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President: Mr. DRISS (Tunisia)

AGENDA ITEM 14

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1. Mr. FERNAND-LAURENT (France) congratulated the Secretary-General on his report (E/4994), which gave a comprehensive account of the present situation, identified the problems and indicated the responsibilities of the international community. It was only when it dealt with specific suggestions relating to organizational matters that the report began to seem debatable. For instance, in the wide-ranging terms of reference he wished to assign to a disaster relief co-ordinator, the Secretary-General wanted to include the encouragement of scientific and technical studies on the provision of relief. His own delegation would certainly support that proposal, provided that such studies were not carried out under the responsibility of the Co-ordinator, since many organizations, such as WMO, UNESCO (heir to the International Relief Union) and the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO) had for long been doing useful work in that field.

2. His delegation had certain observations to make regarding the two draft resolutions before the Council. First, it fully supported the draft resolution introduced at the previous meeting by the Peruvian representative (E/L.1434), on the understanding that operative paragraph 4 should be interpreted literally, in other words that the Economic and Social Council would simply convey a desire and that UNDP, its Governing Council and its Administrator would remain entirely free to decide on the action to be taken in response to requests for assistance from the Governments of Colombia and Chile.

3. The draft resolution contained in document E/L.1438 had the full sympathy of his delegation, since it was the logical follow-up to the conclusions reached in the Secretary-General's report, to the work of the League of Red Cross Societies and to the memorandum submitted by the United Kingdom (E/L.1404); moreover, it took account of

recent experience with regard to co-ordination in cases of natural disaster. His delegation wished, however, to suggest a few amendments.

4. First, it noted that the beginning of operative paragraph 1 allowed the Secretary-General the possibility of appointing as Co-ordinator either someone from outside or a senior United Nations official who would undertake that task in addition to his usual duties. Then, in sub-paragraph 1 (a), it did not seem realistic, as the Director-General of UNICEF had already pointed out (1786th meeting), to use the word "direct"; the Co-ordinator should not try to actually direct the specialized agencies, nor, moreover, could he do so efficiently with the limited administrative means at his disposal. His delegation therefore formally proposed that the word "direct" should be deleted from that sub-paragraph.

5. It also felt that the end of operative paragraph 2, from the words "and at a level equivalent to . . .", should be deleted. The Secretary-General should be left free to settle the matter, which was not within the Council's competence. There seemed no reason why the Co-ordinator should not have the rank of Under Secretary-General.

6. With regard to operative paragraph 3, his delegation would like to insert the word "small" before "permanent"; in the French text, it would prefer the word "*bureau*" instead of "*service*". Perhaps the Secretariat had been impressed by the magnitude of recent disasters, but the number of victims had no direct bearing on the size of the staff. His delegation would prefer the employment of a small but efficient team, at least for the first four years.

7. His delegation also fully supported the observations made at the previous meeting by the United Kingdom representative about financing, about the undesirability of creating international stockpiles just at a time when the League of Red Cross Societies was encouraging the creation of regional or local stockpiles, and about liaison arrangements. One person should suffice to ensure liaison between the Secretary-General and the Co-ordinator.

8. With regard to the decision as to whether the permanent office should be in New York or Geneva, his Government would rather favour Geneva in view of the neutrality of Switzerland, which was propitious for any humanitarian action, and also because Geneva was already the seat not only of the Red Cross institutions but also of the headquarters of such specialized agencies as WHO and WMO -- not to mention the relative proximity of FAO -- and, more recently, of an international computing centre which might prove most useful. It was also the town which the Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs had chosen, in agreement with the Secretary-General, as the centre of his activities. Another factor to be taken into account, even if not a determining one, was the financial

implications; it would be interesting to know the cost differences between New York and Geneva.

9. Mr. NÁTHON (Hungary) said that the very full report presented by the Secretary-General (E/4994) was a real work of reference for all organizations which gave assistance in cases of natural disaster. However, his delegation wished to lodge a strong protest against a detail of the map accompanying the report, which did not reflect the present state of affairs in Europe with regard to the two Germanies.

10. In reply to the Secretary-General's *note verbale*, his country had stressed the importance it attached to the matter and had welcomed the fact that the United Nations family intended to give greater assistance to countries that were victims of natural disasters. The Hungarian Government and various Hungarian non-governmental organizations provided bilateral and other assistance in such cases. Like the Secretary-General, his delegation believed that the United Nations could and should play an essential role in the over-all co-ordination of all international efforts to deal with such events.

11. Warning systems should be set up at the regional and inter-regional levels, and close co-operative links established between neighbouring countries with a view to forecasting disasters and taking appropriate measures. With regard to the establishment of plans for forecasting natural disasters and the state of preparedness of the services concerned, he had no doubt that the international organizations could provide invaluable technical assistance to countries which had neither the experience nor the necessary means.

12. When a disaster had actually occurred, the responsibilities of the international community – and consequently of the international agencies – obviously increased considerably. Emergency relief should be adequately planned, and the mobilization of resources for disaster areas called for co-ordinated and concerted action.

13. In the view of his delegation, international assistance could also play a major role as regards rehabilitation and reconstruction. The type of assistance needed had to be determined on the basis of detailed requests, and until that problem had been solved there was inevitably a risk of wasting some of the assistance offered.

14. So far as the institutional arrangements to be made at the international level were concerned, his delegation was not convinced that the creation of a permanent office, as proposed by the Secretary-General, was necessary at present; it took the view that efforts should be co-ordinated by the existing organs of the United Nations Secretariat, out of the resources already available, and that the role of Co-ordinator should be entrusted to a Deputy or Assistant Secretary-General. In that connexion, his delegation supported the proposals made at the previous meeting by the Soviet delegation, regarding draft resolution E/L.1438.

15. His delegation also wished to formally propose the deletion, in the second and third lines of operative paragraph 6 of that draft resolution, of the words "of States Members of the United Nations and of the specialized agencies and the IAEA". It reserved the right to speak

again, after a more thorough examination, on other aspects of the draft resolution at a later stage in the discussion.

16. In conclusion, he said his delegation fully supported the draft resolution E/L.1434, as amended at the previous meeting with the agreement of the Peruvian representative.

17. Mr. SMOQUINA (Italy) said that, given the breadth and complexity of the problem, the most striking features of the Secretary-General's report were that it was concise and at the same time comprehensive and that it analysed all the aspects of the problem in a balanced and constructive manner. Although the report dealt primarily with sudden, unforeseeable natural disasters, the solutions it recommended could also be useful in man-made situations that called for urgent concerted action. That dual-purpose aspect of the report foreshadowed the possibility of a general plan of assistance in emergencies.

18. In view of the recent frequency of exceptionally severe natural disasters, it was becoming necessary to study their causes and if possible to prevent them. The greatest attention should therefore be given to the application of science and technology to the prediction and control of natural disasters and to the planning of potential measures to forestall them. Even more important was the preparation of relief-planning services: although it was still not possible to eliminate all the effects of natural disasters, precautions could be taken to protect human life and limit damage to property. Chapters I-IV of the report, to which his Government had contributed by replying to the Secretary-General's request for information, therefore raised no objections.

19. Some problems might, however, arise in respect of chapters V and VI which dealt respectively with organizational arrangements at the international level and financing. Several United Nations specialized agencies were engaged in work connected with relief in cases of natural disaster. Instead of adding to the already complex structures, it would seem preferable to synchronize activities and methods and means of action, bearing in mind the circumstances peculiar to each case. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, however, international assistance could only supplement the efforts of the countries themselves, and it was to be hoped that the latter would decide to take the measures suggested by the Secretary-General regarding the maintenance of the necessary public services, whether for the purpose of preparing for natural disasters or for that of taking action once they had occurred.

20. With regard to the organization and centralisation of relief activities within the United Nations, his delegation greatly appreciated the concrete proposals put forward by the Secretary-General and the constructive contribution offered by the United Kingdom (E/L.1404) and Turkish Governments (E/L.1425). Draft resolution E/L.1438, introduced by the United Kingdom representative on behalf of the sponsors, seemed on the whole to propose a satisfactory solution to the problem of co-ordinating assistance efforts in cases of natural disaster. However, his delegation would like to know the financial implications.

21. The Italian delegation believed that the main role of the co-ordinator should be to utilize the skills and

experience of United Nations bodies and to co-operate closely with other organizations active in the sphere in question, and particularly the League of Red Cross Societies. It was also necessary to bear in mind the experience gained in the past by the International Relief Union and the important operational contribution which the Intergovernmental Committee for European Migration (ICEM) could make in the transport of refugees.

22. As his delegation had suggested at the forty-ninth session of the Council, co-ordination at the central level should go hand-in-hand with co-ordination at the regional level, for instance in the matter of stocks of relief supplies.

23. While reserving its right to comment later on the wording of the draft resolution, his delegation wished to stress two requirements which it considered essential to the solution of the problem of co-ordination: first, the person appointed as co-ordinator should be of unquestionable moral authority, and, secondly, the international community would have to accept certain basic principles without which its relief work would prove ineffectual.

24. In conclusion, he said that his delegation fully supported the draft resolution contained in document E/L.1434 and wished to express its sympathy to the Governments of Chile and Colombia whose countries had recently suffered natural disasters.

25. Mr. ANTOINE (Haiti) referred to the tragedies that could result from natural disasters such as the earthquakes which had shaken certain Latin American countries and the cyclones which periodically devastated the West Indies. The economy of the latter region was based on agriculture and in particular on such commodities as cocoa, coffee and sugar, which required years of work before they became economically viable. Famine and death were the inevitable aftermath of natural disasters. His Government, like all other Governments, was giving stricken countries all the help which the distances involved and the means at its disposal allowed. His delegation consequently hoped that the Council would adopt the two draft resolutions under consideration. In his opinion, the two texts should be merged into one resolution, to give them greater effect.

26. The Haitian delegation was gratified that the organizations within the United Nations system had not remained indifferent to a serious problem and that a series of measures was being recommended that would establish, possibly at Geneva, information and planning services along international lines whose task would be to support the action of Governments and international bodies. Other delegations had emphasized from a more technical point of view the problems which the whole international community would have to confront in that field and had advanced arguments which would help to guide the Economic and Social Council towards finding rapid solutions to those problems.

27. In conclusion, he said that he wished to assure the Chilean Government of his delegation's sincere sympathy.

28. Mr. BEER (League of Red Cross Societies), speaking under rule 75 of the rules of procedure, noted with satisfaction the long history of good co-operation between

the organizations within the United Nations system and the International Red Cross, a term which embraced the International Red Cross Committee, the League of Red Cross Societies and the national societies. The machinery of the Red Cross, with regard to both pre-disaster planning and emergency relief, was well described in the Secretary-General's report.

29. He supported the Secretary-General's conclusions and would therefore limit his comments to a few points. First of all, there already existed between the International Red Cross and the United Nations, WHO, UNICEF, UNHCR, FAO, WMO, and other international organizations, a form of co-operation whose promptness and efficiency were due to its non-bureaucratic nature and its basis in excellent personal relationships. In that connexion, he welcomed the fact that the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1438, had given the assurance that they did not wish to impede that spontaneous co-operation.

30. The creation of a new co-ordinating office, which would be active even if of modest dimensions, was a useful idea. However, it would be necessary to define with precision its attributions in the light of the existing relationships between relief organizations. Co-ordination between the organizations of the United Nations system was not the most important aspect of the matter. There were others which were essential, such as the co-ordination of multinational aid with bilateral aid, co-ordination in the field -- which depended on Governments and called for prior planning -- and the role of the national Red Cross societies.

31. Governments, in particular, played a decisive role: if a Government rejected the conditions for assistance when a disaster occurred, a co-ordinating office could not do much. It was also indispensable for Governments to associate the national Red Cross societies in their pre-disaster planning, for otherwise the Red Cross could not effectively channel private aid, as advocated in the Secretary-General's report.

32. The Secretary-General had given much attention in his report to pre-disaster planning, which while perhaps not as dramatic as the activities of the Co-ordinator in forwarding relief, was perhaps even more important. Such planning involved the distribution of responsibilities, the making of the necessary arrangements in advance (customs clearance, transport, telecommunications, getting the representatives of relief organizations to the scene and so on) and the training of personnel at all levels. The Red Cross itself had to work actively in the field of planning. It had to strengthen its national organizations to be able to meet the demands of Governments, and Governments in turn would have to rely to a large extent on those national societies and give them the necessary authority to channel aid from abroad.

33. Planning would also be the most important activity of the new co-ordinating office. It would have to bear in mind that Governments were sovereign and that their representatives were in the best position to know what national needs were. Planning along such lines would help to overcome some of the policy problems encountered in the past not only by avoiding the provision of unwanted aid, but also by

creating an atmosphere in which aid from outside would be used most effectively.

34. A joint effort must be made to improve the state of preparedness of both facilities and personnel. Money was not the most serious problem, for, given suitable plans, Governments and the public could always be relied upon. In that connexion, he emphasized that nothing should be done to hinder voluntary contributions. It would also be useful to gather information on the habits, beliefs and other characteristics of disaster-stricken populations, so as to avoid past errors. The Red Cross had undertaken that task and it would like to have the co-operation of other interested bodies.

35. The International Red Cross was prepared to continue its active co-operation with United Nations organizations. The League possessed a machinery which enabled it to act immediately without holding meetings and discussions. Furthermore, it was in a position by itself to mobilize public opinion. With such facilities at its disposal, it should remain an essential factor in the joint effort to cope with natural disasters. Its activities would have their full impact if it had the support of the United Nations and especially of Governments.

36. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America), referring to draft resolution E/L.1438 of which his delegation was a co-sponsor, said that he wished to dispel some fears which had been expressed about permanent aid machinery in cases of natural disaster.

37. That draft resolution aimed at strengthening the good work which had been done so far and not at hindering it. It must be construed not as criticism of that work but as an expression of intent to reinforce the United Nations machinery in that field as requested by the Secretary-General. There was no thought of preventing any organization from taking immediate action in case of disaster; all that was asked was that the organization should keep the Co-ordinator informed. Contributions separate from those referred to in operative paragraph 1 (b) were not ruled out. On the whole, the draft resolution did not seek to impede the activities of those who wished to help victims in ways other than through the intermediary of the Co-ordinator.

38. The United States delegation would carefully study the amendments proposed. With reference to the French amendment to delete the word "direct" from operative paragraph 1 (a), he pointed out that the Executive Director of UNICEF had stated that his organization would accept guidance and leadership in its disaster relief activities. He did not think that the word should be deleted, for the English word "direct" did not imply that the Co-ordinator would run the affairs of independent organizations. It suggested rather a role which might be compared to that of a traffic policeman. The Co-ordinator would be guiding the activities of the organizations without impeding them.

39. Commenting next on the very full and useful report of the Secretary-General (E/4994), with regard to the financing proposals, he agreed to extend the use of the working capital fund for emergency aid at the amount of \$150,000 per year. That money, however, should not be

used for pre-disaster planning, which should be financed by voluntary contributions. On the other hand, he was not in favour of setting up a natural disaster emergency fund, or of pre-disaster pledges of voluntary contributions. He believed that Governments would respond more generously on the basis of each disaster rather than to a general call. Furthermore, frequently, supplies and transport are more urgent than funds.

40. Lastly, he indicated that his delegation would support draft resolution E/L.1434 as amended.

41. Mr. GHACHEM (Tunisia) congratulated the Secretary-General on his report and stressed that any new provisions concerning assistance in cases of natural disasters should not interfere with assistance already provided by various sources.

42. To ensure world-wide co-ordination of such assistance, there would be a need for active co-operation between the proposed new office, the specialized agencies and inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations, among which he wished particularly to mention ICDO. He drew attention to ICDO's training courses and seminars relating to assistance in cases of natural disaster.

43. His delegation would support draft resolutions E/L.1434 and E/L.1438.

44. Mr. SCOTT (New Zealand) expressed his country's sympathy to the Chilean delegation on the recent earthquake in Chile.

45. His delegation supported draft resolutions E/L.1434 and E/L.1438. The report of the Secretary-General was a well constructed document, offering a clear statement of what had been done and what remained to be done, and leading to realistic conclusions. New Zealand particularly endorsed the idea that the study and prevention of disasters and pre-disaster planning were as important as assistance itself. Since his country was subject to earthquakes, it was well aware that plans had to be made for the reception, stockpiling and distribution of relief supplies. The UNDP resident representatives should encourage Governments to prepare such plans.

46. He was in favour of the suggestion to provide an additional amount of \$25,000 each year from the regular budget specifically for assistance in disaster planning and preparedness. Such assistance would act as a catalyst and encourage the Governments of developing countries to draw up national disaster plans.

47. Regarding the section of the report dealing with stockpiling, he noted that UNICEF kept a stockpile for mothers and children. He also noted that the storage of foodstuffs raised special problems. The report also mentioned a proposal to the effect that WFP should set up an International Food Bank, supplied from five strategically located food reserves. His delegation would like to have more details on that proposal: at first sight it doubted the usefulness of creating five strategically located food reserves since it would seem preferable for the supplies to remain in the producing countries. Again, disaster-prone countries should create their own stockpiles.

48. His delegation also approved the idea that donor countries should be free to determine the amount of their assistance. The question of setting up an Emergency Fund or of adopting a pledging system should be seen in that context. The element of spontaneity in contributions connected with natural disasters must not be disregarded.

49. The Secretary-General had noted the difficulty of foreseeing and planning for cases of disaster, and had pointed out that there was always an element of improvisation. One crucial function of the proposed office would be to obtain, in co-operation with Governments, information on the needs that could not be met on the spot, and on the order of priority of those needs, so as to be able to report it back to all the bodies concerned, together with information on the action of all aid sources. That function was brought out in the memoranda submitted by the United Kingdom (E/L.1404) and by Turkey (E/L.1425).

50. His delegation also supported the idea put forward in chapter V of the Secretary-General's report to the effect that the main job of United Nations bodies was the long-term task of rehabilitation and reconstruction.

51. The Secretary-General's report aimed at remedying the inadequacy of arrangements for international disaster assistance which had been demonstrated by recent events. That situation was particularly deplorable in the United Nations. The Secretary-General's recommendations were realistic and modest, and, it seemed, would not be costly provided that the functions proposed for the new office were not exceeded. The costs should be met from the regular budget.

52. As to where the proposed new office should be established, he was inclined to favour Geneva.

53. In conclusion, he pointed out that he was a co-sponsor of the draft resolution introduced by the United Kingdom representative at the previous meeting (E/L.1438).

54. The PRESIDENT said that, if there were no objections, he would give the floor to the Observer for Colombia under article 75 of the rules of procedure. Beforehand, however, he wished to extend his sympathies and those of the Council on the disaster that had befallen his country.

55. Mr. GARCES (Observer for Colombia) thanked the President and the Council for their expressions of sympathy.

56. Colombia welcomed the attention which members of the Council were giving to the question of assistance in cases of natural disaster. The events that had so unexpectedly stricken Colombia had serious consequences that were difficult to quantify. There had been the loss of human life, but the damage caused to crops and property had also been very great, and deaths due to disease and undernourishment were assuming alarming proportions. Colombia wished to express its gratitude to the League of Red Cross Societies and to the countries which had given valuable assistance in the form of medicines, clothing, etc. Before the recent floods, the Red Cross had made a preliminary estimate of the damage caused. That estimate,

unfortunately already overtaken by events, was available to the Council.

57. His delegation fully supported the Economic and Social Council's action. Having read the Secretary-General's report with great care, it approved its conclusions and recommendations, and it hoped that the discussion, to which it had listened with interest, would have positive results.

58. Mr. NAIK (Pakistan) said that the experience of recent calamities had shown the limits of United Nations means of action, in terms of financial resources and operational ability. The United Nations was not able fully to translate into action that spontaneous upsurge of human solidarity brought forth in the event of great disasters, nor to use, in order to avert the consequences, the actual experience of the stricken countries and the results of technological progress.

59. General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV) was more than a statement of principle: it was a call to action. The Secretary-General's report (E/4994) largely fulfilled the expectations of those responsible for that resolution. Generally speaking, his delegation supported the recommendations of the Secretary-General concerning the way in which the United Nations could assist in the phases of disaster prediction, pre-disaster planning and prevention, emergency relief and reconstruction. The main provision of General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV) was that the central co-ordinating machinery of the United Nations must be strengthened. Pakistan, which supported the Secretary-General's recommendation concerning the establishment of a disaster relief office within the United Nations, had agreed to co-sponsor the draft resolution submitted to the Council (E/L.1438). The Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, whose functions were set out in operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution, would be empowered to assist countries during all phases of natural disasters, but his action could only be effective if sufficient funds were available. The resources currently available were pitifully scarce. The United Nations contribution was limited by General Assembly resolution 2435 (XXIII) to \$100,000 a year, with a ceiling of \$20,000 for each disaster. The Secretary-General envisaged an expenditure of \$205,000 a year for the operational costs of the co-ordinating office (i.e. staffing and administrative requirements). The recommendation concerning technical assistance for pre-disaster planning and prevention was, however, only \$25,000 which was tragically small, and his delegation hoped that the authority of the Secretary-General could be substantially increased to enable him to draw from the Working Capital Fund.

60. His delegation had been pleased to note the recent changes in UNDP's procedures enabling that body to take more effective action in emergency situations, and attached great importance to the principle evolved in the Governing Council to the effect that in the case of countries affected by natural disasters, government obligations to pay their share of the costs of on-going projects should be waived and the level of the country-programme of such countries should be adequately increased. Projects currently under-

taken by UNDP to assist disaster-stricken countries were reimbursable. Such assistance should be over and above the normal level of UNDP's country programmes.

61. At its eleventh session, the UNDP Governing Council established a programme reserve of \$9 million a year for the purpose of assisting the least developed countries, and to meet unforeseen needs (E/4954, para. 71, decision II, subparagraph (e)). At that session his delegation had said that "unforeseen needs" included disaster situations. Part of that reserve, perhaps \$1 million, should be set aside for the purpose of assisting disaster-stricken countries.

62. His delegation was aware that requests for assistance in disaster prevention and planning has so far been very limited. That did not mean that disaster-prone countries were not interested in the possibility of preventing natural disasters; it was simply that those countries gave priority, in the use of available resources, to more directly remunerative projects.

63. The Secretary-General's report also mentioned that the IBRD Group was ready to contribute to reconstruction programmes. For example, the Group had drawn up a programme with an estimated cost of \$180 million for reconstruction and development of the areas of East Pakistan hit by a cyclone in 1970. Some means must be devised, however, whereby IBRD and the other credit agencies could provide assistance for reconstruction of the stricken areas, without prejudice to the normal development assistance provided.

64. The main factor preventing the United Nations from meeting the need for relief and assistance was the lack of funds at the Secretary-General's disposal to offer the stricken countries within 24 or 48 hours after a disaster. The Secretary-General's report highlighted the fact that resources at the disposal of the various United Nations bodies, and even UNICEF and WFP, were not geared to providing immediate relief. The United Nations had to await the receipt of contributions from Governments before it could provide really significant emergency assistance. For the Co-ordinator to be able to act rapidly, the Secretary-General must be empowered to draw upon the funds available to him under the regular budget of the United Nations, it being understood that such funds could be reimbursed by him from the special voluntary contributions received. Such a procedure might be an alternative to the suggestion made by the Red Cross to create a fund of roughly \$2 million (E/4994, para. 97), and would resolve the conflict between the need for immediately available funds and the voluntary nature of assistance.

65. The proposed co-ordinator could perform his task adequately only if Member States, both recipients and donors, took the measures outlined by the Secretary-General.

66. It was imperative for disaster-prone countries to draw up contingency plans and set up disaster warning systems, establish stock-piles of relief supplies, improve communications and create a disaster relief organization and infrastructure. Donor Governments must take all necessary measures to be able to provide assistance generously and promptly. At the twenty-fifth session of the General

Assembly, his delegation had stressed the importance of the need for stand-by relief units and equipment, so that assistance might be brought to stricken areas within 24 to 48 hours of the disaster.¹ If such facilities existed, the Government of the country concerned would not be obliged to seek bilateral aid, entailing delays and political complications. Unfortunately, apart from Sweden and Norway, no other Government had offered its services to the Secretary-General.

67. The Secretary-General's report was limited to action to be taken in cases of natural disaster, but many of the recommendations it contained could be applied in other emergency situations. It had to be emphasized that such assistance must be provided, in accordance with operative paragraph 1 (a) of draft resolution E/L.1438, in response to a request from a stricken State.

68. Mr. CHAMMAS (Lebanon), after assuring the Chilean and Colombian representatives of his sympathy concerning the disasters which had occurred in their countries stated that his country supported draft resolution E/L.1434 as amended.

69. His delegation was very mindful of the comments made on draft resolution E/L.1438, including those of the French representative and the Executive Director of UNICEF (1786th meeting). It would certainly not have joined in sponsoring the draft resolution if it had had the impression that the draft resolution contained provisions liable to jeopardize the activities of existing aid organizations. On the contrary, its objective was to strengthen their action and the title of Co-ordinator given to the head of the office to be set up clearly indicated the nature of his functions.

70. He recognized that operative paragraph 1 (a) could be interpreted in different ways, but he hoped that the explanations of the United States representative would dispel the fears of the representative of France and the Executive Director of UNICEF.

71. His delegation understood the motives of the French delegation and hoped that the other sponsors would have no objection to the word "small" being inserted before the words "permanent office" in paragraph 3, since operative paragraph 4 provided for the possibility of increasing the staff of the office if the need should arise.

72. Mr. EFFAH-APPENTENG (Ghana) said that the recent natural disasters in Chile, Colombia, Peru and Pakistan had emphasized the need to strengthen existing disaster-relief machinery.

73. Generally speaking, his delegation therefore supported draft resolution E/L.1434, as well as the text contained in document E/L.1438. With reference to the latter draft resolution, he said that as the Co-ordinator would not be at least it was to be hoped he would not be a full-time official, his delegation did not think it would be necessary to give him the rank of Under-Secretary-General.

¹ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-fifth Session, Third Committee*, 1791st meeting.

The post could be given a lower rank, without in any way decreasing its importance. Furthermore, his delegation was of the opinion that operative paragraph 5 should provide for the possibility of enlisting staff of non-governmental organizations.

74. Dr. SACKS (World Health Organization) said that at the forty-ninth session of the Council, his organization had stated the ways in which it provided assistance to countries suffering from natural disasters, and that a report by the Secretary-General² outlined the nature and scope of its relief operations in cases of natural disaster.

75. The Secretary-General's report now before the Council (E/4994), on which WHO had been consulted examined the main problems related to the prevention of disasters, pre-disaster planning, emergency action and rehabilitation and reconstruction. In relation to each of these aspects, the role of health services at the national level and of WHO at the international and intergovernmental levels, should be borne in mind.

76. Clearly one of the major concerns after large-scale disasters was the provision of immediate medical assistance, the prevention of the spread of disease and the organization of health and sanitation services in the disaster area. That necessitated the mobilization of national and international health personnel, and the provision of urgently required health supplies and infrastructure. In that connexion, WHO had always worked in close partnership with the League of Red Cross Societies, to whose work it wished to pay tribute, and that partnership involved the immediate exchange of information, the agreement on responsibility for provision of medical supplies, and arrangements by which each organization kept the other constantly informed of any action taken.

77. The Secretary-General had quite rightly emphasized that the main responsibility for taking the action required rested first with the Government of the country victim of the disaster and it was at that level that co-ordination was decisive. In the majority of disaster-prone countries, there were usually WHO country representatives and project staff who could be mobilized along with representatives of other agencies as soon as disaster struck. Such staff worked closely with the representatives of other United Nations bodies, including the UNDP resident representative, and was in constant contact with the national Red Cross and other voluntary organizations. It thus provided a unique source of rapid and precise information which could be decisive in weighing needs and responding to requests by Governments for assistance.

78. The Secretary-General stressed in his report that unnecessary personnel in a given sector and multiplicity of supplies arriving from various sources created infrastructure and morale problems. Because of the highly technical nature of the activities involved, co-ordination should be undertaken by the national health administration and, at the international level, by WHO.

79. He had referred only to certain problems concerning short-term assistance, since the longer-term problems of

pre-disaster planning and rehabilitation and reconstruction in the health field were undertaken with Governments within the normal framework of his organization's technical co-operation activities. Such assistance had been supplied to a large number of countries within WHO's budgetary resources.

80. The Director-General of WHO, as a member of the ACC, had taken an active part in that body's consideration of the methods which could be recommended to the Council to ensure effective implementation of emergency programmes to cope with natural disasters and their co-ordination at the international level. His organization was glad that the Council was bearing in mind existing arrangements in the field of health, and in particular WHO's network of regional offices and representatives as well as its close relationships with the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Health problems required immediate and effective action. Any over-all arrangements relating to disaster emergencies should be limited to mobilizing and co-ordinating the various efforts, whilst assuring to the technical agencies, such as WHO, their necessary flexibility in advising and assisting Governments. His organization would be happy to co-operate towards those ends with any central point the Council might set up.

81. Mr. PEREIRA DA FONSECA (Brazil) said that he would limit his comments to an explanation of his Government's position on natural disasters, since other kinds of disasters created more complex problems such as those of a political nature.

82. With reference to draft resolution E/L.1434, of which Brazil was a co-sponsor, he said that his Government had been profoundly grieved over the disaster which had recently afflicted two friendly countries, Colombia and Chile. One might well ask whether in those cases international aid and the action taken by the various United Nations bodies had been really adequate. They would probably have been more effective if there had been a permanent body responsible for co-ordinating relief activities. He hoped that UNDP and IBRD would give priority to requests for assistance from Chile and Colombia.

83. Of course, international solidarity had been spontaneously displayed on a generous scale, but it was not yet well organized. A very flexible organization which would co-ordinate relief activities and which might subsequently expand and be given greater resources would be enough to begin with. In any case, since resources were limited, they should be allocated to the worst cases.

84. It was necessary to distinguish three stages in dealing with natural disasters: prevention and prediction, emergency relief, and rehabilitation and reconstruction. Assistance should be centred on emergency relief so as to save as many lives as possible. In that connexion his delegation supported operative paragraph 1 of draft resolution E/L.1438, which called on the Secretary-General to appoint a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator. The co-ordinator could, among other things, help stricken countries to organize internally the receipt of aid. It would be preferable for his office to be situated at Geneva since that would facilitate

² E/4853 and Corr.2 and Add.1.

contact with WMO, WHO, many intergovernmental organizations and the International Committee of the Red Cross. His delegation thought that the staffing costs of the co-ordinator's office should be borne by the regular budget of the United Nations. As to funds already available for emergency relief under UNICEF and WFP, they should not be used for other purposes.

85. Mr. ODERO-JOWI (Kenya) said that since the world would not be spared further natural disasters, it was logical and desirable that the international community should organize itself to cope with the consequences. That was why his delegation had become a co-sponsor of draft resolution E/L.1438. As indicated in operative paragraph 1, the Relief Co-ordinator would have broad functions, and the recommendation in operative paragraph 6 was of particular importance. He considered, like others, that the funds needed for the operation of the Co-ordinator's office should be provided from the regular budget of the United Nations.

86. He expressed his sympathy to the Chilean and Colombian Governments on the heavy losses their countries had recently suffered from earthquakes. He intended to vote for draft resolution E/L.1434.

87. Mr. ARIFF (Malaysia) associated himself with the other delegations which had expressed their sympathy to the Chilean and Colombian Governments. He expressed the hope that draft resolution E/L.1434 would be unanimously adopted.

88. Draft resolution E/L.1438 was constructive and should not raise any difficulties. The appointment of a relief co-ordinator was necessary and he hoped that the draft resolution would be unanimously adopted.

89. Mr. PATHMARAJAH (Ceylon) congratulated the Secretary-General on his report on assistance in cases of natural disaster (E/4994), which was both interesting and useful. Because of monsoons, Ceylon was periodically devastated by floods which caused considerable damage. Export products in general and coconuts in particular suffered greatly. Ceylon had to devote a large part of its resources to make good such damage, although it fortunately received some bilateral aid for that purpose. However, on the principle that prevention was better than cure, his Government had developed flood control plans. His country was also taking part in the World Weather Watch organized by WMO, and he expressed gratitude to WMO and particularly to the Swiss Government for the assistance provided under the Voluntary Assistance Programme (VAP) which he hoped would be strengthened.

90. His delegation was particularly moved by the disasters which had afflicted Chile and Colombia, and it would support draft resolution E/L.1434 as amended.

91. It also welcomed the humanitarian sentiments which had inspired the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1438, since it was assuredly an obligation of the international community to come to the aid of countries suddenly stricken by natural disasters. He considered the amend-

ments submitted by the USSR (E/L.1440) reasonable, rational and economic, and he hoped the draft resolution would be adopted with those amendments since what was wanted was not a permanent organization but a plan of operation ready to be put into effect when needed.

92. Mr. PILAVACHI (Greece) expressed his sympathy to the Chilean and Colombian Governments and said that he would support draft resolution E/L.1434.

93. Greece was a co-sponsor of draft resolution E/L.1438 for, having suffered itself from many natural disasters, it was in a position to appreciate the lack of synchronization in the provision of relief. It would therefore welcome the appointment of a relief co-ordinator, which would result in better organization.

94. Mr. NESTERENKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) pointed out that his delegation had proposed an amendment to draft resolution E/L.1434 but had withdrawn it in view of other amendments which had been submitted. He wished to know if those amendments had been incorporated in the text.

95. Mr. AHMED (Secretary of the Council) said that the sponsors had decided to omit operative paragraph 2 from the draft resolution. They had also decided to omit, in former operative paragraph 3, the reference to IMF. Lastly, they decided to replace, in former operative paragraph 4, the words "decide favourably on" by the words "consider favourably".

96. Mr. PEREIRA DA FONSECA (Brazil) said he thought that since WFP was mentioned in former operative paragraph 3, FAO should also be mentioned.

97. The PRESIDENT suggested that the draft resolution E/L.1434, as just amended, should be unanimously adopted.

It was so decided.

98. Mr. SANTA CRUZ (Observer for Chile), speaking under rule 75 of the rules of procedure, thanked the Council for unanimously adopting draft resolution E/L.1434. He was also grateful to all the countries which had shown their solidarity with Chile and Colombia. His delegation had taken note of the amendments which had been introduced in the draft resolution so as to adapt it to existing conditions and procedures within the framework of UNDP. Lastly, it considered draft resolution E/L.1438 an important milestone in the matter of assistance in cases of natural disaster.

99. Mr. GARCES (Observer for Colombia), speaking under rule 75 of the rules of procedure, endorsed the Chilean representative's remarks and welcomed the adoption of draft resolution E/L.1434. He understood and accepted the amendments to that draft resolution. It illustrated the way in which the United Nations conceived of its role, which was to work for the creation of a world united in peace.

100. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) said he hoped that, as the Council had a very heavy agenda, it could resume in plenary meeting, on the morning of Friday 23 July if possible, the discussion of the item under consideration. He welcomed the wide support given to draft

resolution E/L.1438 and hoped it would be adopted at that meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.35 p.m.