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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 34th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. PAPADATOS

(Greece)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 84: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

- (a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued)
- (b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (continued)
- (c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (continued)
- (d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (continued)
- (e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 84: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (<u>continued</u>) (A/45/3, A/45/76 and Add.1-E/1990/12 and Add.1, A/45/77 and Add.1-E/1990/10 and Add.1, A/45/584, A/45/598-S/21854, A/45/646, A/45/648)

- (a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (A/45/273 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5-E/1990/85 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5, A/45/281 and Corr.1-E/1990/66 and Corr.1)
- (b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (continued) (A/45/347; E/1990/29 (Supplement No. 9))
- (c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (continued) (A/45/529; E/1990/29 (Supplement No. 9); DP/1990/44)
- (d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (continued) (A/45/3; E/1990/28 (Supplement No. 8))
- (e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (continued) (A/45/3; E/1990/99)
- 1. Miss COURSON (France) said it was regrettable that one year after the adoption of resolution 44/211 by the General Assembly, some of the largest organizations had not yet conveyed their thinking on reforms already undertaken or envisaged in accordance with an established triennial schedule. In that respect her delegation took note of the decision taken by the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination to study the measures to be adopted for the period 1990-1992. Thus, it was difficult to form an opinion concerning the efforts made in the realms of decentralization and the utilization of national capacities and with regard to the steps taken to adopt a common approach to the programming of the system's activities.
- 2. It was to be hoped that the organizations would take care to decentralize their programmes as soon as possible on the understanding that at the same time the team-leadership capacity of the resident co-ordinators within the United Nations system at the country level was to be reinforced. The inter-agency agreements intended to strengthen co-operation between the resident co-ordinators and the field representation of the United Nations system at the country level should go into effect as soon as possible. For that purpose, it would be desirable to increase the staff made available to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation.
- 3. The utilization of national capacities for the formulation and execution of programmes and projects could not be determined on the basis of a pre-established schedule since it depended on the level of development of the countries and on local conditions. It would therefore have to be decided on a case-by-case basis. If the new approach was to take hold, resident co-ordinators would have to act without delay, in co-operation with the Governments concerned, to take measures to

(Miss Courson, France)

strengthen government bodies as well as local non-governmental organizations. Her delegation fully endorsed the recommendations of the Director-General in that regard.

- 4. The integrated inputs of the United Nations system should be based on priorities determined by the Governments. If the inputs were seen in terms of programmes and were designed to fit in with national efforts more smoothly, avoiding a proliferation of projects, the results obtained would not be conclusive unless they were based on well-defined and specific national strategies and objectives. Recipient countries would not be able to play a leading role in the realization of their economic and social objectives without coherent assistance from the United Nations system. For that reason, her delegation welcomed the decision taken by UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to co-ordinate their programme cycles and make them compatible with national planning periods. Progress was still required, however, in the rationalization of procedures, which often posed insurmountable problems for recipient countries. The success of assistance for development depended on the simplification of procedures.
- 5. The overall thrust of the programme of operational activities drawn up by the recipient country and the integrated operational input of the United Nations system should not be too rigidly conceived. An ongoing dialogue, which could take place within the framework of appropriate machinery, should be initiated between a Government and its development partners for the purpose of assessing the programmes in implementation and identifying activities which might benefit from external assistance. All countries, and the least developed countries, in particular, were not, however, in a position to devise such an approach. In assisting them, United Nations bodies, and UNDP in particular, should have recourse primarily to planning instruments such as National Technical Co-operation Assessment and Programmes (NATCAP) and round tables. It was, however, important that the institutions should adapt to the needs of the countries, rather than the other way round. External assistance was no substitute for government accountability.
- 6. In implementing the measures referred to, United Nations bodies should adapt them to the country concerned and take an innovative approach, avoiding a build-up of new bureaucracies. Her delegation trusted that the report submitted by the Director-General in 1991 would describe the progress made in respect of the whole procedure and in terms of the experience acquired by Governments and executing agents.
- 7. She closed her statement by expressing the gratification felt by her delegation at the very encouraging results of the negotiations on the fifth programme cycle and at the fact that the UNDP Governing Council had, by sarmarking 55 per cent of the resources allocated to country programmes to LDCs, shown its willingness to gear its activities to the poorest countries.

- 8. Miss HASSAN (Egypt) noted that the entire United Nations system was being called upon to play an important role in the preparations for, organization of and follow-up on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development scheduled for 1992, the International Meeting on Population to be held in 1994, the World Conference on Women planned for 1995 and the World Conference on Human Rights. Those efforts could meet with success only if the Member States displayed the necessary political will not only by adopting resolutions but also by pledging resources. In that connection, she made a number of points on behalf of her delegation.
- 9. First, the predictability of resource availability would, to a large extent, determine the impact had by the activities undertaken by the system. It would also influence the decisions which the recipient Governments would take, whether in governing bodies or in the field. It was encouraging to see that the resources pledged at the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities amounted to nearly \$US 2 billion. However, they corresponded only to recognized activities, while emergency situations required ad hoc measures over and above the normal operational activities of the system.
- 10. Her delegation agreed with the conclusions reached by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation that the recipient Governments were the ones to decide on their national programme framework, their country statements and whether or not to have recourse to bodies in the system. On the other hand, the system should take responsibility for co-ordination. In that respect, she said her delegation felt strongly about the need to preserve the central role of UNDP in the funding of technical co-operation since it was virtually the backbone of the system's operational activities and was indispensable to their implementation.
- 11. Finally, she said it was not unrealistic to envisage that political will on the part of Governments could be associated with the efforts made by the system in respect of co-ordination. That had been seen to happen when a funding machinery had been established to assist the developing countries to implement the provisions of the Montreal Protocol relating to Ozone Depletion. It could only be hoped that that attitude would prevail enabling United Nations bodies to face the challenges of the 1990s.
- 12. Mr. ASRAT (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) reiterated that UNESCO would do its utmost to implement General Assembly resolution 44/211, not only in the formulation, follow-up and evaluation of programmes and projects and their implementation but also above all, in safeguarding the partnership between Governments, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the specialized agencies. Although the divergency of views on implementing decision 90/26 of the UNDP Governing Council should be overcome in the months ahead, a number of questions still required further discussion: how the new programme approach was to be organized; whether agencies should be put on the same footing as "subcontracted parties" such as non-governmental organizations and private firms; and whether the concept of standard rates for project implementation functions should be discarded in favour of competitive bidding on a case-by-case basis.

(Mr. Asrat, UNESCO)

- 13. At its most recent session, the Executive Board of UNESCO had made a number of important decisions concerning operational activities and cc-operation with UNDP. It had unreservedly endorsed the principle of a single programme document that contained the integrated operational response of the United Nations system and was based on recipient countries' analyses of their own needs and priorities. reiterated its view that the United Nations agencies should be the preferred sources of technical backstopping and that the new support cost arrangements should encourage the agencies to provide such support. It had taken the view that the three-tier system of financing technical services and other support provided by UNESCO might be a viable alternative to current arrangements provided that: (a) sufficient resources were allocated to the new account for technical support services; (b) the frequency and type of intervention expected from UNESCO was foreseen well enough in advance; (c) a significant increase in the amount of the regular budget devoted to support costs was not required; (d) the negotiation and management of the new arrangements did not lead to additional charges against the regular budget; and (e) compensation for the full execution of projects took account of both administrative and technical backstopping requirements.
- 14. Mr. SUCHMAN (Czechoslovakia) said that, on the threshold of a new United Nations development decade, UNDP, whose central funds and co-ordinating function should be strengthened, must promote strategies and programmes based on the concept of sustainable development and on human development, with a view to enhancing co-operation between developing and developed countries.
- 15. Amidst sweeping political and economic changes, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe were making the transition to a pluralistic political system and a modern market economy. His delegation was pleased to note that, at its thirty-seventh session, the Governing Council of UNDP had underscored the importance of that process. UNDP could play a positive role in helping those countries in such spheres as privatization, reorganization of public administration, retraining of managers and specialists in the field of environmental protection, telecommunications and social policy. His country was not seeking material assistance from UNDP so much as practical advice that might help it make the transition to a market economy.
- 16. While Czechoslovakia was among those countries entitled to an indicative planning figure (IPF), it wanted to continue to provide technical assistance to developing countries within the framework of its agreement with UNDP, with a view to achieving net contributor status. It was also participating in the implementation of 19 European projects, of which it was co-ordinator for three. Lastly, it hoped to intensify its co-operation with the Inter-Agency Procurement Services Unit.
- 17. His country was aware of the importance of the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and, at the recent pledging conference had pledged to contribute more to UNFPA than it had in 1988. At the same time, it commended the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) for its efforts on behalf of children and its contribution to the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It

(Mr. Suchman, Czechoslovakia)

would be expedient to consider the possibility of extending the mandate of UNICEF to cover children in the developed countries.

- 18. In conclusion, he reiterated his country's interest not only in European affairs, but also in North-South relations.
- 19. Mr. MENDEZ (Philippines) said that, as stated in the update of the World Economic Survey. 1990 (E/1990/INF/10), the sense of optimism that had been generated by the dramatic changes in Eastern Europe and the reduction of tension between the super-Powers had come to be replaced by a great uncertainty about the immediate prospects for the world economy. Suffice it to recall that the world economy would probably record its slowest growth since 1982 and that the overall assessment for 1990 was extremely discouraging.
- 20. The lessons of 1990 should prompt the international community to face even greater challenges with the determination that had inspired all those who had participated in the formulation of the new international development strategy (A/45/41). The time had come to leave the strategy formulation phase behind and move on to implementation. It was necessary for all nations to play their respective roles in the development process, and United Nations agencies, in particular UNDP and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), should help them to do so.
- 21. It was in that context that his delegation reaffirmed the significance of General Assembly resolution 44/211, entitled "Comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system". While the United Nations specialized agencies had already contributed much to the development efforts of developing countries, during the 1990s it would be necessary to eliminate all obstacles to the application of certain key concepts in resolution 44/211, since doing so would make it possible to enhance the effectiveness of the system and to obtain the desired results.
- 22. In his report on the operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/45/273/Add.5), which contained the revised schedule of implementation of resolution 44/211, the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation reaffirmed that host Governments had sole responsibility for designing and managing their cverall national development programmes. National capacities would be strengthened if each Government exercised its right to determine its development priorities and the nature of the programmes required, possibly with the help of experts provided by the United Nations system. A country-specific approach was all the more necessary since each country had its own particular needs. Those needs could only be understood after in-depth study, and it was in that area that the assistance of a United Nations consultant might be useful.
- 23. United Nations consultants could also help a country become aware of the international context. All consultations at the pre-programming stage were of critical importance, since it was vital that the Government of the recipient country should be fully informed in order to plan its overall national programme.

(Mr. Mendes, Philippines)

- 24. Governments must also take the lead in implementing the programmes. National execution of projects should promote self-reliance, since the ultimate goal of technical assistance should be to eliminate the need for it. In order to make optimum use of national capacities, those capacities must be strengthened, which meant that operational activities should emphasize the human dimension of development. It was necessary to increase the Special Programme Resources earmarked for training in countries in which the delivery rate of nationally executed projects remained low.
- 25. There was an obvious need for close co-ordination not only between Governments and the United Nations system but also among the relevant United Nations agencies. It was also essential to increase the core resources of UNDP, as the central funding agency for technical co-operation, as well as to respect the principle of neutrality, which could be threatened by the special interests and preferences of donors.
- 26. As stated in paragraph 26 of the new international development strategy, "the reactivation of development would not take place without an early and durable solution to the problems of external indebtedness". Those problems were not purely financial and United Nations agencies should try to make available to developing countries the new production, management and marketing technologies that would enable them to be competitive. In that regard, it should be added that the debt crisis had been aggravated by the oil shock precipitated by the Gulf crisis, and that the consequences could be disastrous.
- 27. He thanked once again the United Nations agencies that had helped his country on several recent occasions, particularly after the earthquake in early 1990.
- 28. Mr. ZUPANJEVAC (Yugoslavia) said that resolution 44/211 was a landmark document because it synthesized the experience accumulated over decades of development co-operation and paved the way for the adjustment of the operational activities of the United Nations system to changing needs and priorities.
- 29. Not only did the resolution affirm the fundamental principles of operational activities (universality, voluntary nature, neutrality and multilateralism), but it had also developed a complex and integrated set of measures designed to strengthen the effectiveness of those activities. It was in that context that the report on operational activities by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation (A/45/273/Add.5) should be viewed. The report contained the revised schedule for implementation of the resolution, and on reading it it was encouraging to observe that United Nations agencies were already making detailed plans for decentralization and that decisions had been taken for the enhancement of national capacities and the harmonization of programming cycles.
- 30. While the principle of using national capacities was now accepted, in many countries the actual progress made was minimal. Rules and procedures were still too complicated and the necessary human resources were very often lacking. Capacities should therefore be developed at the country level, while at the central

(Mr. Zupanievac, Yugoslavia)

level the rules and procedures governing all aspects of the project should be simplified, harmonized and adapted.

- 31. Those reforms, while necessary, would not be possible without adequate resources. It was disappointing to see that in 1989 the amount of official development assistance (ODA) had fallen in real terms by 2 per cent (A/45/273/Add.4). The nominal 7 per cent increase for core activities for UNDP in 1991, as adopted at the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, was also very discouraging because in June 1990 the UNDP Governing Council had set a target of a gross increase of 8 per cent. Those trends were disquieting in view of the net transfer of resources from developing countries, deteriorating terms of trade and the threat of a new world-wide recession. A substantial and real increase in the flow of concessional resources to developing countries was imperative.
- 32. The consensus which had led to the adoption of the Declaration on Economic Co-operation, the success of negotiations on the new international development strategy and the impressive results of the World Summit for Children and the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries heralded the beginning of a new era in international economic co-operation. The momentum thus created must also be reflected in a marked enhancement of operational activities for development.
- 33. Mr. DOLSINTSEREN (Mongolia) recalled that 1990 had marked the fortieth anniversary of multilateral technical co-operation for development within the United Nations system. Such co-operation had become a significant element of international relations and permitted the mobilization of voluntary contributions for development.
- 34. UNDP was at the forefront of technical co-operation, especially in the areas of training of professionals from developing countries, transfer of technology and raising standards of living and education. Incidentally, one of the essential principles of UNDP's activities was and should continue to be universality.
- 35. The fifth programming cycle which would begin the following year was, of course, very important and he hoped that the growth rate of voluntary contributions envisaged in UNDP Governing Council decision 90/34 would be achieved.
- 36. One of the most interesting of UNDP's new initiatives was the Management Development Programme, which his delegation fully supported because it sought to strengthen the management capacity of developing countries. Mention should also be made of the publication of the human development report which was essential to devising a truly scientific approach to the problem. It was interesting to note that UNDP was now participating in technical co-operation among developing countries (TCDC). Those recent initiatives should be developed in accordance with General Assembly and UNDP Governing Council resolutions and decisions. In other words, the Second Committee should take them into account in its decisions.

(Mr. Dolsintseren, Mongolia)

- 37. The role of UNDP resident representatives in developing countries should be enhanced but local experts should also be involved more closely in the execution of different assistance projects. Mongolia was an active participant in the work of UNFPA and UNICEF and other multilateral technical assistance agencies. It greatly appreciated UNICEF's decision to expand its co-operation and appoint a permanent representative in Ulan-Bator.
- 38. Because it was a lend-locked country, Mongolia incurred considerable transport costs in exporting its goods and products. Its economic infrastructure was barely developed and climatic conditions very unfavourable. Mongolia was also facing the difficulties inherent in the transition to a market economy, which must take place without affecting social development programmes. Mongolia's external debt should also be taken into account. Its per capita rate of indebtedness was the highest in the world: \$7,000, or 70 times the per capita external debt of Brazil. He hoped that the various international organizations would take all those factors into account when considering the question of assistance to Mongolia.
- 39. Mr. ISAKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that, like all United Nations activities, operational activities for development should reflect the new economic thinking and should take into particular account General Assembly resolution 44/211, which highlighted the role of the Governments of developing countries in the formulation of plans and priorities and in co-ordination at the national level.
- 40. In that context, UNDP was, without any doubt, the core agency for the funding and co-ordination of multilateral technical assistance. At its thirty-seventh session, the Governing Council had adopted by consensus a balanced decision on the distribution of funds under the fifth programming cycle. UNDP, UNFPA and the specialized agencies would thus be able to contribute to solving the problems of economic development, environmental protection and rational exploitation of resources and to the development of international co-operation in such areas as science, technology and population. By including an economy in transition in the supplementary criteria to be used in calculating IPFs, UNDP had shown that it was prepared to take account of the processes under way in the international arena, particularly in the countries of Eastern Europe. The sweeping reforms that those countries had embarked on would, without doubt, give fresh impetus to the development of global relations.
- 41. In the opinion of his delegation, the restructuring of UNDP should have four main objectives: to improve the mechanism for adjusting programmes to the priorities of recipient countries; to strengthen evaluation functions so as to increase the impact of projects on national economies; to strengthen UNDP's co-ordinating role in the framework of United Nations technical assistance; and to extend the responsibilities of UNDP resident representatives for co-ordination in the field.
- 42. It was extremely important that balanced and orderly relations based on effective inter-agency co-ordination should be established between UNDP and United

(Mr. Isakov, USSR)

Nations organs and agencies. The Soviet Union supported the overall agreement on relations between UNDP and executing agents and felt that the present system for funding support costs should be maintained. It had no objection to the conclusion of individual arrangements with the different organs or agencies.

- 13. With respect to its own participation in United Nations technical assistance programmes, his Government was currently taking action to solve the problem of the accumulation of resources in roubles.
- 44. Since most, if not all, current economic problems had an important demographic component, it was only logical that the United Nations should concern itself with population questions. In that context, the action taken by UNFPA to implement the decisions of the 1974 Bucharest Conference and the 1984 Mexico Conference was to be commended. UNFPA had also played a role in the International Forum on Population in the Twenty-First Century, held at Amsterdam, which had adopted an important declaration.
- 45. The Fund was rightly trying to adopt an approach based on those programmes, to harmonize its programming cycles with those of the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) and to establish closer links between its programmes and the social and economic development aims and objectives of each country. It was wise, too, to increase the relative size of its African projects at a time when the international community was doing its best to increase assistance to the African countries, particularly the least developed among them.
- 46. There was a need to alop international co-operation in the field of demography. A number of meetings on that subject had been held in Moscow on World Population Day, 11 July. The Soviet Union also had a particular interest in manpower training and had already trained 430 specialists from 70 countries. It was studying the pussibility of expanding its co-operation with the Fund. Soviet organizations would be participating in the computerized system for the processing of demographic data under a European Economic Community project. The Soviet Union was also keenly interested in the joint evaluation of the demographic consequences of the Chernobyl disaster and the formulation of recommendations, and prospects for co-operation were, on the whole, good.
- 47. The activity of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) deserved particular attention. Its authority on the international scene was increasing with its participation in the solution of the problems of mothers and children and its efforts to mobilize the political will of States on behalf of children. The Soviet Union supported the policy pursued by UNICEF, particularly in organizing the recent Worl? Summit for Children. In his message to participants, Mr. Gorbachev had emphasized the Soviet Union's whole-hearted support for the lofty objectives of the Summit and its firm intention to assume all the commitments embodied in the Declaration and the Plan of Action. The highly complex problems of maternal and child welfare in all countries, particularly the developing countries, could not be resolved unless solutions were found for the world-wide problems of underdevelopment and poverty, environmental degradation, the arms race that was

(Mr. Isakov. USSR)

relentlessly pursued in many countries, and human rights violations. It was precisely that approach which should guide the activities of UNICEF in the 1990s. At the same time, its priorities for the new decade should be set in consultation with other United Nations organs and bodies.

- 48. The Soviet Union had been one of the first countries to sign the Convention on the Rights of the Child and was amending its legislation in the light of that instrument and the documents adopted by the World Summit for Children. Priority would be given to the urgent issues of improving the status of women and maternal and child welfare.
- 49. Mr. van SCHAIK (Netherlands) thanked the Director-General for submitting a more precise schedule for the implementation of resolution 44/211 in document A/45/273/Add.5.
- 50. Table 1 related to decentralization, which in his delegation's view was one of the corner-stones of the more effective functioning of the United Nations system. Development assistance could, of course, be based on universal priorities and global thomes, but it must above all be tailored to the situation and the particular needs of the recipient countries, which meant leaving room for adapting assistance to local conditions on a continual basis. His delegation was not convinced from the schedule that United Nations organizations were decentralizing their activities as fully and as quickly as possible. Decentralization meant that field offices must have the necessary capacity and resources. In paragraph 16 of its resolution 44/211, the General Assembly had requested the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation to make specific recommendations for improvements and increased effectiveness in line with the objectives of the resolution. His delegation awaited those recommendations with great interest. In paragraph 26 of the same resolution, the General Assembly requested the executive heads of the United Nations funding and technical agencies to re-examine their organizational structures and staff deployment in support of the requirements of decentralization to the country offices, with a view in particular to redeploying personnel and effecting economies at headquarters. The schedule did not show clearly how the various organizations would implement that request. His delegation would be interested to know the outcome of the discussions on decentralization in CCSQ(OPS).
- 51. Regarding table 2 of the revised schedule, he wondered if in future reports the Director-General could provide some figures on the progress made. In connection with table 3, on improvements in programming processes, he welcomed the progressive harmonization of the programme cycles of the United Nations organizations with those of Governments and hoped that the harmonization would be completed by 1992, thanks in particular to the efforts of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy. The suggestion in paragraph 112 (c) of document A/45/273/Add.5 concerning the creation of an easy-to-use manual which would clarify concepts and approaches was very interesting.

(Mr. van Schaik, Netherlands)

- The main report (A/45/273) dealt with one of the principal stumbling blocks in the negotiations on resolution 44/211, namely, the concepts of national programme frameworks and integrated operational response by the United Nations system. subject was a sensitive one, involving many interests, but the material available was sufficient to take a few first steps, which should be based on the following elements: (a) recipient countries should indicate, possibly through an integrated national programme framework, what their national development priorities were and where the United Nations system could help them; (b) the United Nations system should formulate an integrated operational response to the framework (under the leadership of the resident co-ordinator, in view of the potential input of those United Nations agencies not represented at country level); (c) use should be made of existing mechanisms, such as NaTCAPs, round tables, consultative groups; (d) the United Nations system should decentralize its activities and strengthen its field offices; (e) a flexible approach was necessary, taking into account the needs of each country, but the Director-General and the governing bodies of the United Nations agencies should agree on a set of principles and practical procedures for initiating and monitoring the process.
- 53. Without wishing to oversimplify the issue, he felt that the time had come to move from reflection to action. The resident co-ordinator could be asked to organize a meeting of all the agencies represented in the field to discuss with the Government concerned the possibility of an integrated response by the United Nations system to the particular needs of the country. The aim was simply to improve the efficiency of operational activities. Too many recipient countries had been complaining of the failure to co-ordinate the work of the different bodies. In order to further decentralization and improve co-ordination structures in the field, the General Assembly might request the organizations in the United Nations system to implement, on a pilot basis, the notion of a United Nations integrated operational response to the national programme of a recipient country, leaving the detailed modalities to that system.
- 54. Mr. BABBINGTON (Australia) said that his delegation had consistently stressed that the operational activities of the United Nations system should provide assistance in the most effective and efficient way and should concentrate on helping the poorest countries to achieve self-sufficiency. The various bodies should develop operational activities in their fields of expertise where they had a comparative advantage; in other words, the system should do fewer things better.
- 55. Many recipient countries found it difficult to blend the inputs of the United Nations system with those of bilateral sources. Often United Nations assistance was used to fill gaps in development programmes and was given relatively lower priority in resource allocation. The governing bodies of the United Nations agencies had not always been successful in setting priorities. Australia, which was a substantial donor, sometimes doubted whether United Nations assistance was having the intended impact.
- 56. There were, nevertheless, some encouraging signs of improvement. Faced with the prospect of reduced growth in official development assistance during the 1990s,

(Mr. Babbington, Australia)

Member States and United Nations agencies had taken several important initiatives to bring greater coherence and focus to development activities. In that regard, resolution 44/211 was a landmark. There was a particular need for better integration and co-ordination of programming of United Nations system co-operation in the field to promote an integrated system response to the national programme framework. No effort should be spared to improve the correlation between national programme frameworks and integrated system response, and the lack of interest among countries was disappointing. Joint programming required well-developed national programming structures, and one of the principal tasks of the United Nations system, especially of UNDP, was to respond to requests for assistance in national development planning and public sector management in general. Co-ordination of various institutional activities in the field called for strengthening of the role of the resident co-ordinator, who should be primarily responsible for ensuring that United Nations country acitivities met the needs of the recipient country. Further administrative decentralization should permit the representatives of specialized agencies in the field to work as a team, since they were usually best acquainted with local needs.

- 57. National execution was an aspect of resolution 44/211 whose implementation would require great care. Indeed, all technical co-operation should eventually be executed by national bodies, but the capacity of each country must be considered. It must also be in conformity with established principles of accountability for operational activities (para. 24 of the resolution). National execution was important because it opened the door to local and international private organizations and to NGOs. It would be promoted by the new agency support cost arrangement, which eliminated automatic payment of support costs to United Nations agencies and organizations. His delegation welcomed that new decision of the UNDP Governing Council because it increased flexibility in selection of executing agents, and could only help to improve the quality of programmes and projects.
- 58. An idea which had emerged from the thirty-seventh session of the UNDP Governing Council was that UNDP should identify the areas in which it had been most and least effective and should address three main challenges: poverty alleviation and investment in people; improvement of economic management; and sustainable development.
- 59. Welcome initiatives had been taken to improve the intergovernmental management of the World Food Programme (WFP). At a time when efforts were being made to enhance the credibility of the multilateral development assistance system, it was essential that the thirtieth session of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes should be characterized by constructive effort.
- 60. Mr. KOIKE (Japan) said that resolution 44/211, adopted the previous year by consensus, was a landmark in the history of the concept of operational activities for development, because it established a basic philosophy, principles and guidelines. That resolution was based on the premise that the Government of a recipient country knew best what its development priorities and objectives were. The recipient Government therefore should take responsibility for integrating

(Mr. Koike, Japan)

operational activities of the United Nations system into its own national development plan and for co-ordination of external assistance in such a way as to strengthen and utilize national capacity. In that sense, the resolution was an attempt to help developing countries to attain the goal of self-reliance.

- 61. His delegation had identified four main objectives: decentralization and delegation of authority and capacity for action to field offices; promotion of national execution; reorientation of the role of technical co-operation agencies from project execution to technical support activities; and a shift from a project approach to a programme approach. Since adoption of the resolution, the UNDP Governing Council had taken a number of important decisions concerning national execution, agency support costs, procurement policies and programme planning. While UNDP had begun the necessary adjustment process, other organizations had not yet done so, perhaps because their governing bodies had not considered the matter. It was imperative that action taken by Governments in the various governing bodies should be perfectly co-ordinated. Since UNDP had particular responsibilities, and since the fifth programming cycle would be beginning in 1992, UNDP and the organizations concerned should consult among themselves and co-ordinate their activities. The Director-General and his staff should continue to play a key role in accelerating the co-ordination process.
- 62. General Assembly resolution 44/211 and UNDP Governing Council decision 90/21 both dealt with ways to facilitate national execution, but lack of human resources was a constraint. UNDP must make every effort to assist recipient Governments in enhancing policy formation, programme management and project administration. Furthermore, if the integrated system approach was the best way to increase coherence and efficiency of operational activities, a recipient Government also had a responsibility to strengthen co-ordination, for example, by formulating an internally consistent national development programme and ensuring interministerial co-ordination.
- 63. His delegation had participated actively in negotiations which had led to the adoption by the UNDP Governing Council of decision 90/26 on agency support costs. The new system would bring about changes that might be difficult in the short run, but it offered a solid framework for tripartite co-operation. UNDP should intensify its consultations with the agencies concerned, giving consideration to their own problems, especially the predictability of income during the transition period in particular. After such consultations, specific proposals should be submitted at the special session in February.
- 64. The fifth programming cycle adopted by the UNDP Governing Council did not satisfy all countries, but Japan supported allocation of resources on a priority basis for poorer countries, including the least developed countries, for alleviation of poverty and for capacity-building by developing countries. It also welcomed the Governing Council's decision, (decision 90/23), to establish a standing committee for programme matters, which would allow UNDP better to meet the needs of recipient countries.

(Mr. Koike, Japan)

- 65. Since its inception in 1963, the World Food Programme had played an important role in assisting low-income and food-deficit countries. It had extended assistance also to countries afflicted by natural and man-made disasters and had become the largest provider of aid in the United Nations system after the World Bank. Its activities had expanded dramatically, by more than 10 times over the past 27 years, which could not have been imagined when it was established as a small experimental programme under the joint auspices of the United Nations and FAO. WFP was still governed by the general regulations formulated 25 years earlier, which appeared increasingly out-of-date, particularly with regard to relations with FAO. The time had come to review the regulations to reflect the actual relationship between WFP and FAO. WFP should assume responsibility for its own governance, under intergovernmental oversight by the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, which would lighten the FAO work-load. With greater independence, WFP could play a more active role in co-ordination of programmes conducted with other institutions, such as FAO. The Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes should attempt to resolve that matter quickly, and it was to be hoped that the United Nations and FAO would participate positively in that effort.
- 66. Mr. ROKOTUIVUNA (Fiji) said that UNDP, which was the corner-stone of United Nations development activities, had a key role to play in the establishment of a new and more balanced economic and social order. It must have strong support for its activities, particularly through financial and material contributions of Member States. The recent United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities had fallen short of the target established, and it was to be hoped that donor countries had not rejected the idea of contributing 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance. Nevertheless, though perhaps a certain "donor fatigue" was setting in, there could be little doubt that the development assistance they had provided had brought about an unprecedented transformation since the end of the Second World War.
- 67. His delegation welcomed the priority given to consolidation and co-ordination among United Nations agencies. The UNDP resident representative, in his capacity as resident co-ordinator, should be given clear authority to oversee the activities of United Nations bodies to ensure that they were consistent with the objectives and priorities set by Governments. Human resource development had been given high priority in the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations Development Decade. Assistance from the United Nations system for national capacity-building had achieved good results, and it remained a UNDP priority. National execution and technical co-operation between developing countries must also continue to be encouraged.
- 68. The small island countries of the Pacific subregion, which often felt marginalized and neglected in the face of the compelling needs of the more populous developing countries, highly appreciated the assistance provided by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). Such assistance had enabled Fiji to hold a round-table meeting in 1990, at which it was able to highlight policies focused on the adaptation of the development process to present day realities: export-led growth, deregulation of the economy, cutbacks in public spending, reform of the tax

(Mr. Rokotuivuna, Fiii)

system, the importance of competitiveness in international markets and the involvement of all sectors of the population. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the World Food Programme (WFP) had all been of vital assistance to Fiji in their respective areas of competence.

- 69. Mr. REVA (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) noted with satisfaction the wider acceptance of the need for a new approach to multilateral co-operation. The growing interdependence of States, the acceleration of political and economic integration processes, the critical nature of environmental problems and the necessity to ensure the stability and the predictability of international economic relations should be taken into account when restructuring the mechanism of operational activities. Particular importance attached, in that regard, to the General Assembly resolutions and above all to resolution 44/211.
- 70. His delegation had studied with interest the revised schedule of implementation of resolution 44/211 contained in the Director-General's report (A/45/273/Add.5-E/1990/85/Add.5). That schedule represented an extensive revision of the draft presented at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council. The Director-General's task had been complicated by the transformations under way in the United Nations system for example, UNDP was preparing its fifth programme cycle and working out the new procedures for organization support costs. Nevertheless, a number of participating bodies had presented detailed decentralization plans and adopted decisions on more vigorous action to utilize national capacities and to accelerate implementation. As the Director-General had said, however, implementation of the resolution was essentially at the preparatory stage. The Ukraine would follow the practical execution of the resolution with the keenest interest.
- 71. The attainment of the broad objectives of operational activities for development depended to a large extent on the efficiency of UNDP. The foundation for the success of UNDP's activities was the consensus of 1970: voluntary and universal participation, the immediate nature of assistance and the decisive role of the beneficiary countries in using that assistance.
- 72. The report on the thirty-seventh session of the UNDP Governing Council (Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1990, Supplement No. 9) contained detailed information on the assistance provided by UNDP to the developing countries. His delegation noted with satisfaction that UNDP's activities were geared to the work of the other United Nations agencies and specialized institutions as well as to the results of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation. It was particularly important that UNDP should participate in the adoption of environmental protection measures because the dimensions of environmental degradation necessitated a significant expansion in international, regional and subregional co-operation, particularly in operational activities. For the Ukrainian SSR, a major focus of those operational activities was international co-operation to deal with the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and it was to be hoped that UNDP would play an active role in that co-operation.

(Mr. Reva. Ukrainian SSR)

- 73. With regard to the full utilization of the resources placed at the disposal of UNDP, reference should be made to decision 85/39 by which the Governing Council had urged UNDP and the executing agencies to increase their efforts to expand the geographical distribution of the sources of supply. The UNDP administration should show greater perseverance and flexibility in that area.
- 74. The Ukrainian SSR had participated in the work of UNDP since its inception. Its co-operation with the developing countries consisted in training qualified personnel, and more than 20,000 nationals of developing countries were currently undergoing training in the specialized establishments of the Ukrainian SSR.
- 75. The Ukraine had undertaken a programme of improvement of its economic structures, which would help ensure that every production unit could participate in the multilateral technical assistance offered by the United Nations in the provision of equipment or consultative services to interested developing countries.
- 76. In conclusion, he called attention to the work of UNICEF, which occupied an increasingly important place in the system of operational activities. The Ukrainian SSR endorsed UNICEF's lofty objectives, as evidenced by its contribution of 1,249,000 rubles for 1989, and it welcomed the personal initiatives undertaken by the Director-General in maternal and child care. It was vital to continue efforts to rationalize the work of UNICEF, to direct resources towards the main goals defined in the documents adopted by the World Summit for Children and to improve the evaluation mechanisms employed in ordinary programmes.
- 77. Mr. MOHIUDDIN (Bangladesh) said that efforts must now be directed towards the practical implementation of various important international instruments, such as the final declaration of the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly and the new development strategy. The new Programme or Action for the Least Developed Countries also established important goals. It was to be hoped that the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) would not overlook that problem at its next session. The Director-General could play an essential role by taking timely initiatives to ensure the coherence, co-ordination and effectiveness that would benefit the developing countries in general and the least developed countries in particular. It should also be noted that paragraph 142 of the new Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries called for the establishment of focal points for the least developed countries in the various United Nations agencies.
- 78. He stressed that operational activities for development should not suffer from a lack of financing. It was vital to allocate an increasing share of the resources earmarked for those purposes to the activities which deserved them most. He welcomed the decision taken by the Governing Council of UNDP regarding the fifth programming cycle. Other important concerns included execution, co-ordination and decentralization at country level, the simplification of procedures, the harmonization of programming cycles and the integrated approach. Guidance should be sought in the important provisions of resolution 44/211.

(Mr. Mohiuddin, Bangladesh)

- 79. It was essential to make programmes responsive to national priorities and to ensure that the national executing authorities were fully involved in the planning and execution process. If they were to play their proper role, those authorities must receive the full support of the United Nations system. Paragraphs 14 to 18 of the Director-General's report (A/45/273/Add.2) had particular bearing on that topic. While it was essential to increase dialogue at all levels, Member States should have the time to reflect carefully on the different recommendations set forth in that document before any decision was taken about future activities.
- 80. Both the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) had very important roles to play. While co-ordination at field level was of great importance, its impact would be limited without similar co-operation at Headquarters. That task would be greatly facilitated if clearly defined national objectives and priorities were incorporated in the programmes of the United Nations agencies and if emphasis was placed on national execution of projects. The reports submitted by the different agencies on decentralization were of great interest. Efforts must promptly be made to remove all administrative and other constraints, some of which were directly linked to over-centralization.
- 81. Finally, it was important to ensure that the integrated approach of operational activities at country level did not become too burdensome. It should only be adopted where its usefulness was beyond doubt.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.