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President: Mr. DRISS (Tunisia)

AGENDA ITEM 14

Assistance in cases of natural disaster (*continued*) (E/4994, E/5012 (part I), paras. 41-43; E/5038, chap. VI; E/C.2/727, E/C.2/731, E/C.2/732, E/C.2/735, E/C.2/742, E/L.1404, E/L.1425, E/L.1430, E/L.1434, E/L.1436, E/L.1437, E/L.1438)

1. The PRESIDENT announced that the delegations of Peru and Lebanon had joined the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1438.

2. Mr. SANTA CRUZ (Observer for Chile), speaking under rule 75 of the rules of procedure, said that the item under discussion was one of special concern to his country. In the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (E/4994) Chile was described as a country with a history of recurrent natural disasters. On 8 July 1971, shortly after the publication of that report, Chile had been shaken by a major earthquake. It was difficult for him to divorce the general question of assistance in cases of natural disaster from the particular circumstance of the catastrophe that had befallen his country, particularly since the Latin American countries members of the Council had submitted a draft resolution (E/L.1434) on the subject of measures to be taken following the natural disasters in Colombia and Chile.

3. The loss of life suffered in the recent earthquake was not as great as that suffered in the catastrophes that had affected Pakistan and Peru: ninety-three had died, though in view of the serious condition of many of the wounded survivors, that figure might eventually be higher. Some 500,000 persons, comprising over 5 per cent of the country's population, had been affected by the earthquake, which had extended over an area of 72,324 km²; 14,000 dwellings had been completely destroyed and 221,413 seriously damaged, in the midst of one of the hardest winters Chile had experienced; ninety-two schools had been destroyed and over 1,200 damaged by the earthquake; seven hospitals had been destroyed and twenty-three seriously damaged.

4. In the economic field the effects had been disastrous, particularly in regard to sanitary installations, irrigation, roads, harbours, airports, railways and irrigation systems.

Oil and copper refineries and power plants had suffered extensive damage. The total damage had been estimated at approximately \$153 million, and that figure should be increased by a further \$100 million if production losses were taken into account.

5. The earthquake had ravaged practically the same region that had suffered a similar catastrophe in 1965, the only difference being that the recent one was of greater intensity. It was particularly unfortunate that the people of the area should suffer such a severe set-back to their work of reconstruction and restoration. Fortunately, however, the Chilean capital, Santiago, had not been damaged and preparations for the third session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had continued without interruption. His Government remained determined to act as host to the Conference.

6. Chile's long experience of natural catastrophes had strengthened the resolve of its people to struggle towards the attainment of greater progress and development. The Chilean Government and people had lost no time in providing immediate relief for the victims of the disaster and in starting the work of reconstruction and restoration. He expressed his delegation's appreciation of the generous and spontaneous assistance given by many countries and international organizations, which was a memorable example of solidarity among nations.

7. His delegation was also grateful for the spirit of friendship and solicitude that had prompted the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1434. The Council had a tradition of resolutions and recommendations of the kind, notably Council resolution 1518 (XIX) of 10 July 1970 on measures to be taken following the earthquake in Peru. Under that resolution the Council had addressed a series of recommendations to Member States, international credit institutions, Peru's creditor countries, IBRD, the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Governing Council of UNDP. Draft resolution E/L.1434 reproduced paragraphs 2, 7 and 9 of that resolution. While his Government approved paragraphs 3 and 4 of the draft resolution, which were addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and other international bodies, it would prefer paragraph 2, addressed to Governments, to be deleted. He was sure that any Government that wished to alleviate the sufferings of the Chilean People, and was able to do so, would provide assistance without the Council's intervention and he did not wish to give the impression that Chile did not appreciate the efforts of the countries that had already given assistance.

8. The task of reconstruction would be a gigantic one; it would be a matter not only of rebuilding what had been destroyed, but of rebuilding strongly enough to resist future disasters, while at the same time ensuring that the

reconstruction work should give an impetus to development. Since the earthquake of 1939, Chile had been aware that reconstruction and development were indivisible; it had therefore established two parallel institutions in those two fields, institutions which had since constituted the basis of its industrial development. Two days after the catastrophe, the Chilean Government had presented a Bill to Congress calling for the creation of a disaster fund of \$250 million, which it was hoped would be partly financed by external credits in cash or kind.

9. If the work of reconstruction was to be properly carried out, more detailed seismological studies would have to be undertaken and the results of those studies, and the experience acquired in earlier earthquakes, would have to be used not only in planning new buildings but in redesigning cities and public works.

10. His delegation considered that the Secretary-General's report embodied many positive ideas, and the series of measures that it suggested should be undertaken at the national level were of unquestionable merit. Many of those measures had already been put into practice in Chile and machinery had been established which had gone some way towards preventing disasters and towards providing rapid relief when they occurred. The report also made useful suggestions concerning the possibilities for action by various international institutions.

11. The efficacy of international co-operation in the event of disaster depended, however, upon the optimum utilization of available resources and the speed with which those resources were brought into play. That could be achieved only through effective co-ordination, which should be the responsibility of the Secretary-General of the United Nations. He did not think that the existing machinery was adequate for such a task and felt that a much bolder and more far-reaching approach was required. A general spirit of solidarity was needed if action at the international level to alleviate disaster was to be effective. The Council's proposal, in resolution 1533 (XLIX), for the establishment of an emergency fund for disasters, to be financed from voluntary contributions, did not appear to have been acted upon and was not given prominence in the Secretary-General's report. The arguments adduced against that resolution had been that the General Assembly, in resolution 2435 (XXIII), had already requested the Secretary-General to prepare a study on the question and that the Council should await that report before taking a decision. The report in question was now before the Council and it did in fact call for international resources to be made available to the United Nations so that its action in disaster relief could be effective. The report suggested that those resources might be provided by a system of voluntary pledges by Governments, to be drawn on in case of need, but in his view such a system was unlikely to materialize while the political will to create it was lacking. The report revealed that the figure for emergency aid for 1971 had been \$50,000 less than in 1969 and 1970.

12. He thought that, if the Council was serious in its determination to tackle the problem, disaster relief could be linked with action to promote development and social

progress, in particular the improvement of housing. Natural disasters tended to aggravate existing housing problems, particularly since it was the houses of the poorest sections of the community which suffered most. Housing had a preponderant place among the factors accounting for the alarmingly poor social situation in the developing world, and developing countries lacked the resources to overcome the difficulty. The *1970 Report on the World Social Situation* a summary of which (E/5005) was before the Council, stated that less than 50 per cent of the amount of new housing recognized by the United Nations as essential to solve the housing problem in the developing countries had in fact been built. The developing countries possessed the resources in materials and manpower to build houses at a faster rate; moreover, housing construction helped to create employment and thus favoured the development of the economy as a whole. Those resources were not sufficient, however, to eliminate the present shortage and at the same time to provide dwellings for new citizens.

13. The international community should not remain indifferent to a problem of such magnitude. He suggested that a common fund or pool might be set up to which countries could contribute prefabricated dwellings, building materials, technicians or managerial skills. Such a fund could make loans in kind on a long-term and medium-term basis at a low interest rate. Besides helping countries affected by disasters, it could be of benefit to the countries which contributed to it by promoting their building industries and thus constituting an economic incentive. His suggestion might well be explored by individual countries and by interested international organizations, in particular the United Nations, FAO, IBRD and UNIDO.

14. Mr. WIELAND ALZAMORA (Peru) said that, since the adoption of Council resolution 1546 (XLIX) on assistance in cases of natural disaster, events had shown that the impact of such disasters was much greater on the developing countries, which lacked the means to bring rapid relief to those in need. The co-operation of the international community was urgently needed if the work of reconstruction and rehabilitation was to be successful. His delegation considered that the Secretary-General's report was a valuable contribution towards the solution of the problem and that the measures it proposed for prevention, diagnosis and relief were worthy of consideration.

15. Peru, as one of the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1434, could agree to the Chilean representative's suggestion that paragraph 2 should be deleted. It could also agree to the suggestion by a number of representatives that the words "that they should decide favourably on requests" in paragraph 4 should be replaced by the words "that they should consider favourably requests".

16. He hoped that the Council would adopt the draft resolution unanimously.

17. Mr. McARTHUR (United Kingdom) said that he was sure all delegations would wish to extend their sympathy to the Government and people of Chile in the fresh affliction that had overtaken them. The most practical way to give

expression to that sympathy was to support draft resolution E/L.1434.

18. The draft resolution submitted by Greece, Indonesia, Jamaica, Kenya, Lebanon, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Peru, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America (E/L.1438) represented the culmination of much work and consultation on the part of many delegations, organizations and individuals. The delegation of Norway, in particular, had done much to encourage the Council and the General Assembly to address themselves to the problem of assistance in cases of natural disasters.

19. After the tragedy on which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had reported at the 1783rd meeting, there could be no doubt that a new system of co-ordination of international disaster relief was urgently required. Indeed, the Secretary General himself had suggested in his statement to the Council (1773rd meeting) that the relatively modest proposals in his report might well be strengthened. A possible model for the kind of action that was needed was the focal point which the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had represented in the operations in West Bengal.

20. The sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1438 were aware that there were differences of view on various aspects of the Secretary-General's report, but they hoped that, as those differences seemed largely matters of emphasis, they could be overcome during the discussion.

21. Referring to the statement submitted by the League of Red Cross Societies (E/C.2/732), he said that over the years the League had done far more to co-ordinate international aid in natural disasters than any other organization and had gained valuable experience of the practical steps to be taken to deal with such disasters. He suggested that the Council might wish to take particular note of the League's views.

22. His delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's proposal that an office to co-ordinate relief in cases of natural disaster should be created and suggested that it should be headed by a distinguished personality with the title of Disaster Relief Co-ordinator. The Co-ordinator would need to command the confidence of both donors and of recipients and must respect the absolute freedom of Governments to make their own dispositions. While he should also respect the freedom of voluntary societies and United Nations organs, his delegation hoped that those bodies would look to him for guidance, co-ordination and information. Recent activities in West Bengal had provided a good example of co-operation that could well be followed.

23. With regard to the suggestion that a standing committee should be established to advise the Co-ordinator, his delegation would, on reconsideration, prefer to leave such details to the Co-ordinator himself. The administrative costs, which would fall on the United Nations regular budget, need not be greatly in excess of the \$205,000 per annum suggested by the Secretary-General, plus the Co-ordinator's salary if he was to be separately appointed.

24. The drawings of up to \$150,000 per annum from the Working Capital Fund, mentioned in the United Kingdom memorandum of 4 March (see E/L.1404, para. 4), were merely token sums and it might complicate matters to take them formally into consideration. All relief costs would continue to be met by donor Governments, societies and organizations, the funds being either channelled through the Co-ordinator or donated through bilateral arrangements. In the latter case, donors would do well to keep the Co-ordinator informed and to take his advice on what was needed. In that connexion, the views of the League of Red Cross Societies on the importance of supplying according to need, deserved attention.

25. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's recognition that there would be more disadvantages than advantages in establishing a special United Nations fund (see E/4994, para. 95). Knowledge of the existence of such a fund might have the effect of diminishing spontaneous generosity and it would be difficult to decide how to apportion it. Money was seldom the main problem. The case of West Bengal had shown how generously donors contributed in case of disaster. The first essentials were information, organization, supply capacity and co-ordination.

26. His delegation would not wish to prejudice the Co-ordinator's work by suggesting the building up of world stockpiles, which would be expensive, subject to deterioration and possibly wrongly placed. He agreed generally with the observations in the Secretary-General's report (*ibid.*, paras 45-50) in that respect. As his delegation had suggested in its memorandum (see E/L.1404, para. 9), governments might indicate within twenty-four hours of any emergency exactly what resources they had available.

27. With regard to the proposal for the use by the Co-ordinator of temporary staff in times of emergency (see E/4994, para. 88), his delegation hoped that other parts of the United Nations system and voluntary societies would be prepared to second staff.

28. The Co-ordinator should concentrate on co-ordination at the time of disaster and should not be overburdened with rehabilitation work. His delegation hoped that the Co-ordinator would have an opportunity between disasters to prepare for moments of crisis by keeping in touch with national disaster offices, checking means of communication, preparing codes for customs and immigration formalities for relief workers and keeping in touch with methods of prediction and prevention of disasters.

29. The Secretary-General had left the decision on the matters referred to in paragraphs 90 and 91 of his report to Member States. The sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1438 considered that the Council should express its views on the best site for the office. Whether New York or Geneva were chosen, the Co-ordinator would probably need a liaison office in the other main United Nations centre.

30. While the sponsors of the draft resolution would welcome nominations for the office of Co-ordinator, the appointment would, of course, have to be made by the Secretary-General. The Council should at present concentrate on the co-ordination machinery.

31. Earlier General Assembly and Council resolutions, the Secretary-General's report and the United Kingdom memorandum had all referred solely to natural disasters. While his delegation still considered that the United Nations should concentrate mainly on natural disasters, it had proved capable of dealing with other emergency situations and the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1438 had provided for such eventualities. The crux of the matter was whether governments required the Co-ordinator's services; the Council's essential task was to establish the machinery and have the necessary pre-planning and co-ordination work in hand to enable appropriate assistance to be given in the case of any form of disaster.

32. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his Government maintained an effective system for co-ordinating the aid given by various organizations for relief in disaster areas. The Government and social organizations gave bilateral assistance to other countries that had suffered from natural disasters. After the floods and typhoons in Pakistan in 1970, a considerable volume of medical supplies, food and agricultural products, textiles, blankets, motor vehicles and parts and other supplies had been sent to the disaster areas. Emergency assistance had also been given through the Red Cross to the population of East Pakistan in the form of helicopters and crews, together with the services of epidemiologists and other health workers.

33. Assistance given by his Government to Peru after the recent earthquake had included a two-hundred bed field hospital, helicopters, medical supplies, one hundred pre-fabricated dwellings, equipment for three kindergartens, transport, food supplies and the services of some 200 medical personnel. The USSR Association of the Red Cross and Red Crescent had also provided medical supplies, blankets and textiles. Similar assistance had been given to Cambodia and other countries which had suffered natural disasters.

34. The President of the USSR had written to the President of Chile on 11 July 1971 expressing his deep sympathy with the Government and people of Chile on the earthquake that had afflicted that country and informing him that Soviet relief organizations would be sending assistance. That assistance had followed a few days later.

35. His Government attached great importance to international co-operation in relief activities and particularly to the role of the United Nations in co-ordinating such activities. The nature and extent of the assistance to be given should, of course, be decided on separately for each specific case.

36. With reference to the report of the Secretary-General, the USSR delegation in the CPC had objected to the provisions of annex III on the legal status of disaster relief units because they attempted to place such units beyond the control of the governments of the countries in which they would be working. The question of privileges and immunities should not arise in connexion with the provision of humanitarian assistance. There had been cases in which hostile political activities had been carried out on behalf of certain Western countries under cover of assis-

tance activities. Any attempt to place disaster relief units beyond the control of the government concerned by according privileges and immunities could only make that government aware of the danger of interference in its internal affairs.

37. With regard to draft resolution E/L.1438, his delegation agreed that relief activities should be co-ordinated, but would prefer an existing Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General to be made responsible for such co-ordination rather than see a new post of Disaster Relief Co-ordinator created. The supporting staff could be made available through a redistribution of the existing Secretariat staff. The budgetary increases that would be required for the provision of new staff would place an additional burden on governments and reduce their aid resources.

38. He proposed certain amendments to draft resolution E/L.1438.¹

39. His delegation would study the United Kingdom representative's observations concerning further possible functions of the Co-ordinator and would revert to that question at a later stage.

40. The world map appearing in the Secretary-General's report was at least twenty years out of date. There was no longer a State of Germany, as that map indicated, but two sovereign German States: the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany. An assurance had been given at the last session of the CPC that the map would be corrected. His delegation protested at the attempt to use United Nations documents as a means of discriminating against socialist States. It had submitted an amendment (E/L.1437) to draft resolution E/L.1434 with a view to removing a well-known discriminatory formula. The German Democratic Republic had recently sent assistance to Chile and had given similar assistance to other countries which had suffered from natural disasters in the past and its aid should be viewed in the same light as that of other countries.

41. His delegation would support the Chilean proposal for the deletion of paragraph 2. If that proposal did not command unanimous support, he would request that it should be put to the vote.

42. The PRESIDENT pointed out that the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1434 had agreed to the deletion of paragraph 2. The reference to IMF in paragraph 3 should also be deleted.

43. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation would like to be informed of the financial implications of draft resolution E/L.1438.

44. The PRESIDENT said that the Secretariat would prepare a note on those implications for submission to the Council.

45. Mr. FERNAND-LAURENT (France) said that he hoped the note would show the additional cost of creating

¹ The text of the amendments was later circulated as document E/L.1440 and Corr.1.

the post of Co-ordinator, and also the difference in cost between stationing the Co-ordinator and his staff at United Nations Headquarters or at the Geneva Office.

46. Mr. AHMED (Secretary of the Council) said that the Secretariat had investigated the question of the conformity of the map in the Secretary-General's report with other world maps produced by the United Nations. It had been informed that the map conformed completely with United Nations practice, which, so far as Germany was concerned, had extended over a period of some twenty-three years without, as far as could be ascertained, any complaint or query having been raised until the current year. The map, like other United Nations maps, carried a disclaimer clause in the usual form regarding boundaries.

47. Mr. HEDEMANN (Norway) said that his delegation was substantially in agreement with the conclusions and proposals in the Secretary-General's report and had been pleased to co-sponsor draft resolution E/L.1438, which it hoped would receive unanimous support. The new machinery envisaged should be capable of coping adequately with the tasks outlined in the Secretary-General's report. The experience gained from recent large-scale relief co-ordination efforts should be fully utilized.

48. Modern mass media had made it possible for the world to see the sufferings of people struck by natural disaster. It was a fundamental human right that effective and co-ordinated relief should be readily available when disaster struck. Action to be taken before, during and after disasters must be planned and executed in the most efficient possible way. The Council's task was to devise the methods and establish the machinery necessary to protect the individual. His delegation agreed that the work could be divided into four categories: disaster prevention and prediction, preparedness and pre-disaster planning, action during the emergency and post-disaster rehabilitation and reconstruction. That division of activities was reflected in the draft resolution.

49. His delegation agreed with the comparison in paragraph 17 of the Secretary-General's report between the effects of civil conflicts or emergencies and those of natural disasters. The methods and machinery established should in future be available for the relief of human suffering caused by disasters, regardless of the type of disaster. Substantial agreement had been reached on that point at the twenty-first International Conference of the Red Cross held at Istanbul in 1969 and at the twenty-fifth session of the General Assembly.

50. In his interim report submitted to the Council at its forty-ninth session,² the Secretary-General had pointed out that disaster situations calling for resources far beyond the capacity of the countries involved would continue to occur and that governments would look to the United Nations for direct assistance and for assistance in mobilizing aid from the world community. The United Nations must be ready to respond to the demands of Member States and at the same time secure the continued active participation of

private and intergovernmental organizations such as the League of Red Cross Societies, the International Committee of the Red Cross and ICRM in co-ordinated relief efforts.

51. His delegation attached great importance to the efforts of national and international private relief organizations. The approach of the League of Red Cross Societies was basically sound and his delegation was glad to note that the report of the Secretary-General had taken it into account. Private organizations in his country had repeatedly succeeded in mobilizing popular support for international relief work and collecting considerable financial contributions, but better co-ordination at the international level would improve the effectiveness of such assistance. In carrying out its task of improving co-ordination, the United Nations should ensure that private organizations were able to continue their relief work with the same enthusiasm and compassion that they had always shown.

52. His delegation welcomed the observations of the non-governmental organizations and particularly the comments of the League of Red Cross Societies on the necessity of establishing national disaster plans covering all aspects of disaster assistance. The League should also be commended for its efforts in drawing up the *Red Cross Disaster Relief Handbook* (see E/4994, para. 4C) to assist governments in preparing their national disaster plans.

53. Effective international assistance in cases of natural disaster would depend on a number of interrelated factors, ranging from the pre-disaster

55. National relief units available for service abroad had been established by the Governments of Norway and Sweden as part of the stand-by forces which those Governments could place, on request, at the disposal of the United Nations. His delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's efforts in annex III to his report to define the legal status of such units when operating through the United Nations, and hoped to have an opportunity to discuss that and other matters at a later stage.

56. By adopting draft resolution E/L.1438, the Council could mark the beginning of a new era in the efforts of the international community to alleviate human suffering from disasters and emergency situations.

57. Mr. KULIN (Observer for Turkey) speaking under rule 75 of the rules of procedure, said that he agreed with the contents and conclusions of the report of the Secretary-General and supported the proposal for the establishment of a permanent office to deal with United Nations disaster assistance. He welcomed the proposal in draft resolution E/L.1438 for the appointment of a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, which would represent a constructive step in the direction recommended by General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV). He intended to submit a proposal for an addition to the text of the draft resolution, defining the responsibilities of the Co-ordinator more specifically. His amendment would give the Secretary-General and the Co-ordinator more definite guide-lines for the organization of relief supplies, the co-ordination of action taken by specialized agencies and non-governmental and private organizations, the notification of interested parties, the preparation of pre-disaster plans for emergency assistance, the dissemination of information on technical progress in the field concerned, rehabilitation and reconstruction in disaster areas and the assessment of all financial resources available for the accomplishment of their tasks.

58. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) expressed the hope that the proposal by the observer for Turkey would be submitted to the Council in accordance with the provisions of the rules of procedure, and that the Council would not become involved in a lengthy procedural discussion as had happened at its fiftieth session.

59. Mr. TERVER (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), said that he would speak also on behalf of WFP, which had joint responsibility with FAO in the provision of emergency assistance. The report of the Secretary-General clearly defined the roles of the various United Nations organizations in cases of natural disaster. The role of FAO had been defined since 1951 in Council resolutions and those of FAO Conferences. That of WFP had been laid down in 1963, when it had been decided that some WFP resources should be set aside and placed at the disposal of the Director-General of FAO to be used as he considered appropriate in discharging his responsibilities with regard to emergency food aid. Those resources now amounted to \$10 million a year and could be increased if necessary with the approval of the United Nations/FAO Intergovernmental Committee of the World Food Pro-

gramme. The Director-General continued to exercise his authority in the use of those resources, in close collaboration with the Executive Director of WFP. High-level discussions would shortly be held by FAO and WFP on matters of common interest, with a view to formulating a joint policy in the fields of emergency assistance and development.

60. There seemed to be some confusion among members of the Council about the roles of FAO and WFP in emergency assistance. The two organizations could only give such assistance in specific situations: sudden natural disasters such as earthquakes, tidal waves, floods and other unforeseeable calamities; problems arising suddenly out of human action, for example, a flow of refugees; and alarming decline in food supplies caused by less sudden processes, for example droughts or ravages by pests. Over the past few years the two organizations had provided emergency food assistance to the value of about \$20 million a year. Since 1963 over 85 per cent of the \$100 million worth of agricultural products distributed to meet urgent needs had been made available in cases of natural disaster. As the largest United Nations contributor to emergency relief in financial terms, WFP had acquired, jointly with FAO, expertise, machinery and contacts which enabled them to assess, mobilize and transport the quantities of agricultural products needed to meet urgent requirements. They worked in close consultation with UNHCR, the League of Red Cross Societies and voluntary organizations, and they used the services of UNDP resident representatives for co-ordinating food aid in their respective areas. They were ready to support any machinery which might prove necessary, after due consultation, for improving and speeding up disaster relief. There were many FAO and WFP projects, often carried out in co-operation with UNDP, for the rehabilitation of

speeding up the adoption of suitable measures, co-ordinating international action, providing an opportunity for contact with and between donors, and, in the case of major disasters, taking the initiative where individual agencies were unable to act because of constitutional or material limitations. Nevertheless, as stated in the report, such a centre should support and supplement but in no way duplicate the work of United Nations organizations already capable of providing direct assistance and with experience in that field.

63. The comments in paragraph 16 of the Secretary-General's report were most relevant to FAO and WFP food aid in cases of less sudden food shortages and were therefore not of direct concern in the present context. FAO had been able to establish an extensive warning system which made it possible to watch the progress and effects of factors which could damage, reduce or destroy certain crops, with a view to taking timely action either to prevent those effects or help to overcome the resultant food shortage. It would continue to discharge that responsibility, unless the agricultural disasters assumed proportions that called for international assistance on a scale beyond FAO's resources.

64. FAO and WFP would give immediate consideration to some of the suggestions and recommendations in the report, with a view to simplifying and improving their procedures in order to be able to give speedier and more effective emergency food aid. They would co-operate fully with the proposed international disaster relief centre for the co-ordination and promotion of assistance to disaster-stricken countries through the United Nations system.

65. Mr. DARSA (Indonesia) said that the recommendations in the Secretary-General's report were based on experience gained in dealing with major disasters, which had revealed the inadequacies of existing organizational arrangements at the national and international levels for preventing loss of life and property and bringing speedy relief to disaster-stricken areas. Existing disaster warning systems were of limited value, for the problem of communicating warnings and instructions to the public in good time remained largely unsolved. In many disaster-prone countries pre-disaster plans were often incomplete and there was no basic organization with a proper allocation of responsibilities or chain of command. The effectiveness of disaster rescue efforts depended on speedy action, for there was generally some delay before international assistance became available. In disaster-prone areas, pre-disaster planning was therefore essential. Indonesia had established an organization under the chairmanship of its Minister of Social Affairs, with the participation of government agencies concerned with the effects of natural disasters, and the Red Cross.

66. He endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations that the activities of organizations concerned with scientific research on natural phenomena and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with emergency relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction should be strengthened (see E/4994, para. 105). All organizations primarily concerned with such activities should be involved

in the work of the United Nations in that field. He emphasized the useful role played by the International Civil Defence Organization (ICDO), whose main function was the world-wide promotion and co-ordination of the development and improvement of organizations and techniques for preventing both natural and industrial disasters. In response to General Assembly resolutions 2034 (XX) and 2435 (XXIII), that organization had adopted a national model plan for civil defence disaster operations which could serve as a guide to Governments preparing their own operational plans. It had also worked out a procedure for international civil defence assistance, which could be introduced under regional agreements. Regional co-operation in dealing with disasters was essential in disaster-prone regions such as South-East Asia, where disasters sometimes occurred in areas remote from the central government but relatively near to the rescue centres of a neighbouring country. Emergency relief could then be dispatched more readily from that country. The directors of civil defence agencies in member countries of the Association of South-East Asian Nations would meet in Indonesia at the end of 1971 to discuss such co-operation.

67. He welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal for the establishment of a permanent office for disaster relief activities in the Office of Inter-Agency Affairs. To ensure more prompt and effective response to requests for emergency assistance, it was essential to appoint a permanent co-ordinator, as envisaged in paragraph 4 of General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV).

68. The PRESIDENT announced that Malaysia wished to be included among the sponsors of draft resolution E/L.1438.

caused human suffering and needed relief action. There were, of course, emergency situations created by other than natural disasters, and he hoped that it would eventually be possible to extend the scope of the proposed machinery; he was glad that draft resolution E/L.1438 referred also to other emergency situations.

71. It was important to be able to provide emergency assistance without delay and undue formality, and without waiting for detailed plans, provided that expert staff were on the spot to assess the situation. Some United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and certain other organizations had sufficient experience to know what was needed in many situations and had expert staff and supplies in disaster-prone areas. In the recent refugee emergency in eastern India, UNICEF had been able to provide immediate relief supplies and air transport before the co-ordinating mechanism had been established. He assumed that nothing in draft resolution E/L.1438 was intended to delay prompt action in such cases and that the Council would always wish United Nations agencies to act as quickly as possible in accordance with their normal procedure. It was proposed in paragraph 1 of the draft resolution that the Co-ordinator should be authorized to "direct" the relief activities of the organizations of the United Nations system. If the word "direct" meant that the Co-ordinator could issue orders or instructions to the agencies, they would be placed in a difficult position if they were directed to take action inconsistent with their policies or budget resources, which were determined by their respective governing bodies. He assumed that the term meant that the Co-ordinator would provide leadership and guidance rather than issue instructions. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees had acted in that capacity in the Indian emergency he had just mentioned, but the decisions on action and the use of United Nations contributions had been made collectively, in full agreement with the Indian authorities.

72. Emergency action by United Nations agencies often placed a heavy burden on their staff, which was not always foreseen when administrative budget were approved. He suggested that members of the Council which were also members of the governing bodies of United Nations agencies and programmes concerned with relief work should take that fact into consideration when approving administrative budgets. That was important if the entire structure was to function efficiently and expeditiously.

73. Although it was convenient to have most contributions made through a single channel, it might be unwise to insist on such centralization, for that might discourage some potential donors. Some \$2 million had been raised by UNICEF national committees in 1970 for emergency operations. Such fund-raising should be encouraged and it might be wise to include an appropriate provision in the draft resolution recognizing the importance of public interest and support.

74. Mr. LAZAREVIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that the previous year's disasters in Peru and East Pakistan had shown that the United Nations system needed to be better prepared for assisting disaster-stricken countries and should play a larger role in such assistance. Although the Secretary-General's report, which was largely the outcome of resolutions adopted in that connexion, put forward useful recommendations, it did not deal adequately with the question of establishing an international fund for disaster relief. Yugoslavia could not support the approach to that issue adopted in the report, for it considered that if the United Nations was to play a fuller role in disaster assistance, an international fund would ultimately have to be established. International action in the field of disaster relief would have to be improved and increased.

75. The role of United Nations agencies and programmes concerned with disaster relief were determined by their fields of competence, and organizational arrangements were needed for strengthening and co-ordinating those activities in all phases of disaster relief. That had so far been done on an *ad hoc* basis by appointing a special official for the co-ordination of assistance in each emergency. The Secretary-General now proposed, under General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV), to establish a permanent office and a permanent Co-ordinator for that purpose. The proposal was a modest one, but it might be difficult to explain why the United Nations should spend twice as much in one year on an office with a staff of six as it proposed to spend on disaster relief itself in that year. It would not be easy to convince the Yugoslav public that such a new body was necessary. There was no guarantee that the new office would not expand, as usually happened in such cases. There seemed to be no major difference between the institutional arrangements proposed by the Secretary-General and those proposed by the delegations of Turkey and the United Kingdom, but the new office was more likely to become something more than had been intended if it was established as a separate autonomous body outside the Secretariat and not subject to responsible directives from the General Assembly. He was not sure that the Office of Inter-Agency Affairs could not assume, on an *ad hoc* or permanent basis, the role of a focal point for the co-ordination of international disaster relief.

76. A satisfactory solution should be found