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Held at Headquarters, New York,
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President:

Mr. HUSLID
(Vice-President)

(Norway)

- Adoption of the agenda and organization of work: note by the Secretary-General [8] (continued)
- Special economic and disaster relief assistance [88] (continued)
 - (a) Special programmes of economic assistance
- Tentative programme of work

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Huslid (Norway), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 8 (continued)

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ORGANIZATION OF WORK: NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/44/957)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to invite the attention of members to a note by the Secretary-General (A/44/957) informing the General Assembly that the President of the General Assembly has received a letter from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations requesting that the Assembly consider emergency assistance to the Islamic Republic of Iran following the devastating earthquake that struck that country last week.

In order to enable the Assembly to take the required action it will be necessary to re-open consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 88, "Special economic and disaster relief assistance: (a) Special programmes of economic assistance."

Under the circumstances may I take it that the Assembly has no objection to re-opening consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 88?

It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 88 (continued)

SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE:

(a) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (draft resolution A/44/L.66)

The PRESIDENT: Before we begin our consideration of the item on our agenda may I, on behalf of all members of the Assembly, extend to and through the delegation here present our deepest sympathy to the Government and the people of the Islamic Republic of Iran for the immense and tragic loss they

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have suffered. When one meets with a tragedy of such dramatic proportions one becomes very humble, and other facts and considerations in a way fade into the background or become irrelevant.

In the midst of sorrow I think it is very heartening to note that the world community has reacted unanimously with compassion and sympathy, a compassion and sympathy already turned into concrete and prompt relief action. That is really gratifying.

May I express the hope that we here in the General Assembly this morning will also show our solidarity through prompt and unanimous action. As members know, the Secretary-General of the United Nations has sent a message of condolences to the President of the Islamic Republic of Iran and has appointed the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator as his Special Representative for the Emergency in Northern Iran.

I have requested the Secretariat to circulate draft resolution A/44/L.66, which is being submitted for consideration by the Assembly. Before taking up consideration of the draft resolution, I should like to quote from rule 78 of the rules of procedure in regard to proposals before the Assembly. Rule 78 reads, in part:

"As a general rule, no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the General Assembly unless copies of it have been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting. The President may, however, permit the discussion and consideration of amendments, or of motions as to procedure, even though such amendments and motions have not been circulated or have only been circulated the same day."

In view of the limited time available and the desire of members to consider this item expeditiously I would like to suggest, with your concurrence, that we

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proceed to take a decision on draft resolution A/44/L.66, even though it has been circulated only this morning. I might, however, also point out that the basic text of the draft resolution was actually circulated yesterday, together with the letter from the Permanent Representative of Pakistan that appears in document A/44/957.

Unless I hear any objections, I shall take it that the Assembly agrees with my proposal.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I now call upon the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Mr. KHARRAZI (Islamic Republic of Iran): Mr. President, first and foremost I would like to express my appreciation for responding so quickly to the request of the Group of Asian States to convene a resumed session of the General Assembly and to re-open the discussion of agenda item 88, "Special economic and emergency assistance". I should also like to thank the Secretary-General for his timely decision to appoint a Special Representative to co-ordinate and mobilize international efforts. I am also grateful to you all for your support and participation.

The expressions of sympathy conveyed to my delegation and to the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran in this period of great sorrow and grief are soothing. I am truly touched and encouraged by the extent of the sympathy and support extended to the victims of the earthquake.

Allow me to give a very brief report on this devastating earthquake and an account of the current situation.

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On Thursday 21 June, an earthquake registering 7.3 on the Richter scale struck the north-west of Iran in Zanzan and Gilan, provinces with 4 million inhabitants. This earthquake, which came to be known as the world's deadliest since 1976, flattened dozens of towns and hundreds of villages, and turned them into mass graveyards. The number of casualties and the dimensions of the devastation portray the extent of the catastrophe. According to the latest reports, around 50,000 people are dead and 110,000 injured; 500,000 have been made homeless. In the stricken area, which covers about 11,000 square kilometres, three cities are almost completely destroyed and 12 others have suffered extensive devastation. The reports also indicate that in the rural areas more than 1,500 villages have been ravaged or severely damaged. Some villages in the lush green hills of Gilan have virtually disappeared, and their residents are almost all dead. The disaster was of such horrifying magnitude that in some villages not a single person survived to bury the dead. In some other affected areas, there is not even one single house standing. Moreover, 400 aftershocks have struck the devastated region, some as strong as 6.5 on the Richter scale. The only way of seeing the devastation caused by the earthquake is from the air.

Following the disaster, all available national resources were mobilize and the rescue operation started immediately. The rescue and relief operations have continued non-stop. Being well experienced, thousands of Iranian rescuers, alongside 500 foreign rescue workers, toiling rapidly round the clock, pulled more than 100,000 victims out of the rubble within the first 60 hours. Tens of thousands have been flown by helicopter in more than 2,000 flight-hours to nearby hospitals and emergency medical centres. The Iranian air force has also flown thousands of hours, carrying in medicine, food and tents and transporting thousands of rescue workers to the region. Some constraints have hampered the rescue

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operation, such as aftershocks, bad weather in some areas, and landslides which cut off roads and threatened the rescuers. Villages perched atop the heights are accessible only by helicopter. Although seven days after the earthquake the likelihood of finding any survivors is remote, the decision to move from the rescue phase to the next phase is not an easy one to make.

With very high temperatures in the quake-stricken areas, prevention of outbreaks of epidemics from the unburied bodies has become an urgent task. Immediate plans for the provision of safe drinking water and for sanitation have been identified as the priorities for this phase. In this regard, more than 100 teams have been set up to fight disease and disinfect the area, but more supplies and equipment are required to fulfil that important task. Work crews are evacuating ruined settlements, burying dead bodies and spraying rubble with disinfectant. According to public health officials of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the possibility of the outbreak of infectious diseases is slim, but not zero.

As soon as the news of the earthquake was aired on the radio, thousands of Iranian people lined up to donate blood, relief items and financial aid. The response to the appeal by the Iranian Red Crescent society for donations was such that in just 24 hours the supply of empty blood bags ran out and there was no need for blood from abroad. In many cities, people have established special committees to collect relief items for the quake zone. Popular efforts and private support have been enormous and overwhelming.

Following the disaster, many countries announced their readiness to extend emergency relief assistance, which was welcomed by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran. I should like to take this opportunity to thank all those who have rendered emergency assistance to the victims of this disaster. Up to now, 171 planeloads of relief aid from 86 countries have reached Tehran.

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The leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Ayatollah Khamenei, has expressed thanks to every country in the world that rushed to assist the victims of the earthquake in Iran. Lauding the people for their sincere assistance, he said,

"Muslims from everywhere, together with other countries of the world, rushed to aid the people of Iran with a feeling of responsibility. I thank them all."

Mr. Noori, Interior Minister and appointee of the Cabinet in charge of the reconstruction and rehabilitation of the quake-stricken areas, has also underscored the importance of this assistance, saying,

"The timely presence of foreign relief teams with advanced and complete equipment has been effective in search, rescue, treatment and sanitation efforts."

Allow me now to point out some of the destructive impact of this natural disaster on the economy of our country. I have to emphasize that this is a very tentative assessment of the damage caused by the earthquake, whose dimensions may very well be worse than what we know at this time.

Being located in a fertile zone and hosting many industries and dams, the two provinces which were hard hit by the earthquake played a crucial role in the economy of the country. Those areas are known as the bread-basket of the country, producing meat and a wide variety of agricultural products including rice, wheat, corn, sugar cane, olives, tobacco, tea and various kinds of fruit. Under the current circumstances - with shattered irrigation systems, the destruction of the husbandry system and the death of thousands of agricultural workers - the region will be able to play hardly any of its previous agricultural role for the next three years at least. Reports from the affected areas indicate that the industries located in the region, including the Qazvin industrial zone, have suffered severely; in some cases the damage is irreversible. Moreover, much economic

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infrastructure - main and rural roads, electricity networks, irrigation systems, sanitary drinking water supplies, hospitals, health care centres and other community facilities - has been destroyed.

Settling more than half a million homeless - let alone rehabilitating them - is a great task. Bearing in mind that winter is coming, settling the survivors is a priority. The temporary settlement of the survivors is going on through the distribution of tents. Relief workers have begun building 10,000 prefabricated homes in Manjil and Roudbar, areas which are prone to high winds that make tents unsuitable for use as temporary shelters. That is just the starting-point.

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More than 50 per cent of the half a million survivors are children under 15 years of age. In addition to shelter and health care, this large number of children have special needs that must be met. Their education requires the very basic facilities for schools and qualified personnel. Many schools need to be built.

This great task calls for international co-operation aimed at rehabilitation of the people and reconstruction of the region.

The magnitude of the ruins is incredible, and the area's recovery cannot be brought about by relief and short-term emergency assistance alone. Enormous efforts will be required to alleviate the grave situation caused by the disaster. President Pafsanjani, after his visit to and a flight over the region by helicopter, stated

"Nothing worth mentioning is left ... It is like a small country that must be rebuilt from scratch".

He added

"The catastrophe is so great that Iran would have to have outside help".

Moreover, the Secretary-General's envoy for co-ordination of earthquake aid, visiting the quake-torn areas, told reporters that the mass media's reports about the depth of the disaster in Iran was "far less than the reality". He added that on his return to New York, he would co-ordinate with the Government of Iran, the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and other related organizations for continuation of relief aid. He also expressed optimism that the United Nations would ask international organizations and institutions to help in reconstruction of quake-stricken areas.

The reconstruction of 15 cities and hundreds of villages in the north-west of the country requires thorough, scientific planning that meets the standards for

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protection against earthquake. Rehabilitation of a larger area may prove necessary if the infliction of such heavy loss of life elsewhere in the future is to be prevented. Such large-scale planning and execution require the co-operation and assistance of the specialized agencies and Member States with experience and know-how, as I believe the report of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Essaafi, will confirm.

In view of the gravity of the disaster and its long-term effects, there will be a continued need, as a complement to the efforts being made by the people and Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for international co-operation to mitigate the adverse impact of the earthquake.

The quick response to the request of the Asian Group to convene this meeting of the General Assembly clearly illustrates the responsiveness of the United Nations system and its Member States and their recognition of the urgent and continued need for international co-operation, not only to alleviate present human suffering, but also to make the area as safe as possible in the future.

The PRESIDENT: I thank the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran for his review of a terrible situation.

I now call on the representative of Pakistan, who will introduce the draft resolution.

Mr. AHMED (Pakistan): On behalf of the sponsors, I have the honour to introduce draft resolution A/44/L.66, of 28 June 1990, entitled "Emergency assistance to the Islamic Republic of Iran".

I am happy to state that 23 more countries have joined the list of sponsors listed in the document. The new additions are: Burkina Faso, Cambodia, the Congo, Costa Rica, Djibouti, Guatemala, Guinea-Bissau, Japan, Maldives, Nicaragua, Niger, the Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Senegal, Singapore, Thailand, Tunisia, the

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United Arab Emirates, the United States of America, Viet Nam, Zambia and Zimbabwe. That brings the total number of sponsors to 112.

In its preambular portion the draft text underscores the deep distress of the international community at the massive devastation caused by the earthquake, in human and material terms. The text acknowledges the efforts of the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran in saving lives and alleviating the suffering of the victims, while noting the enormous efforts that will have to be made to overcome the consequences of this disaster.

The draft resolution recognizes the importance of international co-operation to mitigate the devastation caused by the earthquake and also the need to demonstrate international solidarity in order to ensure broad multilateral co-operation to meet the immediate emergency and to undertake the process of rehabilitation and reconstruction. The text also notes with appreciation the prompt and generous response of the international community in providing immediate relief assistance to the victims of the earthquake.

In its operative portion, which comprises four paragraphs, the text expresses the international community's solidarity with and support for the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran in their hour of travail, and expresses gratitude to the international community for providing emergency relief assistance to the victims.

There is a small procedural addition to paragraph 3. The Secretary-General's Special Representative is visiting the affected areas to prepare a report on the damage caused by the earthquake. It is therefore proposed that the following phrase be added at the end of paragraph 3:

"and requests the Secretary-General to present the report of the Special Representative to the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly;"

Since this is merely a procedural point, I hope it will be acceptable.

(Mr. Ahmed, Pakistan)

In paragraph 4 an appeal is addressed to all Governments, the various bodies and organs of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to extend generous assistance to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction in the affected areas.

The occasion which has brought us together this morning is indeed most tragic. Hundreds of thousands of innocent lives have been shattered by a devastating stroke of nature. The profound human dimension of this tragedy beckons the entire international community to extend all possible assistance and co-operation to the Government and people of the Islamic Republic of Iran. It is in this spirit that I submit to the Assembly the earnest desire of the sponsors that the draft resolution be adopted without a vote.

The PRESIDENT: I wish to inform the Assembly that three more countries wish to be listed as sponsors of the draft resolution: Ghana, Madagascar and Nigeria.

On the basis of what we have heard, may I take it that it is the Assembly's wish to adopt the draft resolution in document A/44/L.66, as amended by the sponsors, without a vote?

The draft resolution, as amended, was adopted (resolution 44/242).

The PRESIDENT: We have thus concluded our consideration of sub-item (a) of agenda item 88.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: I have been requested by the President of the General Assembly to inform members of the tentative programme of work of the Assembly at its forty-fourth session with regard to item 36, "Question of Namibia".

The President was hoping to bring this item before the Assembly as soon as possible. However, there are a number of steps that must be taken in connection with the recommendations submitted to the Assembly by the United Nations Council for Namibia before the Assembly may take up the question of Namibia in plenary meeting.

In this respect the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee need to be given adequate time to consider the programme budget implications of the draft resolutions submitted by the Council prior to the Assembly's meeting in plenary.

For the purpose of assisting delegations in the planning of their work, the President would like to outline the following schedule: on the week beginning 16 July, the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions and the Fifth Committee will, we hope, complete consideration of the programme budget implications of the draft resolutions on the question of Namibia, so that the

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following week, if possible on Monday, 23 July, the Assembly could consider the question of Namibia in plenary meeting.

For the information of delegations I should like to point out that the report and the draft resolutions submitted by the United Nations Council for Namibia are contained in document A/44/24 and Add.1.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.