



**SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING**

**Chairman:** Mr. NAVAJAS-MOGRO (Bolivia)

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

**AGENDA ITEM 86: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)**  
(A/43/3, 399, 402, 480, 587, 692, 709, 713, 723, 731 and 755; A/43/457-E/1988/102 and A/43/463-E/1988/106)

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR (A/43/375-E/1988/73 and Corr.1)
- (b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (A/43/449 and Add.1-2, A/43/483, 514, 703 and 727)

1. Mr. FARAH (Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions, Regional Co-operation, Decolonisation and Trusteeship), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on Emergency assistance to the Sudan (A/43/755), said that the tragic situation prevailing in the Sudan was a complex emergency requiring special handling within the United Nations system. In response to a request made to the Secretary-General by the Prime Minister of the Sudan he had led a mission to that country in July 1988 in order to set up the necessary mechanisms for mobilizing the emergency assistance. Unfortunately, those plans had had to be postponed due to the devastating floods of August and September, but by the middle of September it had become possible for the Director of the Office for Emergencies in Africa to lead a United Nations mission to the Sudan to assess the country's needs. The report was based on the findings of that mission.

2. The mission, which had travelled to many provinces in the Sudan, estimated that at least two and a quarter million people were in need of emergency assistance, and that of that number only one and a half million were accessible to international assistance. It was estimated that by the end of 1989 their number would have risen to 2 million.

3. The recommendations contained in the report were based on the principle that emergency assistance should be delivered through clearly defined programmes or projects. That principle had been accepted by the Government of the Sudan and had led to 21 undertakings being worked out; they were grouped into 10 categories of assistance and amounted to approximately \$US 70 million. A more comprehensive document giving a detailed breakdown of the emergency requirements would shortly be made available so that Governments and organizations could determine how best they could contribute. It was the hope of the Secretary-General that in view of the urgency of the situation the response to the appeal launched by the Government of the Sudan, which he fully supported, would be swift and generous.

4. Mr. KRAMER (Canada) drew attention to the increasingly important and confident engagement of the United Nations in responding to appeals for special economic and disaster relief assistance. Through its assistance in formulating the Central American economic plan, the priority attached to assisting the front-line States of southern Africa and the humanitarian programme in Afghanistan, the Organization had shown a welcome willingness to display initiative and innovation in mobilizing humanitarian and development efforts which supported broader political processes

(Mr. Kramer, Canada)

and objectives. He particularly acknowledged the work of the African Emergency Task Force and of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO). The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of General Assembly decision 42/433 (A/43/731) indicated a number of improvements that had been or were being made to the emergency response capacity of the United Nations system.

5. The Advisory Management Service was studying the work programme and organization of UNDRO in the light of the greater focus on natural disasters, and a joint UNDRO/UNDP task force had been established to work out improved modalities for co-operation. The latter's most important suggestions concerned, *inter alia*, improved disaster training for UNDP field staff, the preparation of a disaster management manual, the establishment of disaster response teams in countries prone to natural disasters, the desirability of consolidating needs assessments, better exploitation of communications facilities and clarification of the role of the UNDP resident representative and the United Nations resident co-ordinator. The need to integrate disaster preparedness and mitigation into national development plans, with UNDP assistance where requested, should also be widely recognized. It was to be hoped that progress would be made in implementing the conclusions of the joint task force.

6. Canada strongly supported concerted international action to develop and disseminate information aimed at reducing the incidence, and mitigating the effects, of natural disasters, and welcomed the proposed International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

7. His delegation had hoped to learn more from the report of the Secretary-General about what the United Nations could contribute with respect to the goals of the proposed International Decade and how it could become an international centre for the exchange of information, storage of documents and co-ordination of international efforts. Preparations for the International Decade were still at an early stage and the exact role of the United Nations had yet to be worked out, but it was important to recognize that much of the relevant knowledge and expertise was decentralized in various institutions, organizations, associations, Governments and United Nations bodies. Accordingly, tapping and effectively disseminating that knowledge and expertise, rather than centralizing or replicating it, was the key to making substantive progress and was particularly relevant with respect to the catalytic and facilitative role envisaged for the United Nations.

8. Mr. BEN LAMINE (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, reaffirmed the Group's support for and commitment to the efforts undertaken in the field of disaster relief assistance, and expressed appreciation for the Secretary-General's efforts and for his report (A/43/375).

9. The Group welcomed UNDRO's increased capacity to respond, thanks to a sizeable financial contribution. The Government of Italy had enabled UNDRO to airlift help to countries which had suffered serious natural disasters. The Group also welcomed

(Mr. Ben Lamine, Tunisia)

the fact that UNDR0 had been able to increase its information capacity through effective use of its communications network, and noted that that had been of great benefit during the recent disasters in Bangladesh, Jamaica and the Sudan, and the unprecedented locust and grasshopper infestation in Africa, and especially North Africa.

10. The Group of 77 wished to underline the importance of strengthening co-operation in the field between UNDR0 and UNDP, and noted that effective assistance had been given to the Governments concerned through assistance programmes. The Group of 77 also welcomed the role of UNDR0 in preparedness for and mitigation of the effects of natural disasters.

11. Mr. VIESTENZ (German Democratic Republic) welcomed the most recent initiatives of the Secretary-General with respect to urgent relief measures for Mozambique, Angola and Afghanistan, and the decision of the General Assembly to mobilize economic support for Central America. He also expressed his appreciation of the wide-ranging activities undertaken by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, and noted that UNDR0's mandate was wide enough to allow it to respond appropriately. Future efforts should concentrate on relief operations in cases of sudden natural disasters and also on disaster prevention. The growing trend towards preventive action was to be welcomed.

12. His delegation was convinced that further implementation of the conclusions and recommendations contained in documents A/43/375 and A/42/657 would help to make more effective use of UNDR0 and to co-ordinate better the various relevant activities of the United Nations system. His delegation had also followed with interest what had been done to implement General Assembly resolution 42/169 on the designation of the 1990s as an International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

13. His delegation expressed its deep sympathy for Bangladesh and the Sudan, as well as the peoples of Jamaica, Costa Rica, Nicaragua and the Philippines who had suffered as a result of hurricanes and cyclones. In addition to material assistance, the Nicaraguan people needed more than ever before a healthy political environment in which they could determine their own destiny without interference from outside.

14. Countries afflicted by natural disasters and the international community as a whole faced the long-term, complex task of creating the national and international conditions that would enable them to take preventive action as well as to be in a better position to cope with natural disasters. In that endeavour the United Nations had an important role to play.

15. The German Democratic Republic would continue its co-operation with the front-line States of southern Africa in the implementation of their national plans and programmes. The policy of aggression and destabilization pursued by the Republic of South Africa was one of the root causes of the critical economic and social situation of the front-line States, and efforts to restore the continent of Africa to economic health must be coupled with resolute action to eliminate apartheid.

16. Mr. YUAN Shaofu (China) said that China was one of a number of countries that had been afflicted by natural disasters during 1988, with floods and drought in four provinces rendering more than a million people homeless and affecting more than 25 million people altogether. It therefore had profound sympathy for countries and peoples suffering the effects of natural disasters. Even the United States, one of the most economically developed countries in the world, had suffered serious natural disasters, thereby demonstrating that even with the best economic and technological capabilities such disasters could not be prevented.

17. Efforts to provide emergency disaster relief and to prevent subsequent disasters were not only necessary but should be strengthened and it was with disquiet that his delegation had noted that the resources that could be mobilized within the United Nations system were currently extremely limited. China hoped that the developed countries, and all those countries and international organizations which had the capacity to do so, would show more concern and increase their support for the work of special economic and disaster relief assistance.

18. China hoped that the international community and the United Nations system would make strenuous efforts to improve and update the existing machinery and facilities for natural disaster reduction, and that the various bodies concerned would be able to exchange information sufficiently rapidly that every country would be able to benefit from the experience of others. His delegation would support every effort made by the Secretary-General in that regard.

19. Mr. KNUDSEN (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that they had provided additional relief assistance to most of the disaster-stricken countries on which the General Assembly had adopted resolutions. The root causes of natural disasters must be attacked both at the national and international levels. At the national level, trained personnel would be required for prevention and preparedness activities in the event of large-scale natural disasters. National and local authorities must be assisted in their efforts to preserve natural resources and restore affected areas. The United Nations system provided the best framework for co-operation and co-ordination at the international level. The Nordic countries appreciated the work of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) in informing the international community of the scope of disasters, a pre-condition for the co-ordination of relief efforts. UNDRO could also play a useful co-ordinating role in disaster mitigation by overseeing prevention and preparedness activities and ensuring that efforts were not duplicated.

20. Although they generally did not favour the adoption of separate resolutions on economic assistance, the Nordic countries had co-sponsored General Assembly resolutions regarding three situations of man-made disaster. Those resolutions concerned special assistance to front-line States and other bordering States, the special plan of economic co-operation for Central America and the Economic and Social Council resolution on United Nations assistance programmes relating to Afghanistan.

(Mr. Knudsen, Norway)

21. Conflict in the region of southern Africa had three dimensions: the question of Namibia, acts of destabilization against South Africa's neighbouring States and the system of apartheid in South Africa itself. In some of the neighbouring States, such as Mozambique, natural calamities were aggravating the disruption of development brought on by externally supported destabilization. For many years, the Nordic countries had granted considerable humanitarian and disaster relief assistance to the countries in southern Africa. Under the Nordic Programme of Action against Apartheid, they directed more than two thirds of their bilateral aid to Africa to the front-line States, of which more than 10 per cent was earmarked for the Programme of Action of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). Another 10 per cent was devoted to humanitarian aid for refugees - the victims of South Africa's policy of apartheid, its illegal occupation of Namibia and its direct and indirect acts of aggression and destabilization. The International Conference on the Plight of Refugees, Returnees and Displaced Persons in Southern Africa (SARRED), held in Oslo in August 1988, had highlighted the plight of nearly six million refugees, returnees and displaced persons in the region. Their situation confirmed the need for economic sanctions against South Africa, and humanitarian and development assistance to the region - policies which the Nordic countries were carrying out.

22. The problems facing Central America had recently been compounded by natural disasters and unfavourable economic developments related to external debt and international trade. Political developments in the region were closely related to economic and social problems. The Nordic countries had welcomed the United Nations plan for special economic assistance to Central America, introduced at the resumed session of the forty-second General Assembly. At that session, they had hailed the plan as an important framework for concerted action by the international community. In particular, they had welcomed the plan's emphasis on the need to foster co-operation among the countries of Central America, its basis in extensive dialogue with the countries of the region and its appropriate reflection of their development priorities. The Nordic countries were prepared to use the United Nations plan as a frame of reference and encouraged other donor countries to do so. They were extremely pleased that the Central American countries had agreed on a follow-up mechanism for co-ordination with the international community. They hoped the mechanism would provide for informal dialogue on co-operation and effective articulation of the genuine interests of the Central American countries. Most importantly, it should be managed by the region's own institutions.

23. Earlier in the year, the Nordic ministers for development and co-operation had agreed to step up co-operation with Central America in order to support the ongoing peace process there. High priority would be assigned to support for the region's own co-operation initiatives in areas which furthered democracy, such as environment, health, women, etc.

24. The political and humanitarian challenges of providing multi-sectoral relief to Afghanistan were tremendous. The Nordic countries strongly supported the efforts of the Co-ordinator of the United Nations humanitarian and economic assistance programmes relating to Afghanistan. It was vital to continue providing assistance to refugees outside Afghanistan until they could be repatriated.

(Mr. Knudsen, Norway)

Vulnerable groups, such as women and children, should be accorded particular attention in relief and rehabilitation programmes. A particularly vulnerable group were the 700,000 widows and orphans. The needs of the disabled also deserved special attention. Long-term vocational training was especially important to their economic and social reintegration in society. The programme to train Afghans in how to defuse mines was particularly commendable, as mine clearance would be a prerequisite for repatriation and for the implementation of rehabilitation programmes. The Co-ordinator was also to be commended for establishing close contacts with international and national non-governmental organizations and for involving Afghan leaders from the outset in defining ways of implementing the international aid programme. As they had demonstrated at the recent pledging conference, the Nordic countries would be doing their part to fund relief assistance for the Afghan people.

25. Mrs. SCOTT (Jamaica) said that UNDR0 had responded speedily when Hurricane Gilbert swept across her country. With communication almost totally disrupted the Jamaican Mission had been dependent on situation reports from UNDR0. Although the significant number of disasters in recent months had placed a strain on its resources, UNDR0 had managed to provide invaluable assistance to the countries affected. Indeed, according to the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/375), UNDR0 had responded to an increased number of disaster situations during the 1986-1987 biennium. It was discouraging to hear, however, that the Office had been able to accommodate only half the requests for emergency cash grants, owing to financial constraints. The recent spate of major disasters underscored the need to ensure that UNDR0 was financially sound.

26. Disaster preparedness and prevention continued to be of the utmost importance to developing countries. Developing and poorer nations were more severely affected by natural disasters and had been forced to pay more attention to national disaster mitigation measures. Jamaica's own efforts to strengthen its disaster mitigation structures had resulted in a lower number of casualties in September. With UNDR0's help, the Pan-Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project (PCDPPP) had been established. Jamaica had benefited from the Project, and welcomed the fact that it would be prolonged.

27. Increased international co-operation could reduce the loss of life, property damage and social and economic disruption caused by natural disasters. Her delegation therefore supported the idea of proclaiming the 1990s as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Concerted international action was necessary so that all countries could benefit from the information and technologies available for reducing the impact of natural disasters. The establishment of an international ad hoc group of experts on the Decade and other arrangements for attaining its goals were also welcome developments. The United Nations was undoubtedly the most appropriate forum for implementing the recommendations of the Decade. The success of the Decade must not be jeopardized by the Organization's financial situation. To that end, all Member States were urged to contribute generously. UNDRONET, the new information network for international disaster management, was but added proof that UNDR0 was central to the disaster relief efforts of the United Nations system.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)  
(A/C.2/43/L.18)

Draft resolution A/C.2/43/L.18

28. Mr. SANGA (United Republic of Tanzania), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, introduced the draft resolution on the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa, and drew attention to Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/67, which recommended that the period 1991-2000 should be declared the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa. Declaring the Decade at the current session would ensure that preparatory work could be implemented well in advance of the Decade itself. The Second Decade would afford an opportunity to build on the achievements of the First Decade and to deal with continuing inadequacies in the field of transport and communications in Africa. The African Group hoped the Committee would adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 83: EXTERNAL DEBT CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/43/L.19)

Draft decision A/C.2/43/L.19

29. Mr. ELGHOUAYEL (Tunisia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, introduced the draft decision on the establishment of an Advisory Commission on Debt and Development. The draft decision took into account the priority the General Assembly had assigned to the external debt crisis for the past several years. It also took into account the importance of strengthening actions within the United Nations system, and of the complementarity between its organizations, particularly between the United Nations itself and the Bretton Woods multilateral financial institutions. The proposed Advisory Commission was to be composed of experts in international finance, trade and development because of the link between the problems of growth and development in developing countries. The Group of 77 hoped that the Second Committee and the General Assembly would adopt the draft decision.

The meeting rose at 11.35 a.m.