



Chairman: Mrs. Helvi SIPILÄ (Finland).

AGENDA ITEM 49

Respect for human rights in armed conflicts (*continued*):

- (a) Report of the Secretary-General (A/8313 and Add.1 to 3, A/8370 and Add.1, A/C.3/L.1895, A/C.3/L.1896);
(b) Protection of journalists engaged in dangerous missions in areas of armed conflict: report of the Secretary-General (A/8371 and Add.1, A/8403, chap. XVII, sect. A; A/8438 and Add.1, A/C.3/L.1902 to 1905)

1. Mr. ESCOREL (Brazil) said that his delegation had considered the report of the Secretary-General (A/8370 and Add.1) in the light of the proceedings of the Conference of Government Experts on the reaffirmation and development of international humanitarian law applicable in armed conflicts that had taken place in Geneva in 1971. Despite the undeniable benefits of the various relevant international instruments, he was concerned that their provisions were not generally observed. The United Nations could provide the institutional leverage to urge all parties to international conventions to observe their provisions or even to raise their standards beyond those provided for. An appeal should be made to all countries to accede to those conventions, if they had not already done so, or even to apply them without waiting for formal ratification.

2. Brazil had participated in the most recent international conferences dealing with the subject and believed that the United Nations and the Red Cross should maintain a close working relationship. He felt, however, that in view of the limited time at the Committee's disposal, consideration of the item should be postponed until the twenty-seventh session, after the second Conference of Government Experts which was to be held in the spring of 1972; that would prevent overlapping and avoid giving the impression that the United Nations was unwilling to collaborate with the Red Cross.

3. Turning to the two draft resolutions (A/C.3/L.1895 and A/C.3/L.1896) and the preliminary draft international convention on the protection of journalists submitted by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1597 (L), he agreed that it was necessary to develop the substance of existing humanitarian rules and the procedures for their implementation. The Conference of Government Experts, however, had already received a clear mandate from the General Assembly to work on those rules and he felt that it would be harmful to prejudge issues or to anticipate recommendations, particularly on controversial questions on which the Conference had not attained an adequate level of agreement, such as the treatment of combatants in

non-international conflicts. In that connexion, he expressed reservations regarding the timing of the drafts, as it could be interpreted as interfering with the work of the Conference. He also criticized operative paragraph 3 of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1895, which omitted some of the items considered during the first Conference of Government Experts in 1971. Nevertheless, he shared the sentiments and supported the intentions of the sponsors and would therefore vote in favour of both drafts.

4. With respect to the protection of journalists, there was overwhelming support in the international community for the basic principle that a distinction should be made between the treatment accorded to combatants and non-combatants and for the adoption of measures to ensure the personal safety of journalists engaged on dangerous missions in areas of armed conflict. The press in the modern world had a key role to play and should have direct access to sources of information. The Geneva Conventions provided a certain degree of protection for war correspondents, but further improvements were necessary. The General Assembly at its twenty-fifth session had expressed its concern and suggested several steps that should be taken. He recognized that any proposed international instrument must be effective and universal; clearly those to be protected should not be exempt from the provisions of internal law, and more protection should not be offered to a foreign journalist than to a national.

5. His Government appreciated the contribution made by the French Government to the preparation of a draft convention, even though the draft was naturally not perfect. He recalled his objections to the machinery provided for in article 3, which regulated matters that could be interpreted as falling within the exclusive competence of States. He also suggested that the document to be issued to journalists should be called an international identity card for journalists rather than a safe-conduct card. Further study of the suggestion of the Working Group established under resolution 15 (XXVII) of the Commission on Human Rights relating to the powers and the membership of the International Professional Committee for the Protection of Journalists Engaged in Dangerous Missions (see A/8438) was necessary. Strict standards should be applied in determining who was a professional member of the press, but identity cards should be issued without delay and in that connexion prior consultation with the countries for which the identity cards were to be issued might be useful. Consideration should also be given to the suggestions that the draft convention should enumerate not only the privileges of the journalist but also his obligations towards the host State or States. He drew attention to the problems that might arise in cases of internal strife: if the identity card were issued for use in a certain area during a specified

period of time, who would define, and by what criteria, the existence of an armed conflict in a designated region, and what would be the legal consequences of recognizing the existence of an armed conflict?

6. The preliminary draft convention contained many elements worth consideration and he did not wish his comments to be interpreted as negative criticism. He did feel, however, that the various proposals should be explored further and in more detail, which could be done at the next meeting of the Conference of Government Experts. The proposals of Australia (A/C.3/L.1902) and the United States (A/C.3/L.1903) should also be considered as part of the search for an effective and universally acceptable convention. He suggested that the preliminary draft convention should not be submitted to the General Assembly until it had been revised.

7. His delegation also expressed reservations regarding the timeliness and acceptability of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1904. Although he fully agreed that the matter was an urgent one, he felt that it would not be advisable for the Committee to adopt, as recommended by operative paragraph 1, the 10 substantive articles of a text which was still being discussed. The Economic and Social Council had not, as the draft resolution claimed, submitted the draft convention for approval by the General Assembly; resolution 1597 (L) merely referred to a preliminary draft transmitted as a valid basis for discussion. He failed to understand how, in those circumstances, the General Assembly could adopt a text which had not been properly discussed.

8. Mr. WILSON (Liberia) agreed wholeheartedly with the principle that, in the conduct of military operations, every effort should be made to spare civilian populations and that dwellings and hospital zones should not be the object of military operations as affirmed in principles 3, 5 and 6 of General Assembly resolution 2675 (XXV). Those principles, however, applied only when one of the parties to an armed conflict invaded the territory of the other. In any armed conflict, one of the parties would violate some of the relevant international conventions, such as the Geneva Conventions of 1949; the only way to observe those conventions was to abide by the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, in particular those embodied in Article 1, paragraph 1.

9. Although the experts could not agree on the need for rules to cover freedom fighters, particularly in Angola, Guinea (Bissau), Mozambique, Namibia and Southern Rhodesia, those fighters deserved the full protection of the international community as they were struggling on their own soil against foreign domination and oppression.

10. His delegation believed that an international agreement for the protection of journalists on dangerous missions would make a valuable contribution to the effective application of the principle of freedom of information, and he, therefore wholeheartedly supported the observations made by the Government of France in the report of the Secretary-General (A/8371, annex II). He also highly commended the efforts of journalists to keep the international community informed about any armed conflict.

AGENDA ITEM 59

Assistance in cases of natural disaster: report of the Secretary-General (*concluded*)* (A/8403, chap. XIX; A/8436, E/4994, A/C.3/L.1897, A/C.3/L.1899, A/C.3/L.1906)

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTION (*concluded*)

11. The CHAIRMAN announced that Australia, the Congo, Ecuador, Kenya, Somalia, Trinidad and Tobago and Uganda had become co-sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897.

12. Mrs. RAKOTOFIRINGA (Madagascar) said her delegation was glad to be one of the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897. It was reassuring to see that both potential victims and donors had agreed on that draft.

13. The preamble recognized the extent of international aid from all sources and in all forms, and the co-ordinating machinery was intended to strengthen collective efforts. One of the most important factors in the effectiveness of aid was time, and the last preambular paragraph recognized the necessity of ensuring prompt response to any request for assistance. The time factor also concerned the Government of the stricken country and operative paragraph 1 (*e*) covered that aspect. Operative paragraph 1 (*f*) contained an important provision relating to the study, prevention and control of natural disasters. The draft did not cover unilateral assistance in cases of natural catastrophes, although operative paragraph 8 did list the responsibilities of the stricken country at the national level. The Co-ordinator would have grave responsibilities and should therefore have every facility and work under the best possible conditions. Geneva might be a suitable site in view of the lesser financial implications and in view of its location, which would facilitate co-operation with other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. Since the Co-ordinator would also be co-operating with Governments and UNDP and since all countries were not permanently represented at Geneva, she was inclined to recommend New York as the site for the Co-ordinator's office. Her delegation would, however, go along with the majority view.

14. She hoped that the Committee would adopt the draft resolution without hesitation.

15. Mr. SEKYIAMAH (Ghana) said that his delegation supported the idea of co-ordinating disaster relief assistance but felt that, if possible, existing resources and personnel should be deployed for the purpose. The Secretariat's comments on that point would be welcome. If a new post of Co-ordinator was considered necessary, however, it should be established at the Assistant Secretary-General, not the Under-Secretary-General, level or better still at the D-2 level. The resultant savings could be used to help disaster victims. With regard to the site of the proposed office, he was inclined to favour Geneva, where many of the voluntary agencies, including the International Red Cross, were located.

* Resumed from the 1888th meeting.

16. Draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 should have contained a definition of a disaster situation. Without that definition, the Co-ordinator's mandate would be too vague. As he saw it, there were two classes of disaster: natural and man-made. In the interests of clarity, the title should accordingly be changed to read "Assistance in cases of natural and man-made disaster", and the words "emergency situations" and "other disaster situations" should be replaced by the term "man-made disasters" throughout the text.

17. In the operative part of the draft resolution, he would prefer to delete the word "potential" in paragraph 8, since it sounded somewhat strange, and in paragraph 9 to replace "potential donor Governments" by "all Governments". In paragraph 8 (b), which was too restrictive, he would like to add after the words "national disaster relief co-ordinator" the words "or designate an appropriate national agency". Lastly, the figures mentioned in paragraph 10 relating to the amount that the Secretary-General would be entitled to draw from the Working Capital Fund and the potential ceiling per disaster were, in his opinion, too low and should be raised to \$US400,000 and \$US40,000 respectively.

18. Mr. AHOUANSOU (Dahomey) said that it was unfortunate that the Committee had not defined the term "natural disaster" before considering the draft resolution. A natural disaster was, in the opinion of his delegation, any event directly caused by a natural physical phenomenon, whether or not foreseeable, which within a prescribed period of time seriously damaged, destroyed or annihilated any immovable or movable property of a State or its citizens, thereby affecting the anticipated economic development of that State. That definition was intended to preclude the possibility that physical phenomena would be considered as disasters simply because they were of a sudden and terrible nature. It was also intended to avoid any conflict of jurisdiction between the High Commissioner for Refugees and the Co-ordinator.

19. Miss FAROUK (Tunisia) welcomed the fact that draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 was more comprehensive and far-reaching than previous resolutions on the subject of natural disasters. Experience had shown that solidarity and sympathy were not enough in the event of a natural disaster and that assistance, if it was to be effective, must be co-ordinated. She therefore wholeheartedly endorsed the idea of setting up machinery for that purpose. Those who were apprehensive about the economic implications of establishing a co-ordinating office could rest assured that the savings which would be achieved by emergency preparedness and co-ordinated assistance would more than compensate for the cost of establishing the proposed office. The official heading the office should, in her opinion, occupy a rank equal to that of the persons he would be dealing with, so that his activities would not be hampered in any way. His rank should therefore be that of Under-Secretary-General. For reasons of practicality and economy, she was inclined to favour Geneva as the site of the Co-ordinator's office.

20. Operative paragraph 8, which invited Governments to establish disaster contingency plans and take other measures in connexion with emergency preparedness, was of paramount importance. In Tunisia, the Minister of the Interior had started to draw up a disaster contingency plan with the

assistance of the International Red Cross. The three Red Crescent Societies were in the process of establishing stockpiles of indispensable emergency supplies in Tunis, Algiers and Rabat respectively. Some scientific research was being undertaken on techniques to prevent or limit the effects of natural disasters, and a meeting of experts on seismic conditions in the Maghreb countries had been held at Tunis in March 1971 under the aegis of UNESCO.

21. Lastly, she expressed the hope that the text of the draft resolution would remain unchanged and that it would be adopted unanimously.

22. Mr. WESTERMOEN (Norway) said that effective and co-ordinated relief was essential in protecting human rights. For that reason, his delegation had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897, which made adequate provision for machinery and methods to assist individuals and nations in disaster situations. The appointment of a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator within the United Nations Secretariat would be an important step forward in all aspects of disaster relief.

23. The General Assembly's action to alleviate the consequences of the drought in Afghanistan had been important, both in providing relief for the people of the drought-stricken areas and because it had extended the scope of the term "disaster situation". The same kind of assistance must be provided in disaster situations resulting from epidemics, famine or locust plagues, even if they were not characterized by the suddenness and violence of typical natural disasters. The Secretary-General had himself pointed out that the effects of civil conflicts or emergencies caused by war or civil disturbances resembled natural disaster situations in a number of ways (see E/4994, para. 17). The tragic implications for the individual were the same or even more serious and imposed the same obligations on the international community. His delegation therefore urged a flexible and broad definition of the term "natural disaster".

24. In the tenth and eleventh preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution attention was drawn to the possibility of providing specific assistance for disaster-stricken countries through UNDP and other international agencies, without prejudice to assistance otherwise provided by such agencies for current development programmes in the countries concerned. His delegation considered that any disaster-related assistance given by the agencies concerned should be regarded as over and above the indicative planning figures established for a recipient country. Efforts to correct the imbalances caused by a disaster should not influence the balanced long-range plans for national development.

25. In connexion with operative paragraph 4, his delegation considered that Geneva would be the most practical location for the office of the proposed Disaster Relief Co-ordinator. It would offer the best opportunities for close daily contact with other organizations and agencies providing disaster relief. In that connexion, he stressed the importance of the efforts of private organizations in mobilizing popular support for international relief work, the contribution of the International League of Red Cross Societies in dealing with disaster situations and the impetus given to its work by the national societies. The role of the

United Nations in improving co-ordination of the efforts of all the agencies concerned was a strong factor in favour of the choice of Geneva for the Co-ordinator's office.

26. Mr. DOE (Liberia) said that every country had experienced a disaster of some kind. Since man was as yet unable to prevent natural disasters, assistance to the victims should be the concern of everyone and should inspire international co-operation if people were to live together as good neighbours.

27. His delegation had greatly appreciated the Secretary-General's report and the statements made at the 1888th meeting by his Consultant and by the Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs. It was heartened by the attention the United Nations was giving to the relief of victims of natural disasters. Since 1964, when the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1049 (XXXVII), had requested the Secretary-General to study, in consultation with the international organizations concerned, the types of assistance which it might be appropriate for the United Nations to provide in cases of natural disaster, numerous resolutions had been adopted appealing to Governments, relief agencies, and voluntary organizations to help the victims.

28. Draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897, of which his country was a sponsor, renewed the appeal to States Members of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies to contribute on a wider basis to emergency assistance and called on the Secretary-General to appoint an assistant whose office would co-ordinate international relief efforts, promote study, prevention, control and prediction of disasters and planning and preparedness before disasters occurred. His delegation would like the Co-ordinator's office to be established away from United Nations Headquarters.

29. His delegation was confident that adoption and implementation of the draft resolution would enhance and facilitate United Nations relief operations in cases of natural disaster and other emergency situations.

30. Liberia had always supported United Nations relief efforts, despite domestic budgetary crises, and would continue to do so as a contributing member of the international community.

31. Mr. DE LATAILLADE (France) said that his delegation would vote for draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 because it reflected humanitarian concern. He had intended to propose amendments to the title of the draft resolution, because the words "other disaster situations" were too vague and might cause conflicts of responsibility with the High Commissioner for Refugees. He had also intended to propose the deletion of the words "and development" from the tenth preambular paragraph, because the Co-ordinator's task should be confined to assistance. After consultations with other delegations, however, his delegation had decided not to do so, while maintaining its reservations.

32. He had already explained at the 1888th meeting his reasons for submitting the amendments contained in document A/C.3/L.1906, which were essentially motives of economy. His delegation in no way denied the importance of the Co-ordinator's task but it felt that the level of

Assistant Secretary-General would be sufficient and would also involve less cost. The moral authority of the Co-ordinator would not be affected in the slightest; whatever his grade, France would accord him full respect and support. The words "a small office", which he was proposing for operative paragraph 3, echoed the wording of Council resolution 1612 (L).

33. Regarding the location of the Co-ordinator's office, the choice of Geneva would be justified by considerations of finance and efficiency. The cost of the office, as confirmed by the figures given in document A/C.3/L.1899, would be lower in Geneva than in New York.

34. The fact that Geneva was the seat of the International Red Cross, and the proximity of the United Nations specialized agencies whose help would be needed in case of natural disasters—WHO in Geneva, FAO in Rome and UNESCO in Paris—were also strong arguments for Geneva.

35. Mr. SABIK (Poland) said that his country had experienced floods, hurricanes and other natural disasters whose effects had been overcome by national planned efforts. The Government and people responded warmly to appeals to help from other countries. He therefore felt that assistance in national disasters should be based primarily on bilateral effort, with assistance from the United Nations, the International Red Cross, WHO and UNICEF as centres for co-ordination. The General Assembly should not adopt any measures that would replace spontaneous national response to appeals for help by merely administrative measures.

36. Unfortunately the idea of humanitarian response had not been taken sufficiently into account in draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897. His delegation agreed in principle with the ninth preambular paragraph concerning the need to strengthen the collective efforts of the international community and particularly the United Nations system. Regarding the administrative aspects, his delegation considered that the Secretary-General should appoint a Co-ordinator from among his assistants whenever a serious natural disaster occurred; it therefore agreed with the provisions of operative paragraph 1.

37. With regard to operative paragraphs 2, 3 and 4, it had been said during the discussion that the need for a permanent office was justified in the Secretary-General's report (E/4994). His delegation felt, however, that in preparing the report not enough attention had been given to organizational matters, particularly in chapter V, and that the report was somewhat one-sided and therefore unsuitable to form the sole basis for specific proposals to the General Assembly. Whether the Secretary-General could use existing staff members for the task or would need a new office and new staff was not a humanitarian but an administrative question. It was all too easy to go on expanding the United Nations administrative apparatus. His delegation therefore found operative paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 unacceptable.

38. He agreed with the French representative about the title of the draft resolution. The wording "other disaster situations" was ambiguous and could be used against countries' interests. In a resolution proposing specific measures, any vagueness in defining the objectives of the

resolution was inadmissible. The definition of natural disasters and the scope of the problem were set forth in paragraph 16 of the Secretary-General's report (E/4994); it was clear that the title should be "Assistance in cases of natural disaster". That wording was simple and easy to interpret and made the Co-ordinator's terms of reference perfectly clear.

39. His delegation shared the anxiety of the Turkish and other delegations, especially those of the developing countries, to improve the work of the United Nations in disaster relief but felt that some of the measures proposed in the draft resolution would have only a symbolic value in humanitarian terms and lead to a proliferation of administration without benefit to the sufferers.

40. His delegation supported the amendments of Dahomey and France contained in document A/C.3/L.1906.

41. Mr. ČALOVSKI (Yugoslavia) said that his delegation attached great importance to the efforts of the Committee and of the Economic and Social Council to enable the United Nations to provide real assistance in case of natural disaster, since it knew from experience how vital international help was. He hoped that the present discussion would help and would bring about a growing awareness in the international community of the role it had to play. Natural disasters would never be eliminated and it was vital to start organizing for joint efforts.

42. He would like to hear the views of the Consultant to the Secretary-General and the Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs on the question of a United Nations emergency fund, an idea which was strongly supported by many delegations, including his own, but which neither of them had mentioned.

43. His delegation welcomed draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897. Although Yugoslavia had been advocating something more than a post in the United Nations Secretariat, a Co-ordinator would be helpful and his Government would co-operate with him as closely as possible. The Co-ordinator's effectiveness would depend on what materials and activities he had to co-ordinate. Yugoslavia had advocated something more than co-ordination, since in the initial stage disaster-stricken countries would need material assistance and immediate relief, not advice. He did not agree with the comments of the United Kingdom representative at the 1888th meeting on the question of an emergency fund. He wished the proposed Co-ordinator every success and hoped that his appointment would not preclude the establishment of a United Nations emergency fund for assistance in cases of natural disaster.

44. Mr. MASUD (Pakistan) recalled that the role of the United Nations in providing assistance in cases of natural disaster had been gradually expanded and improved by the governing bodies and secretariats of the organizations of the United Nations system. His delegation had on a number of occasions expressed the view that the financial, technical and human resources of the developing countries were not sufficient to cope with major calamities and would have to be supplemented by external assistance. The United Nations represented the most appropriate machinery for organizing international assistance and ensuring that it was

delivered in time to the places where it was needed most. He welcomed the growing recognition that relief of human suffering should take precedence over political and economic considerations.

45. Earlier United Nations measures to help in cases of natural disaster, such as General Assembly resolutions 2034 (XX) and 2435 (XXIII) had been limited to requesting studies on various aspects of the question. Until the disasters in Peru and Pakistan in 1970, there had been no comprehensive efforts to ensure that the United Nations and its organizations and agencies could work in a concerted way on prevention, relief and rehabilitation in case of disasters. In that connexion, he recalled his delegation's statement to the General Assembly that there were limits to both financial resources and operational ability and that the United Nations was not yet able to translate fully into action the spontaneous sympathy and human solidarity manifested throughout the world when disaster struck a member of the human family. General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV) had not been confined to principles, guidelines and studies: it had been a call to action, requesting the Secretary-General to submit recommendations and conclusions on all aspects where appropriate measures were needed. Its main recommendation was that the central co-ordination machinery of the United Nations should be strengthened. Those conclusions had been endorsed by the Secretary-General in his report (E/4994) and had been formalized in Council resolution 1612 (LI), of which his delegation had been a sponsor.

46. Draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 was largely based on Council resolution 1612 (LI), but with substantial improvements. The functions of the proposed Co-ordinator, as set forth in operative paragraph 1, related to four identifiable but related aspects of assistance in cases of natural disaster.

47. The first aspect was the application of science and technology to the prevention and control of natural disasters and the improvement of early warning systems. At the time of the 1970 cyclone in eastern Pakistan, the intricate cyclone warning system had unfortunately failed, causing delay and confusion. Rapid advances in science and technology had added greatly to mankind's resources for combating such calamities, but they were still to a large extent unused. While the United Nations obviously could and should provide assistance for that purpose, it was still necessary to devise the best procedure for initiating such projects.

48. The second aspect concerned pre-disaster planning and preparedness, including such measures as contingency plans, organization, stockpiling and planning in disaster-prone countries, with appropriate external assistance. One of the greatest difficulties in organizing appropriate and speedy relief was the breakdown in communications caused by disasters such as cyclones. In Pakistan there had been a breakdown in communications, a disruption of telecommunications and transport, delays in information on the magnitude of the calamity and the extent and kind of relief required. The lack of vital information was particularly alarming in the light of the Secretary-General's observation in his report that the first 24 hours after a disaster might be crucial.

49. The Co-ordinator's essential function related to the phase of emergency relief immediately after the occurrence of a disaster. Subparagraphs (a), (b), (c), (d) and (e) of operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution set forth the means by which the Co-ordinator could ensure the provision of relief in the speediest and most effective way. His capacity to do so would depend on three factors: planning and preparedness for disaster, efficiency and co-ordination of the relief system, and financial capacity. The sponsors of the draft resolution had evidently felt it necessary to concentrate for the time being on improving and enhancing the operational ability of the system. Since the Co-ordinator could not be expected to receive the necessary co-operation from the other agencies of the United Nations system and from the States concerned unless he commanded proper respect and prestige, he should be appointed at the level of Under-Secretary-General.

50. The draft resolution's concentration on the organizational aspects of the subject did not imply that the Organization's financial resources were satisfactory or irrelevant. The only increase was the provision in operative paragraph 10 raising by \$50,000 the sum which the Secretary-General was authorized to draw from the Working Capital Fund for emergency assistance: that could be only a token contribution. One of the greatest constraints on the United Nations system was the shortage of funds for relief immediately following a disaster. A number of proposals had been made in the past for the allocation of funds for immediate relief, such as Economic and Social Council resolution 1533 (XLIX), recommending a special voluntary emergency fund for disasters, the Secretary-General's proposal in paragraph 96 of his report (E/4994) concerning a paid-up fund of voluntary contributions by Governments and the suggestion by the International Red Cross concerning a fund of \$1 million or \$2 million on which appropriate bodies could draw for emergency relief. His delegation had suggested at the fifty-first session of the Council¹ that the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Co-ordinator, should be authorized to draw on the resources available under the regular budget to provide prompt emergency relief, such drawings to be reimbursed by voluntary contributions received later. Although still convinced of the soundness of the suggestion, his delegation had agreed in the interests of harmony to await the report of the Secretary-General requested in operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution, on the basis of the Co-ordinator's practical experience.

51. The Co-ordinator would have to phase out relief operations as the country moved into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction, as stated in subparagraph (i) of operative paragraph 1. The Secretary-General emphasized in his report that the implications for rehabilitation and reconstruction should be taken into account in the early stages of the disaster and it was therefore essential for the Co-ordinator to continue to interest himself in the activities of the United Nations agencies concerned with those aspects. He welcomed the recent changes in UNDP procedure, increasing its ability to assist in emergency situations. His delegation attached great importance to the principle embodied in the tenth preambular paragraph that

emergency projects for relief and rehabilitation for afflicted countries should be additional to assistance provided for normal country programmes.

52. At the eleventh session of the UNDP Governing Council, held from 14 January to 2 February 1971, his delegation had made a number of recommendations on UNDP assistance to countries stricken by or prone to natural disaster, to the effect that local costs of projects should be waived at the discretion of the Administrator, preference should be given to projects designed to assist a disaster-stricken country without prejudice to continuing programmes, susceptibility to disaster should be taken into account in the indicative planning figures for UNDP country programmes, and a portion of the programme reserve should be earmarked for projects relating to relief and rehabilitation for disaster-stricken countries.

53. His delegation also attached importance to the eleventh preambular paragraph concerning the role of the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, whose importance was also stressed in paragraphs 80 and 81 of the Secretary-General's report (E/4994). It was essential that the International Bank and other credit agencies should provide assistance for reconstructing stricken areas without prejudice to the normal development assistance provided to the countries concerned.

54. It was generally recognized, and was clear from the draft resolution, that the Co-ordinator could perform his functions adequately only if his efforts were complemented by measures taken by both potential recipient countries and donor countries. It was essential for countries which were susceptible to natural disaster to prepare contingency plans, set up disaster warning systems, stockpile relief supplies, improve communications and, if possible, establish a national disaster relief system. Donor Governments should be able to provide generous and prompt assistance, including stand-by relief units and the means for delivering supplies by air, sea and land. With the exception of Norway and Sweden, however, no country had as yet given any positive indication of such preparedness to the Secretary-General. In that connexion, his delegation had studied with interest annex III of the Secretary-General's report concerning the legal status of relief units made available through the United Nations.

55. There had been a notable expansion in the character and scope of United Nations humanitarian assistance. Its assistance to East Pakistan had broadened the concept of its role and illustrated the value of expanding the application of the proposed machinery to "other disaster situations". His Government had welcomed the United Nations relief operations and had concluded a special agreement with the United Nations to ensure that humanitarian relief operations were not obscured by political conflict. If the United Nations was to be able to perform its humanitarian role in natural disasters and any other disaster situations, it was essential that no conditions should be imposed which would bring that role into conflict with the fundamental principles of the Charter.

56. Mr. PAPADEMAS (Cyprus) said that his delegation had co-sponsored General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV) and was happy to sponsor the draft resolution before the

¹ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-first Session, 1787th meeting.*

Committee. He expressed his appreciation to the representative of Turkey on his initiative and to the Secretariat for the work it had done.

57. In the consultations among the sponsors of the draft resolution, his delegation had from the outset expressed the view that "disaster situations", including the expression "emergency situations" employed in the preamble, should be interpreted as situations resulting from natural disasters such as famine, epidemics, etc. The text contained no definition of the term "natural disasters" and his delegation was of the opinion that it should be taken to cover any disaster caused by acts of nature—an interpretation which would include all situations caused by the forces of nature that could not be prevented by man. Accordingly, in response to the comments of the representative of Ghana, he felt that it was not possible for the United Nations to include man-made disasters. Moreover, he wondered who could define what man-made disasters were.

58. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) said that Morocco had always attached great importance to the item under discussion, to such an extent that it had traditionally co-sponsored the resolutions adopted on that subject.

59. International solidarity played an important role when natural disasters occurred and it was essential to co-ordinate international assistance to ensure judicious selection and better distribution and utilization of relief supplies. While the international generosity displayed in times of disaster was frequently admirable, it sometimes failed to meet the particular needs of the recipient country and was thus to little or no avail. The aim of the draft resolution was to ensure that the maximum possible use was made of international aid provided rapidly in response to appeals from stricken countries. Moreover, with the establishment of the post of Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, international assistance would in a sense become less philanthropic and more of a moral obligation. It would indeed become a splendid symbol of the spontaneity of international generosity, something which her country had good cause to remember. When the town of Agadir had been struck by an earthquake, aid had been received from all parts, but the remoteness of the area, the breakdown in communications and the urgency of the situation had shown how difficult it was for a country like Morocco to cope with such calamities. The magnitude of the catastrophe had prompted the King of Morocco to propose the idea of a "White Fleet" under the United Nations flag which would be ready at all times to furnish the appropriate assistance quickly and effectively.

60. The sponsors of the present draft resolution included almost all the countries which, in the second half of the twentieth century, had suffered severely from natural disasters. She expressed her gratitude to all those delegations that had spoken in favour of a text that would certainly become a landmark in relations among nations and for their support of what was a new manifestation of international co-operation.

61. Mr. DAMMERT (Peru) said that the tragic experience of the earthquake of 31 May 1970 made his country particularly aware of the need to set up within the United Nations permanent, dynamic and effective machinery for

the immediate mobilization of relief to countries suffering from unforeseeable natural disasters, so as to reduce the ensuing devastation and the terrifying loss of life and property. It was also essential for speedy relief measures to include expert technical services. Experience showed that the lack of co-ordinated technical assistance led to confusion and delay and placed obstacles in the way of effective reconstruction work.

62. Accordingly, his delegation was happy to sponsor draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897: it dealt with a subject which undeniably merited the attention of the international community. Its provisions were profoundly humanitarian in nature and he was sure that it would be adopted unanimously. Consequently, his delegation would be unable to vote for the second amendment in document A/C.3/L.1906.

63. Mr. ACRAMAN (Fiji) said that his delegation supported the draft resolution. Fiji, isolated as it was in the vastness of the South Pacific, was only too well acquainted with natural disasters and their heartbreaking aftermath. Each year, from November to April, Fiji faced the possibility of hurricanes—often with winds in excess of 150 knots—that sometimes led to disastrous floods. It also knew something of the helpless terror of earthquakes. Consequently, Fiji maintained emergency stocks to deal with such situations and he hoped that the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator would consider helping to finance the cost of such supplies elsewhere, since preparedness could often cushion the full impact of natural disasters. Like Fiji, many countries lived through seasons in which natural disasters could be expected to occur. They had acquired some expertise in the matter and the Co-ordinator should draw on that knowledge in the course of his consultations with countries. Lastly, he warned of the danger of over-supply in emergency situations. Countries frequently over-dramatized the gravity of a particular occurrence and relief organizations could easily fall into disrepute as a result of excessive and unco-ordinated generosity.

64. Mr. BAYULKEN (Turkey) pointed out that the figure "2771" in the fifth preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 should read "2717" and that the word "related" should be inserted before the word "agencies" in the twelfth preambular paragraph. Again, in the thirteenth preambular paragraph, the word "should" ought to be replaced by "could" and, in the fifteenth preambular paragraph, the word "system" should be inserted after "United Nations". The representative of Belgium had also informed him that, in accordance with the usual practice, the last part of operative paragraph 1(c) should read "... non-governmental organizations, in particular by the International Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies". Those were corrections of a technical nature and they did not in any way change the meaning of the text.

65. He hoped that delegations would realize that co-ordinating the views of some 60 sponsors was no easy task and that they would understand his position. With regard to the Ghanaian representative's comments on the word "potential" in operative paragraphs 8 and 9, he observed that the present wording was based largely on that of Council resolution 1612 (LI). He could see no difference between the existing text and that suggested by the

representative of Ghana and felt sure that the Council, which was a technical body, would have refrained from using it if doubts had been expressed. Moreover, the wording in no sense precluded the supply of bilateral aid. In fact, the use of the word "potential" struck a balance between those countries which were able to supply relief assistance in great quantity and those which were unable to do so. The draft resolution made it clear that because of their level of economic development and the meagre resources available to them, the developing countries were precisely the ones that suffered most from natural disasters.

66. The title of Council resolution 1612 (LI) used the words "and other emergency situations". However, with a view to facilitating the unanimous adoption of the draft resolution and in order to avoid creating confusion, the sponsors had decided on the phrase "and other disaster situations", thus establishing the connexion between that phrase and the term "natural disaster" used in the earlier part of the title. In any case, he pointed out that, in General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV), which had been adopted unanimously, the tenth preambular paragraph referred to "similar emergency situations". The sponsors had merely tried to accommodate differing views and it might be advisable, once the resolution was adopted, for the Co-ordinator to define natural disasters and situations resulting therefrom. Such a definition could be submitted to the fifty-third session of the Council and any part of the definition which proved to be unacceptable could then be struck out.

67. In addition, he emphasized that action by the Co-ordinator would be taken solely in response to a request for assistance from a stricken State. The Members of the United Nations were sovereign States and quite obviously, there could be no question of coercion.

68. In introducing draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897, he had felt that the Committee should ponder the matter of the site of the office of the Co-ordinator, but it now seemed that there was an overwhelming desire, if not a consensus, to establish the office at Geneva. Accordingly, the sponsors would, in his view, be willing to accept the third amendment in document A/C.3/L.1906. On the other hand, he saw little value in replacing the words "an adequate permanent office" by "a small office" as proposed in the second amendment of the same document. The debate had revealed that few staff members would be required in the new unit. Similarly, all were agreed on the importance of the work to be done by the Co-ordinator, who would be in touch with Governments, the executive heads of the specialized agencies and voluntary organizations. Consequently, his rank should be consonant with the nature of his duties and he should not be placed in a position in which it would be impossible for him to work effectively. His delegation therefore appealed to the representatives of Dahomey and France not to press the first two amendments contained in document A/C.3/L.1906. The sponsors were prepared to accept their third amendment if the Committee did not wish to vote on the alternative sites.

69. Mr. KITTANI (Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs) said that in view of the fact that the wording "International Red Cross" had been used in the

penultimate preambular paragraph, and had also been used in other resolutions, and since both the International Committee of the Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies agreed to the use of the term, for the sake of consistency, the wording "International Red Cross" should be used in operative paragraph 1 (c).

70. The financial implications of establishing the Co-ordinator's office in New York were described in the report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its fiftieth and fifty-first sessions² and had been computed at \$142,000. If the office was established at Geneva, the expenditure would be \$122,900.

71. Mr. SEKYIAMAH (Ghana) thanked the representative of Turkey for explaining why he did not wish to accept the proposed amendment to operative paragraph 9; he would assume that the proposal to expand operative paragraph 8 (b) was also rejected.

72. He asked the representative of Turkey to confirm that man-made disasters were not included; if he received confirmation, he would withdraw his amendment.

73. Mr. BAYULKEN (Turkey) replied that the terminology had been taken from earlier resolutions on the subject, notably Council resolution 1612 (LI), which had, for example, employed the term "emergency situation". The words "other emergency situations" in the title of that resolution had been deliberately changed to "other disaster situations" in the title of the present draft resolution in response to the wishes of a large number of delegations.

74. Mr. YAÑEZ-BARNUEVO (Spain) thanked the representative of Turkey for clarifying the terminology used in the title. The title was important since it referred to the functions and powers of the proposed Co-ordinator's office. He pointed out that the English text read "and other disaster situations", while the Spanish and French versions were different. The scope of the resolution would vary depending on the terms used. As the representative of Turkey had pointed out, the words "and other emergency situations" were used in a resolution of the Council, and the representative of Ghana interpreted the title to include man-made situations. It was advisable to ensure that all language versions were the same; since the English title was the shortest and the most precise and was also the original title supported by the sponsors, the titles in the other languages should conform to it.

75. Mr. BOOTHE (Jamaica), and Mr. VAN WALSUM (Netherlands) requested a vote on the site of the Co-ordinator's office.

76. Mr. HILL (Consultant to the Secretary-General), replying to a question from the representative of Yugoslavia concerning an emergency fund, said that the Secretary-General in his report (E/4994) had described the difficulties involved in establishing an emergency fund and had

² See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6B*, documents A/C.5/1366 and Add.1 and 2.

proposed alternative solutions which had not been taken up. He could therefore say nothing further on the subject

77. With regard to the comments by the representatives of Ghana and Poland on the need for a separate office, he said that the proposed size of the office represented a minimum below which the Secretary-General would not recommend that the United Nations should assume increased responsibility (see E/4994, para. 86). In May 1971 the Secretary-General had hoped that one of the Under-Secretaries-General or Assistant Secretaries-General could perform the supervisory functions: he had invited the comments of Member States on the subject and their statements together with the draft resolution had made it clear that the Co-ordinator would have to be a full-time, able, active and high-level official. Consequently the possibility that someone could combine the functions of Co-ordinator with his present duties had been completely eliminated.

78. Mr. ČALOVSKEI (Yugoslavia) referred to paragraph 95 of document E/4994 which stated that the Secretary-General had been asked by the Economic and Social Council to comment on the various methods of establishing an emergency fund, including the establishment of a United Nations fund to be financed from voluntary contributions. The Secretary-General had concluded that the possible advantages of such a fund would be outweighed by its disadvantages in view of the experience of the International Relief Union established under the aegis of the League of Nations in 1927. The Yugoslav delegation thought it was rather odd to compare an initiative to be taken in 1971 with what had happened in 1927.

79. Mr. DE LATAILLADE (France) said that, in the conviction that the Co-ordinator could be trusted to exercise his discretion in the matter of staffing, the French and Dahomean delegations had decided to withdraw their amendment to operative paragraph 3 (A/C.3/L.1906, para. 2). They wished, however, to retain the amendments to operative paragraphs 2 and 4.

80. Mr. SEKYIAMAH (Ghana) said that it was his understanding that the Cypriot representative agreed with his view that emergency situations could be taken to include man-made disasters. As the sponsors seemed to be divided on the scope of the draft resolution, he suggested that the voting should be deferred to allow time for consultations.

81. Mr. PAPADEMAS (Cyprus) said that the Ghanaian representative had misunderstood his statement. There was no disagreement among the sponsors about the term "emergency situations" which, in the context of the draft resolution, were regarded as situations resulting from natural disasters. There was therefore no need to postpone the voting.

82. Mrs. WARZAZI (Morocco) moved that the general debate should be closed and that the voting should begin forthwith.

It was so decided.

83. Mr. EVDOKKEEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) asked for a separate vote on operative paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 10.

84. The CHAIRMAN invited members to vote on the amendments submitted by Dahomey and France (A/C.3/L.1906).

The amendment to operative paragraph 2 was rejected by 51 votes to 10, with 29 abstentions.

The amendment to operative paragraph 4 was adopted by 72 votes to 5, with 12 abstentions.

85. The CHAIRMAN put operative paragraph 4 of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897, as amended, to the vote.

Operative paragraph 4, as amended, was adopted by 83 votes to 6.

86. Mr. SEKYIAMAH (Ghana), speaking on a point of order, requested a separate vote on the title of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897.

87. Mr. YAÑEZ-BARNUEVO (Spain), speaking on a point of order, proposed that, if the representative of Ghana agreed, the separate vote should be taken only on the words "and other disaster situations".

88. Mr. SEKYIAMAH (Ghana) agreed to the proposal of the representative of Spain.

The words "and other disaster situations" in the title were retained by 62 votes to 1, with 23 abstentions.

Operative paragraph 2 was adopted by 78 votes to 7, with 5 abstentions.

Operative paragraph 3 was adopted by 79 votes to 8, with 3 abstentions.

Operative paragraph 10 was adopted by 83 votes to 8, with 2 abstentions.

The draft resolution as a whole, as orally revised and as amended, was adopted by 85 votes to none, with 8 abstentions.

89. Miss JAUREGUIBERRY (Argentina) said that her country had traditionally supported all measures designed to reduce and prevent damage by natural disasters. It had voted for draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 because of the lofty principles underlying it, waiving exceptionally its policy of opposing any proposal involving an increase in international bureaucracy. For the same reason it had supported the amendments submitted by France and Dahomey (A/C.3/L.1906).

The meeting rose at 7.15 p.m.