



SECOND COMMITTEE
15th meeting
held on
Monday, 24 October 1983
at 10.30 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. DIETZE (German Democratic Republic)

CONTENTS

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

AGENDA ITEM 78: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

- (c) INDUSTRIALIZATION
- (e) FOOD PROBLEMS
- (g) ENVIRONMENT
- (h) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS
- (i) INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS
- (l) NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY
- (n) NEW INTERNATIONAL HUMAN ORDER: MORAL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/38/SR.15
26 October 1983

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

The meeting was called to order at 11.55 a.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. MUÑOZ-LEDO (Mexico) said that representatives of States which were members of the Group of 77 considered the debate to be generally disappointing because it had frequently lost sight of the aim pursued and because some of the views expressed on basic issues represented a step backward and disregarded agreements reached by consensus. It had been agreed that the discussions should lead to a constructive dialogue and be action-oriented but nothing of the kind had occurred. On the contrary, some statements had been aimed at provoking confrontation. But the Group of 77, aware of the seriousness of the situation, had decided not to respond, preferring to reiterate its desire for dialogue and its call to other countries and groups to demonstrate by deeds their sense of responsibility.

2. The Group of 77 welcomed the statements made in favour of international development co-operation and the valuable ideas and suggestions put forward which, although not fully compatible with its proposals, could lead to substantive negotiations. Growing interdependence and the ravages of the economic crisis currently affecting all peoples would make it easier to seek solutions of mutual interest were it not for the fact that dogmatism and prejudice sometimes obstructed rational understanding and the necessary practical measures.

3. A more attentive reading of the Group of 77's Ministerial Declaration, and a response in keeping with the timeliness and validity of its contents, would have been welcome and would have prevented the debate from developing into a succession of monologues. A more receptive attitude would have made it possible to establish the necessary foundation for the second stage of the Committee's work. If the developing countries' theses had been given due consideration, it would have been possible to appreciate their coherence and viability. Studies and reports by specialized agencies and other organizations were basically in agreement with the diagnosis on which the Group of 77's initiatives were founded. A careful review of the Group's document would perhaps have avoided aggressive attitudes and hasty judgements. What the Group wanted was a substantial improvement in international relations, but it knew that it could only be obtained through negotiation.

4. The statements made by members of the Group reflected the continuity of its efforts to confront the crisis resolutely and responsibly. However, the measures taken by many countries could not lead to sustained recovery or genuine progress while the imbalances in the international economy which were at the root of the crisis remained. Development plans and objectives belonged within the sphere of national sovereignty. Consideration of their effects on the world economy should be conducted in a balanced way and in no circumstance encourage tendencies to intervene in the internal affairs of other States or to violate the norms of coexistence and political pluralism on which the United Nations was based.

5. It was time for concerted action. The Group of 77 intended to contribute actively to improving its methods of work, but believed that procedures were of secondary importance. What mattered was the political will to achieve genuine understandings. The Group stood by its decision to promote immediate measures to

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(Mr. Muñoz-Ledo, Mexico)

mitigate the crisis, to encourage the reform of the international monetary and financial system and to embark on global negotiations no later than the current session of the General Assembly. To that end, the Group had suggested a flexible approach in two stages with which no one could reasonably refuse to agree.

6. The Group of 77 had scarcely begun its lengthy task and its unity was being reinforced as the essential identity of its members' interests and objectives became clearer. If what it had achieved was insufficient, its chances of making further progress would be lost if it allowed itself to be divided. It would not renounce its strategy or countenance attacks on its solidarity. It was not the Group's positions which were anachronistic but the existing economic order and the systematic rejection of dialogue and negotiation.

7. The CHAIRMAN, said that the unanimous desire of the Committee to hold a general debate after a period of several years had doubtless been influenced by the realization that, in the current international political and economic situation, every opportunity should be grasped to give fresh impetus to economic co-operation. The quality of the debate and the views and proposals submitted by the 61 delegations which had taken the floor bore witness to the correctness of the Committee's decision. While he acknowledged that the debate had brought out differences of interest and even controversies, he wished to indicate those issues on which there was virtual agreement.

8. There was broad agreement that the international economic situation had deteriorated, that the economic crisis had taken on a structural character and that global measures were urgent to remedy the situation and activate economic recovery on an international scale. That meant, above all, the consideration of concrete proposals aimed at normalizing international economic co-operation and, in particular, improving the economic situation of developing countries. One of the lessons of the debate was the great responsibility borne by the United Nations for achieving those aims, the more so since a number of its important resolutions still remained to be implemented. The problems of the current situation could not be solved by urging changes in internal economic systems. Instead, the achievements in the United Nations during the 1970s aimed at establishing a new international economic order should be utilized.

9. The launching of global negotiations was more urgent than ever. The developing countries had shown their flexibility on the issue by their proposal for an approach in two phases, and the socialist countries were in favour of launching the negotiations as soon as possible. An overwhelming majority of Western States had also expressed their willingness to participate although certain questions remained to be settled. It was therefore important to agree on the necessary measures even if individual delegations still found that difficult. It was the responsibility of the Committee to exert the greatest efforts to achieve progress through a process of discussion, negotiation and compromise.

10. Similar priority attached to the preparation of a programme of immediate measures to tackle the urgent economic problems of developing countries within the

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(The Chairman)

United Nations system itself. Such a programme was not an end in itself but an important adjunct to global negotiations which might contribute effectively in the short term to the implementation of decisions on the establishment of a new international economic order.

11. International monetary and financial relations also remained a major issue of vital importance to all States and were a specific cause of differences of opinion as to how those relations should be adjusted to meet current requirements. Proposals ranged from improving the existing system to fundamentally reforming and democratizing it. The suggestion that a world international monetary and financial conference should be held had met with a warm response and it was therefore necessary to harmonize the various proposals made and initiate preparations for such a conference. In that connection, the growing debts of the developing countries were becoming one of their most pressing problems and it was a matter of great urgency to reach decisions on how to settle the problem during the current session.

12. The Committee's debate on the normalization of international trade had been wide-ranging, due to the fact that UNCTAD (VI) had not satisfied expectations. Members of the Committee had almost unanimously agreed that, starting from the results achieved by UNCTAD, it should seek agreements which would help to settle the acute problems of international trade, in particular by putting a stop to protectionist measures, sanctions and embargoes. The current situation was reason enough for all proposals for confidence-building measures in international economic and trade relations to be considered seriously.

13. Finally, it was no accident that greater attention was being paid to United Nations operational activities, which gave the developing countries important economic support in almost every field. The current session should be used to focus those activities more effectively on stabilizing the developing countries' economies and utilizing available resources as effectively as possible to that end.

14. None of the problems mentioned would be easy to solve if the arms race continued, since there was no way of assuring sound growth and rapid development if massive and increasing resources were diverted to armaments. Moreover, there were many other problems on the agenda on which the Committee ought to make progress. In the current phase of its work, the Committee must set about preparing concrete resolutions and decisions in a businesslike and constructive atmosphere. In today's complicated times, all problems had to be solved by negotiation, but that required political will, a balanced approach and readiness for co-operation. What was needed was not general resolutions so much as action-oriented proposals which could help to solve urgent existing problems and establish a new international economic order.

AGENDA ITEM 78: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION:

(A/38/3 (Parts I and II), 57, 68, 106, 132 and Corr.1-2, 168, 186 and Corr.1, 209, 302, 303, 324, 325, 329, 425, 479, 494, 495; A/C.2/38/3);

(c) INDUSTRIALIZATION (A/38/16, 141, 516);

(e) FOOD PROBLEMS (A/38/19, 277, 280, 377; A/C.2/38/L.4);

(g) ENVIRONMENT (A/38/35, 304, 305, 383, 403, 504; A/C.2/38/L.5);

(h) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (A/38/8, 278);

(i) INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SHELTER FOR THE HOMELESS (A/38/8, 233 and Corr.1; A/C.2/38/L.9);

(l) NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY (A/38/44, 240);

(n) NEW INTERNATIONAL HUMAN ORDER: MORAL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT (A/38/360; E/1983/68 and Add.1-3; E/1983/89; A/C.2/38/L.6)

15. Mr. RAMACHANDRAN (Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements) singled out for emphasis the main points in the introductory statement already circulated to members of the Committee on the agenda sub-items on Human Settlements and the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. The statement examined the place of human settlements activities in a period of economic constraint and its specific purpose was to challenge the view that such activities were essentially non-productive in an economic sense and should therefore have a low priority in allocating available resources. It not only proved that view to be fallacious but also showed the link between human settlements activities and economic growth and proposed that increased investment in those activities could be an effective means of reviving economic growth during a recession.

16. The sixth session of the Commission on Human Settlements had approved the work programme of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and the proposed budget of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for the biennium 1984-1985. It had also discussed the theme of land for human settlements, with emphasis on ways and means of securing greater access by the poor and disadvantaged to the land required for their shelter needs. The Commission had been quite clear in identifying greater security of tenure and more effective land development and management schemes under the auspices of national governments as key prerequisites for improving shelter opportunities for the poor. The most practical steps were those which encouraged the poor themselves to invest in their own shelter needs.

17. It was impossible to overemphasize the importance which the Commission attached to the programme of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless proclaimed for 1987, which was the subject of a draft resolution it had submitted for consideration at the current session. The programme was comprehensive and aimed at an improvement in the overall quality of life for the target group, an aim

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(Mr. Ramachandran)

which had to begin with the provision of decent shelter with adequate infrastructure and services. The programme embraced many areas of more specific concern to other agencies such as WHO, UNESCO, ILO, UNICEF and UNIDO and provided an excellent framework for concerted action to use the resources of the United Nations system in a co-ordinated manner to improve the lot of the underprivileged. It would be particularly aimed at protecting poor women and children, since those more vulnerable groups were often seen to suffer most from the hardships of lack of shelter. To judge by the responses received from governmental and other sources, it should be possible to obtain the political commitment and therefore the material resources necessary to achieve the Commission's goals. Pledges already received for the programme totalled \$1.7 million, which was 40 per cent of the voluntary contributions required, and over 60 countries had already designated official National Focal Points for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, as recommended by the Commission.

18. The programme called for a massive commitment of resources. In adopting its proposed work programme and the proposed budget of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for the biennium 1984-1985, the Commission had had to lament the low level of the planned programme and the meagreness of the resources allocated in comparison to the scale of the problem. No amount of programming, good intentions and declarations of support could effect a tangible improvement in living conditions for the poor and disadvantaged the world over until Governments and other bodies committed the resources needed to do the job.

19. Mr. SZEREMETA (Poland) expressed support for United Nations activities in promoting the industrialization of developing countries and ensuring broader international co-operation in the industrialization field.

20. Present economic difficulties could be overcome only through increased international co-operation and UNIDO had a responsibility to provide a platform for the development of mutually beneficial co-operation among States, including those with different socio-economic systems.

21. He noted from the Report of the Industrial Development Board on the work of its 17th session (A/38/16) that UNIDO had broadened its technical assistance to developing countries without additional expenditure, largely by sound management, for which the Executive Director and his staff were to be congratulated. The conversion of UNIDO into a specialized agency should further enhance its effectiveness.

22. The Technological Counselling Service of UNIDO had provided valuable assistance in facilitating access by developing countries to advanced technology. Nevertheless, the training courses had been organized in such a way as to reduce the scope of the courses resulting in an under-utilization of UNIDO's capacity in that field.

23. He appreciated the functioning of the Technological Information Exchange System, under which Poland had provided developing countries with information on

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(Mr. Szeremeta, Poland)

the terms of licences it had purchased in market-economy countries. He hoped that that information would help to strengthen the developing countries' bargaining position in negotiations on licence purchases. He welcomed the computerized programme for the appraisal of investment effectiveness which the UNIDO secretariat had worked out, and hoped that it would soon be placed at the disposal of interested parties.

24. While he endorsed the idea of industrial consultations, further efforts were necessary, including possibly the reduction of the number of meetings, to make such consultations a practical means of exchanging experience between industry representatives.

25. He welcomed the expansion of the Senior Industrial Development Field Adviser (SIDFA) system, but noted with regret that vacancies under that scheme were filled only by UNIDO secretariat staff, a policy which failed to take into account the interests of those States which applied the principle of rotation to their UNIDO employees.

26. He felt that UNIDO's capacity in the field of industrial co-operation in developing countries was not being fully utilized. Poland had contributed to that activity and was ready to provide more co-operation in future.

27. Poland's long-standing co-operation with UNIDO was a manifestation of its general policy towards the developing countries. Through UNIDO, Poland made available both experience and funds for development and despite its economic difficulties, it had doubled its voluntary financial contribution in 1982 and was trying to increase it even further. Under that programme, Poland had organized a number of training programmes in Poland itself and hoped to add a course on industrial planning in the 1984 programme. A UNIDO Bureau for Economic Co-operation and Investment in the Developing Countries had recently been established in Warsaw to facilitate all forms of industrial co-operation with partners in developing countries. His Government intended fully to maintain its co-operation with UNIDO after it became a specialized agency.

28. Mrs. MBOYA (Kenya) expressed appreciation to the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements for his review of the Centre's activities during the previous year.

29. The sixth session of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements had concentrated on a number of special themes, one of which was the question of land for human settlements. The Commission had urged all Governments to ensure that sufficient land was made available to enable the poor and disadvantaged in developing countries to build and improve their own shelter and neighbourhood. Noting that over the past 30 years most of the land used by the poor for shelter had been taken by unauthorized means, her delegation had supported a resolution urging all Governments to expand land development programmes for the benefit of the disadvantaged. She agreed with the Commission's conclusion that the focus of Government efforts must shift from the provision of shelter structures to the

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(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

provision of land in places where low-income and disadvantaged groups could gradually build up their own neighbourhoods.

30. Human settlements activities had been recognized as part of the socio-economic development process in the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade (General Assembly resolution 35/56, annex, paras. 159 and 160), and measures to promote the social and economic development of nations should be addressed equally to the promotion and improvement of human settlements and the environment. Her delegation had consistently stressed the need for Governments to include human settlements and the environment among the priorities in national development plans. She fully supported the arguments advanced by the Executive Director of Habitat in favour of increased Government investment in human settlements.

31. She was gratified to note from the Executive Director's statement that arrangements for implementing the programme for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, established by General Assembly resolution 37/221, were proceeding smoothly. She had noted the Secretary-General's report to the thirty-seventh session on the subject (A/37/527 and Add.1), agreed with the guidelines and objectives set out therein, and endorsed the recommendations for the programme of activities for the Year. To attain those objectives, and particularly to improve the shelter and neighbourhoods of all the poor and disadvantaged by the year 2000, Governments would have to devise specific guidelines and measures including demonstration projects and training programmes, appropriate legislation, and the development of human resources, information programmes, technical co-operation and the generation of the financial and other resources necessary for the implementation of all the activities of the Year. She hoped that resolution 6/1 of the Commission on Human Settlements (A/C.2/38/L.9) would be unanimously approved by the Committee.

32. The great importance which the developing countries attached to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless had been demonstrated at the Seventh Conference of Heads of State or Government of Non-Aligned Countries and the Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity. Indeed, most contributions made so far to the Year, and to the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation had come from developing countries. She urged developed countries to make substantial contributions to the Foundation, particularly in view of the inadequate resources available to the human settlements programme from the regular United Nations budget and from voluntary contributions. Kenya had regularly contributed to the Foundation; its contribution for the coming year would be announced at the pledging conference in October; meanwhile, she pledged a sum of \$100,000 for the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, payable in the 1986-87 financial year.

33. An assessment was being made of the situation of the poor and disadvantaged in Kenya, including a survey of housing needs up to the year 2000, as well as the housing policy and needs of the private sector. The by-laws on building and housing were being reviewed, and management and administrative capacities improved

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(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

accordingly. There were also a number of shelter projects being developed in the country, but they could not be completed without external financial assistance.

34. It was important that nations should also recognize the clear relationship between development and the environment and take urgent steps to improve the environment and systematically deal with those problems which had been identified at the Stockholm Conference of 1972. Protection of the global environment depended on concerted measures of national and international co-operation. She had noted the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on the work of its eleventh session (A/38/25) and the important decisions taken by the Council. All nations acknowledged the devastating effects of environmental hazards on human life, natural resources and the economy; the destructive effects of those hazards had intensified the search for lasting solutions to environmental problems. In a spirit of co-operation and understanding agreements had been reached in many countries on ways to overcome impediments to the improvement of the environment. She welcomed that positive trend. Environmental problems should be dealt with by activating mechanisms for consultation, implementing national and international decisions, increasing financial resources and strengthening the capacity of the United Nations to deal with environmental disasters. She hoped that appropriate action on those problems would be taken by the Assembly at its current session.

35. International co-operation on human settlements and on the environment had high priority in Kenya's national development plans despite the strain on the country's limited resources.

36. Her delegation welcomed the recommendations for approval of the work programmes and programme budgets of the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements and United Nations Environment Programme for the biennium 1984-1985, and hoped for positive action on those proposals. Many developing countries had expressed disappointment that the resources of the Habitat Centre were not commensurate with the complexity and scale of the problems and she hoped that adequate resources would become available following the forthcoming Pledging Conference for development activities.

37. She noted that despite the request in General Assembly resolution 35/77 C that the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements be allowed to participate in all aspects of the work of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, the necessary arrangements to that end had not been made. She believed that the General Assembly decision, repeated in resolution 37/223 C, should be implemented without delay.

38. Programmes of information must be elaborated on a larger scale for the education of policy-makers and people in general regarding human settlements and environmental issues. She welcomed the consultations on that matter currently being pursued between UNEP and UNCHS.

39. The Government and people of Kenya would continue to attach great importance to environment and human settlements issues in their national development plans,

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(Mrs. Mboya, Kenya)

and to work closely with UNEP and Habitat to realize the objectives of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

40. Mr. BORG (Malta) said that his comments were intended to supplement the statement by the Chairman of the Group of 77 whose views he endorsed. As a small island country, Malta was heavily dependent on its industrial output as a means of earning foreign exchange. The main objective of Malta's industrial policy was to broaden the industrial base by shifting to processes having a higher content of skilled labour and a more advanced technological input. To implement that policy a steady flow of direct foreign investments was essential. At the recent meeting of the UNIDO Industrial Development Board appeals had been made for a sustained programme to reactivate the world economy and accelerate the development of the developing countries. Industrial restructuring was essential to such a programme. His delegation therefore welcomed the efforts of international organizations, particularly, UNIDO, to provide assistance in that field. It was in favour of considering new mechanisms to finance the industrialization of the developing world and joined others in appealing for increased financial and technical assistance to promote their countries' economic recovery.

41. Turning to the question of food problems, he said that, in planning food aid policies and programmes, international bodies and agencies should take into consideration the situation of countries like Malta, which was, and undoubtedly would remain, a food-deficit country. They should not only safeguard island developing economies against adverse market trends but also create opportunities for co-operation with those economies in such sectors as marketing, processing, storage and distribution of the commodities of other countries. His Government had offered storage facilities to FAO for the establishment of a regional food storage centre as part of the world food security programme. His delegation welcomed the recent establishment of an action committee for regional food security and hoped that that committee would consider his Government's offer. He also joined with others in appealing for negotiation of a new international wheat agreement as a means of establishing greater order in the international cereals market.

42. His Government had embarked on a vast programme to clean up the environment in and around Malta. In that connection, a regional centre for the Mediterranean had been set up in Malta under the auspices of the International Maritime Organization. One of its functions was to monitor oil spills.

43. While it had succeeded in keeping its shores clean of oil pollution, Malta had been unable to clear its soil and waters of unexploded war devices and those devices continued to pose a hazard to life and property. His Government had appealed repeatedly to the United Kingdom Government to remove bombs and wrecks from Malta's harbours and from Filfla, one of the five Maltese islands which had been used in bombing practices by the British Royal Navy and Royal Air Force, but to no avail. The United Kingdom had adopted the position that it had no legal obligation to clear Maltese waters of unexploded devices and had ignored all requests for assistance in removing them. Since the report of the Secretary-General on the problem of remnants of war (A/38/383) had only just been distributed, he was unable to comment on it but reserved the right to revert to the item at a later stage.

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(Mr. Borg, Malta)

44. One of Malta's biggest disadvantages was its complete dependence upon imported fuel supplies. The Government was encouraging experimental work with solar, wind and other sources of energy and some promising results had been achieved with the help of a number of Governments. However, more financial and technical assistance was required in order to move from the experimental to the implementation stage. He noted with satisfaction the consensus reached on areas for priority action by the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy and the emphasis placed on the urgent need for sustained mobilization of additional and adequate financial resources for the effective implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action (para. 75 of the report). Energy programmes adopted by developing countries should be action-oriented and directed primarily at enhancing the potential of such countries. In that connection he appealed to the Economic Commission for Europe to focus more attention on countries like Malta.

45. His failure to comment on the other issues before the Committee should in no way be interpreted as lack of interest in those issues on the part of his Government. He had simply tried to comment on those issues with which Malta was directly involved.

46. Mr. KRIS (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) said that many of the issues relating to development and international economic co-operation which made up agenda item 78 had been discussed by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance at its thirty-seventh conference in October 1983. The Heads of CMEA member States present at that conference had drawn attention to the economic and social consequences for all mankind of increasing military expenditure, which diverted more and more resources to non-productive purposes to the detriment of the standard of living of many countries throughout the world. The burden of the arms race put new obstacles in the way of solving those countries' problems and led to increasing inflation and unemployment. The quickening tempo of the arms race limited the possibilities of providing technical assistance for the developing countries in which three quarters of mankind lived. Increased economic tension was having a negative effect on the efforts to establish a new international economic order. The Heads of Government of the CMEA countries had said that they were ready to co-operate with all States in Europe and the world and with all peace-loving countries to avoid any further escalation of the arms race.

47. One of the particular characteristics of the environment was its global nature, so that successful solutions to environmental problems were possible only through the joint efforts of all countries based on co-operation and the international division of labour. The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance endeavoured to solve those problems on a regional basis within the framework of a general programme of co-operation among its members for environmental protection and the rational use of natural resources, applying an integrated approach with due regard for conservation. The programme included all important aspects of multisectoral environmental co-operation in such areas as the protection of the atmosphere and water resources from pollution, the preservation of the ecosystem and the countryside and the use of industrial, agricultural and general waste products, the development of low-waste technology, the protection and rational use

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(Mr. Kris, CMEA)

of natural resources, protection against radiation, a global monitoring system and the preparation of statistics on the composition and changing nature of the environment. Some 650 research and project-design organizations of member States of CMEA were participating in that project.

48. Meanwhile, there had been continuously developing co-operation between CMEA and the organizations of the United Nations system including UNEP, UNESCO, and ECE. Under its co-operation agreement with UNEP, the secretariat of CMEA was implementing projects on protected areas in the biosphere, microbiological separation of metals from ores, the integrated management of mountain ecosystems and problems of global environmental monitoring systems. There had been successful co-operation between CMEA and EEC in environmental matters, largely in connection with the solution of problems arising from atmospheric pollution over long distances, and the Declaration on low-waste and zero-waste technology adopted by the EEC high-level conference on environmental protection.

49. The position of world energy supplies had led to an intensification of the search for new sources of energy and had clearly shown the need for their immediate practical application. Processes which had been uneconomic a few years previously were becoming practical alternatives to traditional sources of energy. On that basis, the co-ordinated activities of more than 80 organizations in the nine member States of CMEA were being directed towards such projects as the development of means of converting solar energy to electricity and heat energy, the development of high-efficiency chemical sources of current, the development and establishment of thermal electric generators, the development of meteorological and information systems, and the use of geo-thermal energy, wind energy and so on. In the light of its accumulated experience, CMEA was at present organizing joint efforts by its member States for the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy.

50. Those measures included the planning of multilateral, scientific and technical co-operation, the determination of priorities and the organization of co-operation to solve fuel and energy problems, training and increasing the qualifications of scientific and technical personnel in the energy field, the identification of the economic characteristics of alternative electrical power sources, the rational use of hydro-electric resources, multilateral co-operation in the development of devices for the conversion of solar energy into electrical and heat energy and its use in various applications.

51. The secretariat of CMEA had prepared reports on new and renewable sources of energy in connection with measures undertaken by the European Economic Commission and the International Atomic Energy Agency.

52. Thus, the CMEA, given the readiness of its member States to follow a course of close international co-operation, was making a positive contribution to the implementation of the Nairobi programme.

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(Mr. Kris, CMEA)

53. The final document of the Madrid Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe had confirmed a desire to continue and intensify co-operation in the economic, scientific and technical fields. For its part, the CMEA intended to develop co-operation with all interested parties in new and renewable sources of energy, and was ready to make its contribution to realizing the aims of the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference for the solution of the problems confronting mankind.

54. Mr. SCHLINGEMANN (Netherlands) said that his delegation attached great importance to increased international co-operation in environmental matters. It therefore welcomed the system-wide medium-term environment programme and hoped that co-operating agencies and organizations would contribute to the implementation of that programme in 1984 and 1985.

55. He welcomed the progress made in strengthening UNEP's role of assisting developing countries to tackle their most serious environmental problems and noted that UNEP had started to act as a clearing-house by channelling specific requests for assistance to interested donors. He urged the Executive Director to further improve the organizational structure and management of the clearing-house system. Governments should assist in efforts to make the clearing-house experiment a success by providing moral and financial support.

56. Turning to the question of desertification, he said that since it seemed likely that major donors would persist in their refusal to contribute to the special account for desertification control, UNEP's role in that field should be reviewed. In future, UNEP should concentrate on policy and programme co-ordination and advice. The Consultative Group for Desertification Control should prepare the ground for discussions in the Governing Council, as it was equipped to function as a forum where donors, recipients and international organizations could discuss policies, programmes and projects. He hoped that the General Assembly would decide to change the Group's mandate. He welcomed the agreement reached by the Governing Council on the process of preparation of the Environmental Perspective to the year 2000 and beyond. His Government favoured the establishment of a Special Commission and would contribute financially to the Commission's work.

57. He noted with pleasure the steady progress being made in the implementation of the programme for the development and periodic review of environmental law. His Government would be hosting a meeting in 1984 on the development of guidelines and principles on the exchange of information relating to potentially harmful chemicals, in particular, pesticides. It was crucial that as many Governments as possible should participate in the meeting and in the other meetings on environmental law.

58. He associated himself with the sentiments expressed in resolution 6/16, paragraphs (b) and (d), adopted by the Commission on Human Settlements. The work programme of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) represented an absolute minimum. Any further reduction of activities would seriously jeopardize the credibility of the Centre as the main United Nations agency responsible for promoting human settlements as an essential element of

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(Mr. Schlingemann, Netherlands)

economic and social development. While the Centre had performed well as an executing agency for UNDP and others, its efforts to draw up and implement a programme of activities to stimulate and assist countries in promoting human settlements development and to co-ordinate the efforts of the United Nations system in that area had proved disappointing so far. The number and level of contributions from industrialized countries to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation remained depressingly low, and the Centre continued to be unable to participate in the work of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. Although the General Assembly had asked the Secretary-General several times to arrange for the Centre to participate in all aspects of the work of that Committee, consultations on the matter were still going on. His delegation therefore associated itself with the remarks made by other delegations urging the Secretary-General to implement the relevant decisions of the General Assembly without further delay.

59. His delegation welcomed the guidelines set forth by the Commission in connection with the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Activities envisaged in the context of the Year should consist of demonstration projects and other forms of assistance and emphasis should be placed on national action. Non-governmental organizations had an essential role to play in that regard.

60. The position of poor urban women required special attention. Research had shown that the percentage of households headed by women had increased dramatically and the burden of combining household duties with income-generating activities weighed especially heavily on women in urban areas where basic social services were lacking. Accordingly, he stressed the importance of the recommendations made in the report concerning women in human settlements development which had been prepared for the World Conference of the United Nations Decade for Women.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.