

48. Mr. DEWULF (Belgium) wished to point out that his delegation's approval of paragraphs 2 and 3 was without prejudice to the intention of the Belgian Government to channel its assistance to the countries of Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific, as well as to those included in the list of countries in need of emergency assistance, through EEC.

49. Mr. CZARKOWSKI (Poland) said that his delegation had approved the draft resolution since it had always upheld the cause of the least developed countries, both in UNDP and in UNCTAD. He wished to specify that the special fund for the least developed countries should be financed by voluntary contributions and that assistance provided to those countries should not prejudice the granting of assistance in other areas.

50. Mr. MWANGAGUHUNGA (Uganda) supported the statement made by the representative of the Upper Volta

and requested the World Bank to assist the least developed countries without discrimination.

51. Mrs. DE ZEA (Colombia) said that those countries which had attained a moderate level of development were concerned over the fact that they were receiving much less assistance than the least developed countries, despite the fact that their problems were the same. At the present stage of their development process, the former were in need of special assistance to keep them from relapsing into stagnation. Her delegation was not, of course, opposed to special measures being taken in favour of the least developed countries, but it hoped that other developing countries would not be forgotten in the process.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.

1621st meeting

Thursday, 31 October 1974, at 10.50 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Jihad KARAM (Iraq).

A/C.2/SR.1621

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Hamid (Sudan) took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 60

Assistance in cases of natural disaster and other disaster situations (*continued*) (A/9603, chap. III, sect. B and chap. VI, sect. E; A/C.2/L.1363):

- (a) Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator: report of the Secretary-General (A/9637);
- (b) Aid to the Sudano-Sahelian populations threatened with famine: report of the Secretary-General (A/9733, A/9737)

1. Mr. CORREA (Chile) said that because of its geographical situation, Chile was continually the victim of disasters; in the course of the current year alone, bad weather had caused his country damage costing more than \$150 million. In recent years, Chile had registered, due to natural disasters, a loss of over \$4 thousand million, an amount which exceeded the country's total external debt.

2. In view of the heavy blows inflicted on Chilean society and the economy by natural disasters, his delegation was in a good position to understand the full importance of the role played by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) and it wished to congratulate the Co-ordinator, Mr. Berkol, on the efficiency and competence he had shown in his work. There was an urgent need to increase the resources of the Office and provide it with enough staff to enable it to perform its role. His delegation had always advocated strengthening the Office and considered that the Committee should contem-

plate allowing it full administrative and budgetary autonomy, by creating a special fund for that purpose.

3. His delegation was convinced that the developing countries would prefer to receive assistance through international bodies rather than on the basis of bilateral relations, since in the latter case the assistance was always subject to conditions. A country which had suffered a natural disaster should receive assistance immediately and subject to no conditions other than those prescribed by the United Nations. He therefore welcomed the proposals made on the previous day by the representatives of the United States, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom concerning the formulation of a draft resolution aimed at strengthening UNDRO.

4. His delegation whole-heartedly supported the special treatment which the United Nations was giving to the Sudano-Sahelian region, the reconstruction of which would require enormous effort. The tragedy suffered by the sister nation of Honduras, described in a report prepared by ECLA for the Economic and Social Council,¹ likewise called for special assistance and it was to be hoped that the draft resolution to be submitted for that purpose to the Second Committee would command unanimous support.

5. The Chilean Government had established an administrative unit specially designed to cope with natural disasters, the "Oficina de Emergencia Nacional", which was provided with a special budget and was also active in the

¹ E/CEPAL/AC.67/2 and Corr.1 and 2, of 11 October 1974.

field of disaster prevention. It would be desirable for other nations and the Office of the Co-ordinator itself to use that experiment as a model, particularly since one of the latter's purposes was precisely to help establish administrative structures of that kind in disaster-prone countries. That would considerably facilitate disaster prevention, as well as the planning, mobilization and co-ordination of relief for which the Office of the Co-ordinator was responsible.

6. Mr. SKOGLUND (Sweden) congratulated Mr. Berkol on his introductory statement and on his dedication to his duties, despite the lack of resources; the time had come to strengthen UNDRO. As his Government had already stressed at the fifty-seventh session of the Economic and Social Council, in the Policy and Programme Co-ordination Committee (532nd meeting), it felt there was a close relationship between economic development and prevention of disasters; to ensure that the latter did not hinder the development of many countries, it was necessary to establish United Nations machinery for disaster prevention, pre-disaster planning and disaster preparedness. His delegation had therefore proposed that the item should be transferred from the agenda of the Third Committee to that of the Second Committee.

7. UNDRO had very limited funds and had been obliged to concentrate its efforts on co-ordinating assistance. It had only on a very limited scale been able to assist the countries that had asked for technical assistance in order to improve their disaster preparedness. Its financial resources were merely symbolic when compared with the financial losses caused by disasters.

8. Another neglected area was pre-disaster planning. Experts in that field did exist, but they were attached to too many international organizations and were not readily available. A system for collecting data should be established and a review made of the existing methods of preventing and reducing the effects of disasters. That was one of the tasks of UNDRO, and UNEP had already placed funds at its disposal for that purpose. However, additional resources were needed if those alternatives should be considered for improving United Nations work in that field.

9. Long-term problems were, of course, very important, but a more immediate problem, namely the need for effective co-ordination of assistance, should not be underestimated. His delegation welcomed the initiative of the United States delegation to strengthen the capability of UNDRO in that respect, but the voluntary financing was of an interim character, and as the representative of the Netherlands had pointed out, the administrative costs should as soon as possible be borne in full by the regular budget.

10. In conclusion, he was pleased to announce that his Government was prepared to make a voluntary contribution to UNDRO for the purpose of strengthening its disaster-prevention and pre-disaster planning capability.

11. Mr. ARVESEN (Norway) said that the devastating natural catastrophes that the world had witnessed over the past few years had highlighted the need for internationally co-ordinated relief. UNDRO must therefore be gradually strengthened so that it would be better able to co-ordinate

such relief and avoid overlapping and duplication. In that connexion his delegation endorsed the new approach for the United Nations system envisaged in Economic and Social Council resolution 1891 (LVII). In addition, it shared the view expressed the previous day by the representative of the Netherlands with regard to disaster prevention and pre-disaster planning and co-ordination, and supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General contained in paragraph 29 of his report (A/9637) regarding the strengthening of the staff of the Office. Moreover, his Government agreed with the Secretary-General that disasters could no longer be considered as exclusively a humanitarian and social problem. The Co-ordinator's and the Secretary-General's suggestion concerning the need to elaborate an international strategy for disaster prevention therefore merited serious consideration.

12. With regard to the "other disaster situations" mentioned in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), his Government felt that the mandate of the Co-ordinator also covered "man-made disaster situations".

13. In the view of his Government the main task of UNDRO was to function not as an executive organ in its own right, but rather as a focal point for co-ordinating international relief. In addition, rather than sending its own officials on missions to disaster areas, the Office should make greater use of the services of the UNDP resident representatives.

14. In conclusion, his delegation shared the views of the Co-ordinator to the effect that disaster relief activities should be envisaged within the context of the economic and social development of the areas concerned.

15. Mr. KUNIYASU (Japan) said that his delegation for the most part shared the views expressed by the Secretary-General in his report (A/9637). The damage caused by natural disasters caused extensive set-backs to the development of many countries and could even result in negative development. As his delegation had stated at the twenty-eighth session of the General Assembly,² United Nations efforts should be concentrated on pre-disaster planning and preparedness rather than on relief activities as such. Moreover, sufficient resources for preventive measures must be allocated to UNDP regional and country programmes. However, as UNDP resources for many of the country programmes for the current five-year planning period had already been committed, as stated in paragraph 5 of the Secretary-General's report, it did not seem that that would be possible in the immediate future. In view of that situation, his delegation had supported General Assembly resolution 3152 (XXVIII) authorizing the Secretary-General, as an interim measure, to draw on the Working Capital Fund in the amount of \$45,000 for 1974 and \$60,000 for 1975 for assistance to Governments in the elaboration of national preparations to meet natural disasters, on the understanding that the financing of future operations would be incorporated in the UNDP regional and country programmes for the next five-year planning period.

² See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-eighth Session, Third Committee, 2041st meeting, para. 39.*

16. The Economic and Social Council had adopted resolution 1891 (LVII), which emphasized the need for a more systematic approach to and strengthening of the operations of the United Nations system in anticipation of, during and immediately after natural disasters. In the Asian region, with the co-operation of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and WMO, the Typhoon Committee and the Tropical Cyclone Panel had been set up. The Typhoon Committee, which was composed of eight countries including Japan, had succeeded in establishing a flood prevention and warning system in the main rivers of the developing countries.

17. His delegation recognized that the limited resources available to UNDR0 had been a major constraint in the performance of the duties entrusted to it by the General Assembly. The Office should therefore be strengthened in order to serve more effectively as the world-wide clearing-house and co-ordinator for the collection and dissemination of information.

18. Finally, his Government, as a token of sympathy for the peoples of the Sudano-Sahelian zone affected by drought, had contributed \$2.8 million to the FAO Sahelian Zone Trust Fund and would continue to do its utmost to help the countries of that region. His delegation supported draft resolution A/C.2/L.1363, relating to economic and social assistance for Honduras.

19. Mrs. LISING (Philippines) said that her country was particularly susceptible to natural disasters and that its development suffered severe setbacks as a result. Her delegation therefore congratulated Mr. Berkol on his developmental approach to the question of disaster control. The capacity of UNDR0 to mobilize and co-ordinate disaster relief must be strengthened and her delegation therefore supported the United States proposal aimed at so doing.

20. While disaster relief remained a priority for the Office of the Co-ordinator, the importance of preventing or minimizing the effects of natural disasters should not be underestimated. In that connexion, pre-disaster planning would reduce the need for massive emergency relief after a disaster occurred and limit the subsequent economic losses.

21. The United States proposal should be regarded as complementary to Economic and Social Council resolution 1891 (LVII), as each emphasized a different aspect of disaster assistance. However, the approaches were not mutually exclusive. Emergency relief must go hand-in-hand with long-term planning covering all aspects of the question. Her delegation commended UNDR0 for its efforts to draw up a strategy for disaster prevention and hoped that it would bear in mind decision 8 (II), adopted by the Governing Council of UNEP at its second session, in which, among other things, it had decided to include preparedness planning for natural disasters among its priorities. Her delegation hoped that, in the field of natural disasters UNDR0 would duly co-operate with UNEP in the preparation of the action programme which the Executive Director had been requested to prepare, under the terms of the same decision, for consideration by the Governing Council of UNEP at its third session. The action programme would make it possible to define more fully the role which the

Office of the Co-ordinator could play in pre-disaster planning.

22. Her delegation commended Mr. Berkol and his colleagues for the admirable way in which they were carrying out their work, despite limited resources. The resources available to them should be expanded; in that regard, her delegation welcomed the voluntary contributions announced by the representatives of the United States, the Netherlands and Sweden and hoped that further support would be forthcoming.

23. In conclusion, her delegation endorsed draft resolution A/C.2/L.1363, which deserved unanimous support in view of the magnitude of the destruction suffered by Honduras.

24. Mr. CHANG Hsien-wu (China) said that he had listened attentively to the statement by Mr. Berkol about the work of UNDR0 and had carefully read the report by the Secretary-General on the aid to the Sudano-Sahelian populations threatened with famine (A/9737). His delegation supported the efforts made by the United Nations system to assist disaster-stricken people in rebuilding their homes, restoring production and enhancing their strength to resist disasters. It hoped that the Office would make a helpful contribution to such efforts.

25. His delegation expressed its deep sympathy for the people of the drought-stricken Sudano-Sahelian region, as well as the people of Peru, Honduras and other countries which had suffered disasters. Under the leadership of their respective Governments and with the support of friendly countries and peoples, the peoples of the disaster-stricken countries were unrelentingly combating natural disasters in a spirit of self-reliance. They had made great achievements in that regard and it was worth pointing out particularly that many developing countries in Africa and other regions, some of which had themselves suffered from disasters, had made positive contributions, to the extent of their ability, to the disaster relief work in the Sudano-Sahelian region. That was an excellent example of mutual assistance among the developing countries. His delegation hoped that the United Nations organizations concerned, while duly carrying out emergency relief operations, would implement in that region the medium-term and long-term programmes to enhance the capacity of the countries affected to resist disasters.

26. His delegation hoped that the people in the Sudano-Sahelian region and the peoples of Peru, Honduras and other disaster-affected countries would overcome their difficulties and soon restore their economies.

27. Mr. WOLF (Austria) said that, in allocating the item under discussion to the Second Committee, the General Assembly had recognized the close link that existed between disaster prevention and relief, on the one hand, and development, on the other. However, the problem of assistance in cases of natural disaster also involved humanitarian aspects which would be dealt with by the Third Committee.

28. The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Austria had already had the opportunity to express before the General

Assembly, on 26 September 1974 (2244th plenary meeting), the deep sympathy of the Austrian Government and people for the Government and people of Honduras who had suffered so greatly in the recent disaster. His delegation was in a position to report that its Government had decided to make a contribution in the amount of 500,000 schillings to Honduras, to be used for the procurement of agricultural tools and appliances needed for the reconstruction of the Honduran economy.

29. As the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator had rightly pointed out, short-term relief measures had to be complemented by a more integrated approach which would make it possible to prevent disasters and to reduce their impact on the people and the economy of a country. In view of the varying degrees of vulnerability of individual countries and the implications of such a planning exercise for economic and social development, the Governments of disaster-prone countries would have a decisive role to play with regard to the establishment of an effective policy of disaster prevention and control.

30. There was, however, also ample opportunity for international co-operation and co-ordination. Considering the multidimensional nature of effective disaster prevention, co-ordination of efforts between national and international agencies was of the utmost importance. His delegation hoped that those aspects would be taken into account in the elaboration of the international disaster prevention strategy, which would unquestionably be a useful instrument in the context of development planning. The close interrelationship between pre-disaster planning and development planning should therefore be borne in mind not only at the stage of plan formulation but also at the subsequent stages of implementation. International co-operation in the field of research, data collection and systems analysis could provide important inputs in such a planning exercise. Regional and global co-operation with regard to specific natural disasters of a recurring nature would be an equally pertinent factor in devising effective methods of disaster management and control.

31. His delegation welcomed the fact that increased attention was being given to those problems by various countries as well as by the United Nations system. In carrying out studies in the field of disaster prevention, however, duplication of effort should be avoided as far as possible and full use should be made of existing data and sources of expertise.

32. His delegation would continue to follow with close attention the work of UNDRO and to participate in efforts to solve, or at least mitigate, the problems arising from natural disasters.

33. His delegation would vote for draft resolution A/C.2/L.1363.

34. Mr. GARCIA BELAUNDE (Peru) thanked Mr. Berkol for his excellent statement on the activities of UNDRO, and welcomed the fact that the question was being considered by the Second Committee: when the development of a country was disrupted by natural disasters, it was not only emergency relief that was required, but also preventive measures and assistance for the reconstruction of

the disaster areas. Disaster relief measures should therefore form part of the development effort, and the Second Committee and the Economic and Social Council were the most appropriate bodies to deal with such matters.

35. Taking into account the costs involved in the rehabilitation and reconstruction of developing countries, international co-operation to meet natural disasters was indispensable. He paid a tribute to UNDRO for its action in various parts of Peru, and noted that if preventive measures had been taken, the damage could have been considerably reduced. A sound preventive system did not preclude emergency relief and enhanced the effectiveness of the measures taken once a disaster had occurred. In that connexion, mention should be made of the system which had been set up for the Andean subregion and was to be extended to the whole of Latin America.

36. He welcomed the statement of the representative of Sweden, and commended that country for its contribution to the strengthening of the activities of the Office of the Co-ordinator in the field of disaster prevention.

37. One of the most important duties of UNDRO was to assist countries which were particularly disaster-prone. The Peruvian Government, for its part, had set up a civil defence system to meet natural disasters, whose primary functions were prevention and the provision of assistance. UNDRO should help countries to establish such defence systems, thus enabling them to take preventive measures and, once a disaster had occurred, to put foreign aid to the most effective use.

38. Mr. HACHANI (Tunisia) said his delegation had always thought that the problem of natural disasters unquestionably had economic implications which should be studied very carefully in order to find not only short-term but also medium-term and long-term solutions. His Government appreciated the work done by the Co-ordinator and his team, despite the restrictions imposed on them.

39. With respect to the mobilization of relief and co-ordination, Tunisia, which had on several occasions suffered from floods, had been able to witness the efficiency with which UNDRO fulfilled its responsibilities with regard to the dissemination of information and the mobilization of assistance. His delegation agreed with the Co-ordinator that such activities should be strengthened by increasing the financial resources available to the Office. It had noted with interest the Co-ordinator's intention to build up an information bank capable of rapidly providing stricken countries and donor countries with detailed information on requirements and available means of relief. It also welcomed the arrangement enabling the Office to procure air freight either free of charge or at reduced rates for the shipment of vaccines and other emergency relief supplies necessary for the prevention of epidemics. It viewed favourably the proposal made at the previous meeting by the representative of the United States, and was prepared to participate in the final formulation of the draft resolution referred to.

40. His delegation felt that emergency activities, preventive measures and pre-disaster preparedness were extremely important and should be increased. Prevention was

better than cure, especially when the cure involved the difficult task of rebuilding a ravaged economy; in that connexion, his delegation expressed its appreciation for the technical assistance received by his country in the field of pre-disaster planning. He shared the Co-ordinator's hope that the experience of the Andean Group countries could one day be extended to other regions and subregions, including the Maghreb, since such a step could only be of benefit to the countries concerned.

41. He also hoped that the Co-ordinator could submit as soon as possible specific proposals concerning the proposed international strategy for disaster prevention, which had been widely supported. In view of the scope of the problems confronting the Office, it was essential to expand its staff substantially, and to provide it with increased financial resources.

42. The extent of the damage caused by the disasters which had struck Bangladesh, Honduras and the Sahel showed the importance of pre-disaster planning and preventive measures. In the case of the Sudano-Sahelian region, while it was encouraging to note the wave of international solidarity which had made it possible to avert the worst, most of the work remained to be done. His delegation was particularly pleased to note Economic and Social Council resolutions 1874 (LVII) and 1878 (LVII), concerning respectively the Sudano-Sahelian region and the drought problem in Africa. Those two resolutions stressed the need for a major attack on the drought problem in Africa and throughout the world. In that connexion, it was essential that the activities of the research institute for the arid Sahelian zone, whose establishment was envisaged in resolution 1874 (LVII), should cover the whole of Africa and all other areas with similar geographical conditions, as requested in paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 3054 (XXVIII).

43. All international bodies and organizations, including, of course, UNDRO, should undertake effective action in co-operation with the competent national organizations and services, so that every existing or future possibility could be used to save Africa as a whole, and even perhaps large parts of other continents. To that end, UNDRO should be strengthened, and Mr. Berkol was the best qualified person to ensure the fulfilment of the important tasks which would confront it.

44. Mr. HAYS (Canada) felt that high priority should be given to the measures required to enable the international community to cope more rapidly and effectively with the consequences of natural disasters. When UNDRO had been set up in 1972, Governments had not been aware of the number and variety of requests for relief which would have to be met. During the past two years, a number of countries, many of them among the poorest, had been victims of natural disasters which had caused great suffering to their populations and seriously disrupted their economies. As in the past, Canada would continue to provide assistance to the victims of such disasters.

45. The most important problem facing the United Nations was the improvement of co-ordination among donors, recipients, and the agencies and bodies within its system by creating a clearing-house to provide information

on the needs of the area affected and on the intentions of donors and action taken by them. It was in that connexion that UNDRO could play its most effective role, by ensuring that relief efforts were focused on priority items and that duplication was avoided. In practice, however, there were problems. For example, donors often failed to keep the Office informed of the assistance they planned to give or had given, so that it was difficult for the Office to carry out its co-ordinating role. Canada would attempt to keep the Office better informed of its bilateral and multilateral relief activities and his delegation hoped that other donors would make a similar effort.

46. The Office, however, should not be content with mobilizing and co-ordinating disaster relief; it also had a role to play in pre-disaster planning and preparedness. Those activities were in fact connected, because if arrangements for co-ordination were to be effective, they must form part of a contingency plan formulated in advance. While the timing of natural disasters could often not be predicted, in many cases their geographic location could. The Office of the Co-ordinator had been able to furnish modest but worth-while assistance for pre-disaster planning and preparedness, and activity in that area should continue to constitute an important element of its functions.

47. To carry out its tasks, UNDRO would require strengthening. His delegation considered that the Office should give priority to centralizing and disseminating information. In that connexion, the proposal introduced by the representative of the United States at the preceding meeting, which emphasized the co-ordinating role of the Office and which carried with it a generous financial contribution, was extremely constructive and merited broad support.

48. Mr. SADEGHI (Iran) said that the views expressed in paragraph 6 of the Secretary-General's report (A/9637) and the statement by Mr. Berkol to the effect that the cost of damage caused by disasters in many developing countries considerably exceeded in absolute value the total of the aid which those countries received from abroad, once again affirmed the need for speedy adoption of an international strategy for disaster prevention. His delegation approved of that principle and was happy to note that certain measures had already been taken in that connexion. Pending the formulation of such a strategy, priority should be given to strengthening the capability of UNDRO in the field of disaster prevention and preparedness; his delegation therefore welcomed the initiative taken by the Co-ordinator in that respect. The proposed setting-up of a regional pre-disaster planning project in Latin America for rendering mutual assistance in cases of disaster within the region deserved the support and encouragement of all delegations. It was to be hoped that that approach would be extended to other regions.

49. With regard to the mobilization and co-ordination of disaster relief, his delegation was pleased to see that, since its establishment, the Office of the Co-ordinator had been able to mobilize and co-ordinate aid in more than 47 disasters. It welcomed the Co-ordinator's statement that his Office was engaged in preventing duplication in relief aid by filling gaps in the existing arrangements. The Office had rightly emphasized the role of UNDP resident repre-

sentatives in helping to co-ordinate and mobilize disaster relief in the field.

50. His delegation agreed with the Co-ordinator that in order for his Office to function effectively, its capacity with regard to disaster prevention and disaster preparedness as well as mobilization and co-ordination must be strengthened.

51. Mr. NANAYAKKARA (Sri Lanka), after commending the efforts made during the past year by the Office of the Co-ordinator to assist regions affected by natural disasters, said that the international community was apparently aware of the unexpected disasters which could befall many poor countries. Because of their difficult economic situation, those countries were not in a position to take speedy and effective action to meet unforeseen situations of that nature, which seriously disrupted their development activities.

52. The support given to UNDRO by the international community had helped it to respond immediately to emergency situations. The experience gained so far in relief operations should contribute to the adoption of an international strategy for disaster relief as well as a strategy for disaster prevention. The initiative taken by the United States Government to provide financial assistance should pave the way for a more effective and co-ordinated role for the Office in its future activities. His delegation hoped that other rich countries and the numerous organizations active in that field would follow that example.

53. In view of the dwindling world food reserves and the worsening of the economic situation of many developing countries, UNDRO should be prepared to meet all types of emergency situations in the coming years. His delegation was confident that, with the support being pledged to it by the rich countries and on the basis of the vast experience it had already gained in relief operations, UNDRO would discharge that responsibility expeditiously and effectively.

54. Mr. AKSOY (Turkey) noted with satisfaction that disaster relief was considered not only a humanitarian and social problem but also a part of the development effort.

55. In view of the destructive impact of natural disasters on the developing countries, the General Assembly had adopted resolution 2816 (XXVI), establishing UNDRO, under which the Co-ordinator was to make all feasible advance arrangements, co-ordinate relief activities, co-ordinate United Nations assistance with that provided by the International Red Cross, receive contributions, disseminate information, promote studies in that field and help build stockpiles in disaster-prone areas. However, the Secretary-General's report (A/9637) stated that UNDRO had not yet been provided with the necessary staff and funds to enable it to fulfil even part of the responsibilities assigned to it. His delegation regretted that situation and felt it necessary to remind the Committee of Economic and Social Council resolution 1891 (LVIII), in which the Council stated its conviction that the staff limitations of UNDRO had inhibited its ability to prepare details of the kind of relief supplies and services which donors were willing to furnish, and had further inhibited its ability to provide adequate pre-disaster planning advice. Moreover, in

paragraph 4 of that resolution, the Council recommended that, at its twenty-ninth session, the General Assembly should reconsider the proposals of the Secretary-General for additional staff resources as initially requested by him for the Office. It was to be hoped that that proposal would receive a positive response from all delegations. In that connexion, his delegation wished to thank the United States delegation for its generous offer to strengthen the co-ordinating role of the Office.

56. That role, however, was only one of the functions of UNDRO. For example, the strengthening of its co-ordinating role should not prevent progress in its disaster prevention activities. The developing countries did not have the means to establish effective preventive measures against floods, storms, earthquakes and other catastrophes without help; it was disheartening to note that the damage done by natural disasters often exceeded the value of foreign aid and that the resultant losses often exceeded the growth rate of many of those countries.

57. His delegation wished to draw attention to the valuable co-operation Turkey had received from the Office with regard to pre-disaster planning and awaited with interest the first outline of the international disaster prevention strategy.

58. In conclusion, he hoped that all necessary international assistance could be mobilized to help Honduras.

59. Mr. GORITZA (Romania) said that his delegation had listened with interest to Mr. Berkol's statement which showed, as did the reports submitted to the Committee, that the United Nations was endeavouring to respond promptly and as efficiently as possible to appeals from countries stricken by natural disasters, in particular the developing countries. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the United Nations was continually intensifying its efforts with regard to long-term activities designed to avert natural disasters and to deal effectively with their consequences. An international strategy to prevent natural disasters would help significantly to reduce the damage they caused, damage which only aggravated the economic difficulties of the developing countries. Such a strategy was a further expression of the desire of the international community to adopt a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach to all problems relating to the economic and social development of all countries.

60. As far as current assistance operations in cases of natural disaster were concerned, organizational measures and operational arrangements had helped to make relief more effective. Romania, which had suffered serious floods a few years previously, understood and supported the economic recovery efforts of countries stricken by natural disasters and contributed as far as its resources would allow to the international effort for the benefit of those countries; during the current year, in particular, it had provided assistance in the form of food-stuffs, medical supplies and equipment to the countries in the Sudano-Saharan region and to other disaster-stricken countries.

61. Mr. GARCIA GRANADOS (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of the sponsors, formally introduced draft resolution A/C.2/L.1363 on economic and social assistance for

Honduras. Some time previously, that country had been seriously affected by a cyclone which had destroyed much of its economy. According to the report submitted by ECLA,³ it would be three or four years before the economy of Honduras could recover; in view of the gravity of the situation, the sponsors of the draft resolution had felt that special assistance was essential. He hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

62. Mrs. AUGUSTE (Trinidad and Tobago) said that her delegation attached great importance to the work of UNDRO. The need for that Office, and its usefulness, no longer had to be proved. It was high time for the Office to be given the necessary resources to enable it to carry out its immense task, and her delegation was therefore gratified at the offers of contributions which had been made by different delegations during the debate. While it was, of course, important to strengthen the co-ordinating role played by the Office, the work of pre-disaster planning and preparedness should not be neglected, as the Co-ordinator had pointed out at the 1620th meeting.

63. Her delegation had noted with interest the preventive measures which had been taken in a number of Andean countries and hoped that that initiative would be extended to other subregions, in particular to the West Indies.

64. In conclusion, she announced that her delegation wished to become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1363.

65. Mr. RAJAONARIVELO (Madagascar) said that natural disasters could no longer be considered solely as a humanitarian and social problem; they were also a development problem. Each year, Madagascar was struck by cyclones and UNDRO had responded in specific cases with a promptness for which the Malagasy Government could not but commend it. Sporadic action was no longer enough, however, and the time had come to develop an international strategy for disaster prevention. That strategy should organize, within a structural framework, the assistance of the specialized agencies and of the various United Nations bodies, the co-ordination of which had thus far been left to chance.

66. The extent of the damage caused by natural disasters was such that the financial resources available to UNDRO were of no more than token value. Funds were, of course, allocated from the regular budget to that Office, but the latter must be able to continue to draw on the United Nations Working Capital Fund. It was also necessary to alert public opinion to the seriousness of natural disasters; in that connexion, his delegation was gratified at the awareness shown by the donor countries. Those who could do so should increase their financial contributions still further, in the name of international co-operation.

67. Those considerations, and the need to prevent natural disasters by conducting studies and formulating a global and integrated strategy on the question, fully justified Mr. Berkol's wish to see the staff of the Office increased by two Professional and two General Service posts.

68. His delegation had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/L.1363 because Madagascar was well-placed to understand the seriousness of natural phenomena against which man was powerless.

69. Mr. LUCHTERHAND (German Democratic Republic) said that his country provided direct assistance to countries stricken by natural disasters, and in particular the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region. Furthermore, the Government and organizations of the German Democratic Republic had provided effective assistance to India, Bangladesh, Burma, and Honduras to assist them in making good the damage caused by the natural disasters which had occurred in their respective territories. In so doing, the German Democratic Republic had acted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 3054 (XXVIII) and, more generally speaking, with resolutions 3201 (S-VI) and 3202 (S-VI).

70. His delegation agreed with the view stated in Economic and Social Council resolution 1891 (LVII), that disaster prevention and pre-disaster planning should form an integral part of international development policy. It also appeared imperative to take measures that would help to overcome the long-term consequences of such disasters. In that connexion, he once again drew the attention of the members of the Committee to General Assembly resolution 3093 (XXVIII) concerning the reduction of the military budgets of States permanent members of the Security Council by 10 per cent, and to the proposals which had been made to end the arms race. Their immediate implementation would greatly contribute to the social progress of all countries, including the developing countries. At the same time, considerable material and financial resources would be released and could be used to assist countries stricken by natural disasters.

71. Mr. STIEPEL (Federal Republic of Germany) said that, although the Co-ordinator had been involved in relief activities in a number of disaster-stricken countries, his mandate was so extensive that he could not adequately discharge all his tasks with the staff and funds at present at his disposal. In particular, he could not mobilize and co-ordinate emergency assistance and promote disaster prevention, all at the same time. His delegation therefore believed that the Co-ordinator was justified in concentrating on those sectors where his assistance was most urgently needed and his funds could be most effectively employed.

72. His delegation welcomed the proposal made by the United States delegation because it focused on certain precise points and could be expected to result in economically sound proposals.

73. Bilateral contacts between a donor country and the authorities of the recipient country generally provided the best basis for speedy assistance. The involvement of UNDRO could usefully take the form of dispatching an expert to the site of the disaster to advise the missions of bilateral donors, thus ensuring rapid and effective co-ordination of the assistance action. It was also important that the action of the different United Nations organizations should be co-ordinated.

³ E/CEPAL/AC.67/2 and Corr.1 and 2.

74. His delegation considered the involvement of the Co-ordinator in pre-disaster planning and preparedness to be at least as important as his co-ordinating function, if not more so. However, experience had shown that general strategies and grand concepts, impressive as they might seem, rarely led to action-oriented measures. Consequently, the Office of the Co-ordinator should concentrate on precise practical measures.

75. Mr. KJELDGAARD-OLESEN (Denmark) said that the Co-ordinator had clearly outlined the three areas of concern to his Office, namely, disaster prevention, pre-disaster planning, and co-ordination. The fact that very little had been done in the area of prevention was all the more astonishing in that disaster prevention need not be an expensive proposition. In the field of disaster-preparedness, the UNDP project for the Andean countries could be expected to provide valuable experience. As regards co-ordination, the Danish authorities, who had contributed a substantial amount in disaster relief, felt that co-ordination on a world-wide basis was needed in order to determine promptly the most urgent requirements for emergency assistance and to avoid costly and unnecessary duplication.

76. Those considerations had led his delegation to co-sponsor General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), which had established UNDRO. His delegation was very satisfied with the activities so far carried out by the Office, but felt that its co-ordinating function must be strengthened. It had therefore listened with interest to the statement by the representative of the United States, who had introduced a proposal for strengthening the co-ordinating capability of UNDRO. His delegation trusted that the proposal would be acted upon.

77. Mr. LEGHARI (Pakistan) said that, despite the inadequacy of its staff and its funds, the Office of the Co-ordinator had been able to accomplish a great deal. Natural disasters gave rise not only to humanitarian and social problems but also to development problems. In Pakistan, for example, the recent floods had displaced five million people and destroyed four million acres of crops. It had been necessary to divert resources originally earmarked for development to emergency assistance and repair of the damage done in the disaster areas. Honduras now found itself in a similar situation. Consequently, his delegation agreed with the Co-ordinator that priority must be given to pre-disaster planning and preparedness. But in order for that to be done, the Office must have sufficient funds and

staff. His delegation also welcomed the idea of developing an international strategy for disaster prevention, since it had been proved that the cost of relief and reconstruction was far higher than that of prevention.

78. Mr. BISHARA (Kuwait) said that that few members of the Committee knew the Co-ordinator as he did, both of them having been in Tunis at the same time during the 1960s. Mr. Berkol, who had remained a bachelor, had espoused the cause of humanity, and gratitude was owed to him for his dedication to the victims of natural disasters.

79. The development of an international strategy for disaster prevention would be an excellent initiative, since a country stricken by a natural disaster received assistance at a level far below its needs and experienced set-backs to its economic progress.

80. In many cases the delivery of relief to the stricken areas was too slow, and most of the time UNDRO was not involved. It would therefore be desirable to enhance the effectiveness of the Office.

81. Because of its geographical situation, Kuwait was fortunate enough to be spared natural disasters, but it considered it a duty to help countries which were the victims of the whims of nature.

82. Mr. CZARKOWSKI (Poland) said that his Government had always supported resolutions relating to assistance in cases of natural disaster and had always provided assistance, through bilateral channels, to countries stricken by disasters. It intended in the future to support relief operations undertaken within the framework of the United Nations. Assistance was a duty, not only because human suffering must be alleviated, but also because prompt relief could in large part mitigate the destructive impact of the disaster on the economy of the affected country.

83. His delegation had already had the opportunity, at the fifty-seventh session of the Economic and Social Council (1915th meeting), to express its approval of long-term disaster prevention measures. Preventive measures should be integrated into both the policy of disaster-prone countries and the policy of UNDRO, whose effectiveness must be enhanced. Co-ordination of bilateral assistance was a matter for the recipient country.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.