year United Nations Integrated Development Plan to phase out its assistance by the end of 2000. The repatriation process had been accelerated with the return to Myanmar of the remaining refugees in Bangladesh, and talks were in progress with the Bangladeshi authorities on self-reliance activities for those unwilling or unable to return in the near future.

UNHCR was closely monitoring the escalation of violence in East Timor, which had displaced some 60,000 persons. At the Indonesian Government's request and with the agreement of the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), UNHCR would lead measures to enhance the coordination and provision of emergency protection and humanitarian assistance to displaced persons in East and West Timor and their return home.

In northern Latin America, UNHCR was concerned at the increase in forced displacement in Colombia and its wider regional implications. The Governments

of Colombia and Venezuela - where more Colombians were seeking refuge - had stressed their intention to comply with their international refugee law obligations and help UNHCR address any new influxes from Colombia.

In Kosovo, UNHCR and other agencies had been faced with one of the worst and most publicized crises of recent years and one which had raised a number of broad issues concerning the role of humanitarian agencies, donor States and host Governments. UNHCR hoped to gain valuable lessons from an independent evaluation it had commissioned of its role and performance in the crisis, which would review the international community's preparedness for such outflows and its response to them between late March and the end of June 1999. Its commitment to improve its effectiveness must be supported by the commitment of States to uphold the basic tenets of refugee law and to provide UNHCR with the political and financial support required to fulfil its mandate. He hoped it could count on the Council's continued understanding and support.

Ms. CORTEZ de SORIANO (Bolivia), Chairperson of the United Nations Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice, introducing the report on the Commission's eighth session (E/1999/30-E/CN.15/1999/12), said that the Commission had met in Vienna some months previously. Its work had been well prepared, four inter-sessional briefings having been organized for permanent missions in Vienna, preceded by meetings of the Commission's bureau, which had received draft resolutions in advance, to ensure that the Commission would be able to cope with its heavy agenda in the limited time it had at its disposal.

Having highlighted the salient elements of the various agenda items, she said that the Commission's deliberations had culminated in the recommendation for adoption of 10 draft resolutions and three draft decisions, all of which were currently before the Council.

Several suggestions had been made for further improvement of the Commission's strategic management measures, such as inter-sessional meetings for permanent missions as a forum for both information exchange and policy debate on substantive issues. She hoped the Commission's recommendations would receive the Council's full support.

Mr. AMIRKHZI (Islamic Republic of Iran), Chairman of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, said that, at its last session, the Commission had carried out its duties as an organ of the international drug control treaties, had fulfilled the mandates it had received from the General Assembly

and the Council and, as the governing body of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), had endorsed the revised programme budget and the revised biennium support budget as well as the outline for the biennium 2000-2001 of the UNDCP fund. It had also provided policy directives to UNDCP.

The Commission had recommended four draft resolutions and two draft decisions for adoption by the Council and had brought to the Council's attention nine resolutions and three decisions that it had itself adopted.

The Commission had agreed on an Action Plan for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 53/115, and had recommended that the Council should approve it and submit it for adoption by the General Assembly.

Ms. ELLIOTT (Observer for Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed their appreciation of the reports of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (E/1999/57) and the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) (A/54/156-E/1999/102), which presented a clear analysis of the root causes of the Institute's financial and staffing problems and recommended some solutions.

Since the inauguration of INSTRAW in the Dominican Republic in 1983, the Group of 77 had followed with interest its efforts to fulfil its mandate for the empowerment of women, especially in the developing countries, despite the funding constraints as a result of its dependence on voluntary contributions. The Group of 77 and China were dismayed at INSTRAW's dire financial situation and severely reduced staff which had curtailed the formulation and implementation of its programme just when the international community was preparing to assess progress towards the objectives set in the Beijing Platform for Action.

She urged donors and the international community to demonstrate the required political and developmental will to revitalize the Institute. Given the constant official reiteration of the Institute's important training and research role, the Group of 77 and China hoped that the draft resolution it had submitted to the Council would be adopted and would effectively contribute to the revitalization process.

The Council had been provided with information by the Board of Trustees on the progress made in preparing a strategic work plan, and had been updated

on the outcome of the Inter-Agency Brainstorming Workshop and the International Dialogue on Research and Training Priorities for Women in Development. A careful analysis should thus be made of the viability of the proposed measures to revitalize INSTRAW as outlined in the position paper prepared by the INSTRAW Board of Trustees (E/1999/105, annex II). The Group of 77 and China endorsed those measures which, while contemplating some institutional reforms, did not threaten the autonomy and independence so crucial to the Institute's mandate.

Mr. AL-DOURI (Observer for Iraq), said that, in view of the importance of promoting children's rights, his delegation supported the objectives set forth in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that connection, he drew attention to the recent proliferation of economic sanctions, especially against developing countries, which already faced abundant problems. Stressing the many adverse consequences of sanctions, especially to children, the most vulnerable members of society, he cited document A/51/306, which contained an appeal from Ms. Graça Machel to the Security Council for the international community to refrain from imposing comprehensive sanctions without taking account of binding humanitarian exceptions, and that the Security Council's Boycott Committee should reverse sanctions when they were found to cause children excessive suffering.

Comprehensive economic sanctions of unprecedented scale had been imposed on Iraq since August 1990, with tragic effects on all sectors of society. The mortality rate among new-born babies had increased from 28 to 92 per thousand live births and maternal mortality had increased from 17 to 18 per 1,000. In 1990 alone, more than 70,000 children under five years of age had died. Total deaths among children resulting from the imposition of sanctions between 1990 and the end of 1998 were more than 1,087,000. The children of Iraq were also suffering from psychological disturbances never previously known in the country. Perhaps the most serious threat they faced was cancer, resulting from the use of depleted uranium in the ammunition employed by the United States of America and the United Kingdom in their continuing aggression against Iraq.

It was not only the health and nutrition of children that was being impaired but also their education. Many were dropping out of school because of the cost of clothes and textbooks and because free meals could no longer be

provided. Instead, many children had to work in the informal sector to assist their parents. According to a 1997 UNICEF report, the drop-out rate from primary school for children aged between 6 and 11 was 73 per cent. Of the total number of children entitled to attend primary school, 25 per cent were not in school at all.

In short, the life of children in Iraq was hard and miserable: they could not be given the necessary care and attention. Yet, they, too, were part of the world's children and had the right to aspire to higher standards of health and education and better living conditions. It was deplorable that, on the threshold of a new century, lethal measures should continue to be imposed which had led to the deaths of 2 million Iraqis and that the United Nations should still be unable to remedy the injustice affecting the children of Iraq. The sanctions against his country must be lifted.

Mr. TAPIA (Chile) said that the reports of the Board of Trustees of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) (E/1999/57) and of the Board's President (E/1999/105), together with the JIU report (A/54/156-E/1999/102 and Add.1), gave a full picture of the Institute's situation which had become very difficult in recent years. His delegation strongly believed that INSTRAW had an important part to play in the advancement of women, a goal that had the firm backing of the United Nations. Its part needed to be clearly defined, however, so that its activities could be revitalized and its management improved by the provision of the necessary human and financial resources.

The draft resolution on the revitalization of INSTRAW currently before the Council pointed in the right direction by setting realistic goals for INSTRAW and the United Nations Secretariat and reflecting the intergovernmental commitment. His delegation, which thought that the Secretary-General should give full support to the task of revitalization by promptly appointing a Director for INSTRAW, also endorsed the measures set out in annex II to the report of the President of the Board of Trustees for revitalizing INSTRAW's training and research activities.

Mr. MALGINOV (Russian Federation) said he welcomed the adoption by the Commission on the Status of Women at its forty-third session of a draft Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (E/1999/54, para. 21). It was to be regretted,

however, that consensus on documentation had yet to be reached and that work had not yet begun on "Beijing Plus Five" texts. In order to accelerate the process and to avoid the mistakes of "Copenhagen Plus Five", concerted efforts should be made to ensure that regional groups exchanged views prior to the forty-fourth session.

His delegation endorsed the draft resolutions and draft decisions recommended by the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in its report E/1999/30-E/CN.15/1999/12. Work on the preliminary draft of the Vienna Declaration on Crime and Justice deserved to continue. At the United Nations Congress on the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders, the drafting of practical recommendations should be accorded the highest priority.

His Government also endorsed the decisions taken by the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-second session (E/1999/28-E/CN.7/1999/15) and fully supported the policy directives given to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), enhanced efforts in the field of precursor control, the control of synthetic drugs and efforts to combat money-laundering. In view of the comprehensive nature of its activities, UNDCP should be allocated a larger share of the regular budget. The UNDCP attempts to establish a system for identifying regions of illicit cultivation were most welcome; the Russian Federation was willing to provide assistance in that regard with respect to remote sensing. Lastly, the report of the International Narcotics Control Board (E/1999/67-E/INCB/1998/1) provided a clear picture of the drug situation throughout the world.

Mr. HERNANDEZ-BASAVE (Mexico) said, with respect to crime prevention and criminal justice, that he wished to draw attention to draft resolution IV recommended to the Council and General Assembly in the report of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on its eighth session (E/1999/30-E/CN.15/1999/12). The title of the draft resolution was "Action against corruption" but it was focused on the bribery of public officials. While it was, of course, appropriate that any draft convention against transnational organized crime should incorporate measures of that kind, it was noteworthy that the Inter-American Convention against corruption, adopted by the Organization of American States (OAS) in 1996, went beyond simple bribery. He quoted several of the provisions of that Convention, noting that it would also apply by mutual agreement between two or more States with regard to any

other act of corruption not specifically covered by it. The scope of the Convention was significant in that it covered both offences committed by public officials and those committed by persons in civil society or connected with companies. That was important, given the increasing privatization of public services. Under the Convention, offences included conflicts of interest such as the financing of political campaigns.

Paragraph 4 (c) of the draft resolution invited Member States to explore the possibilities of developing a global system for peer review of the adequacy of practices aimed at combating corruption. He had doubts regarding the practicality of such a mechanism. No international instrument containing a provision of that kind had been enacted so far. It should also be noted that, at its thirty-ninth session, the Committee on Programme and Coordination (CPC), had found, when reviewing programme budgets for the biennium 2000-2001, that section 14 on crime prevention and criminal justice referred to the preparation of two additional protocols on corruption and computer crime as well as other instruments such as a protocol on money laundering. There was no General Assembly mandate for the development of any of those protocols and, unless and until such a mandate was created, they could not be included in any programme budget proposal. His delegation had supported the Committee's decision to delete all references to those instruments from the proposed budget.

Turning to the subject of narcotic drugs, he said that his delegation welcomed the results of the forty-second session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs, the first held since the special session of the General Assembly, as being of fundamental importance to the follow-up to the agreements arrived at on that occasion. A comprehensive and balanced approach to the problem of drugs and related crime demanded cooperation and joint action from the international community. The Commission had risen to the challenge with the drafting of the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and the adoption of measures for the prompt preparation of guidelines to help Governments present biennial reports on the implementation of the agreements reached at the special session.

With respect to the annual report of the International Narcotics Control Board (E/1999/67-E/INCB/1998/1), his delegation had noted the Board's efforts

to extend the scope of the report to all areas linked to the anti-drug campaign. The report contained clear and praiseworthy references to the work of his Government at the regional and national level but there were a number of omissions. Information provided by the Government was not presented in the report, but information had been used from sources that had not been checked with the Government.

His delegation had joined in the preparation of the guidelines referred to and would work hard to see that, in the medium term, an overall procedure was established for the multilateral follow-up of the efforts undertaken by States with respect to drugs. The spirit of cooperation, respect and interest in the search for solutions to the problem of drugs and related offences which had made the special session of the General Assembly such a success would undoubtedly continue to inspire the work of the Commission.

Mrs. SOSA-MARQUEZ (Mexico) said that her Government fully supported the preparatory process for the special session of the General Assembly "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century". It was in that spirit that her delegation had participated in the forty-third session of the Commission on the Status of Women.

In reviewing and evaluating the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action at the national level, her Government had made an assessment of the advances and obstacles and of the measures necessary to attain the Platform's objectives. On 14 June 1999, machinery had been established for wide participation by government departments, NGOs, the legislature and academia.

To implement the Platform, her delegation wished to stress once again the primary importance of the fight against poverty. To advance the position of women in poverty, it was essential to give them access to basic and higher education. It was especially necessary to remove the stereotypes which kept women out of scientific and technological education and to promote their education and training in those fields.

International cooperation was essential for the establishment of large-scale programmes and projects aimed at achieving the objectives of the Platform for Action, including the strengthening of institutional capacities for the systematic incorporation of the gender-perspective into public policy. Her delegation thus considered that the availability of resources to support

and finance the implementation of the measures recommended in the Platform for Action, including those from the international community, should be particularly emphasized in the assessment made at the special session.

The twentieth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women was an important milestone in the work of the United Nations. On the occasion of that anniversary, her Government intended to introduce a series of measures to disseminate the Convention's provisions among all sectors of society, and legislators in particular, with a view to promoting the review of the legislation of the States of the Federation to ensure that their provisions were fully compatible with the Convention.

Her delegation had played an active part in the negotiations leading to the approval of a draft optional protocol to the Convention and was looking forward to its adoption by the General Assembly.

Mexico was one of the countries that had initiated and supported the establishment of INSTRAW after the World Conference in Mexico City in 1975. Subsequently, when the Council had studied in 1993 the possible merger of INSTRAW and the United Nations Fund for the Development of Women (UNIFEM), her delegation had argued that the two institutions had different mandates and should continue to operate separately. The tasks entrusted to INSTRAW were most important and ways should be sought to ensure that it could continue to operate.

Mrs. VELASQUEZ (El Salvador) said that her delegation attached special importance to the theme of the advancement of women. The 1990s had witnessed the organization by the United Nations of several global conferences to examine world development problems. Of those, the Fourth World Conference on Women had had a special impact on the various international actors, including States, insofar as gender-related awareness and its repercussions on the analysis of development were concerned. The Beijing Platform for Action emphasized that Governments and other social agents should promote an active and visible policy of integrating a gender perspective into all policies and programmes, so that before any decisions were taken their possible effects on both women and men would be analysed. That decision had proved fundamental to the advancement of women in many parts of the world, particularly in economic matters, where gender was the basis for the division of labour.

In the case of her own country, one of the most pressing challenges was to bring about conditions that facilitated equal development opportunities for women while, at the same time, strengthening the family. The incorporation of a gender perspective in the country's development plans had marked an important step forward in the integration of women into all aspects of national life.

Her Government was particularly concerned that, in the preparations for Beijing Plus Five, delegations should bear in mind the importance of not renegotiating the commitments made at Beijing. All the areas of concern set out in the Platform for Action should, however, be examined and not just the cross-cutting themes indicated by the Secretary-General in his report.

Her delegation had studied the reports relating to INSTRAW with particular care. The revitalization of INSTRAW was necessary because it was a fundamental institution for promoting the advancement of women. Its closure would send the message that there was a lack of commitment on the part of the international community, to implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Her delegation thus supported the draft resolution on the topic submitted by the Group of 77 and China which, she hoped, would be adopted by consensus and thus renew the commitment of the international community to improving the status of women throughout the world.

Mr. ANOSHKO (Belarus) said that Belarus, as a result of its geographical location, was having to deal with unprecedented flows of illicit migrants which had a negative impact on the country's socio-economic situation and caused an increase in crime, drug trafficking and black labour. The Government had responded with a host of new legislative measures, drafted in accordance with the relevant international standards. Since 1998, when the procedure had first been introduced, refugee status had been granted to 214 nationals of Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Georgia and Tajikistan. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) Conference had assisted in the formulation of immigration policy in CIS countries. Belarus was grateful to UNHCR for its comprehensive assistance on refugee issues and set great store by further cooperation.

With regard to the related issue of transnational organized crime, the leaders of the CIS countries were in the process of implementing an

intergovernmental crime prevention programme for the period up to the year 2000. Belarus was also in the process of drafting new domestic legislation, inter alia to provide for the personal safety of the members of the judiciary and their families, to establish personal security measures - such as the provision of bodyguards - and to guarantee the rights of victims, including to compensation. Belarus further welcomed the drafting of a United Nations convention against transnational organized crime.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.