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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece)
later: Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco)
(Vice-Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 84: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT

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

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 84: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (A/45/3, A/45/76-E/1990/12 and Add.1, A/45/77-E/1990/10 and Add.1, A/45/584, A/45/598-S/21854, A/45/648; A/44/646)

- (a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (A/45/273-E/1990/85 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5, A/45/281-E/1990/66 and Corr.1)
- (b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME (A/45/347; E/1990/29)
- (c) UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND (A/45/529; E/1990/29; DP/1990/44)
- (d) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (A/45/3; E/1990/28)
- (e) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (A/45/3; E/1990/99)

1. Mr. BLANCA (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation) urged the Committee, as it discussed operational activities, to bear in mind the difficult economic and social situation facing many developing countries. Given the improvements in the international atmosphere, the international community had a unique opportunity to correct the most flagrant social and economic inequalities and combat poverty.

2. The operational activities of the United Nations system were the practical expression of the collective will of Member States to meet the developing countries' urgent needs. They provided support for national strategies and helped translate international guidelines into concrete development activities, a dual role highlighted in General Assembly resolution 44/211. That resolution also referred specifically to the human dimension of development, the need to eliminate poverty and the importance of popular participation in development. It would now be the Committee's task to formulate guidelines that would enable the system to achieve the objectives set out in the strategies and plans adopted by the international community during the past year.

3. In fact, the preceeding year had been marked by a significant number of important international decisions which would serve as bench-marks for co-operation activities in the coming years. The importance of operational activities had been underscored in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, the Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its eighteenth special session, the draft international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade and the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children.

4. The broad international consensus which had emerged in favour of human development and the achievement of social justice had led to closer co-operation between international institutions, and he hoped that a concerted approach would be adopted also at the country level. Unfortunately, the operational activities of

(Mr. Blanca)

the United Nations system had yet to receive the support they required. Significantly higher levels of core resources must be provided if the unique international and neutral character of United Nations co-operation was to be maintained.

5. Member States were fully entitled to expect qualitative improvements in operational activities in keeping with the exacting standards set by the General Assembly. The 1990 report on operational activities for development (A/45/273 and Corr.1 and Add.1-5) contained detailed information on the numerous steps taken to strengthen co-ordination at the field level, improve collaborative programming, promote greater sharing of the premises, facilitate the provision of multidisciplinary advisory and technical services and increase national programme and project execution.

6. In looking over the vast range of interdependent measures to improve operational activities, it was useful to recall two related fundamental principles: the right of recipient Governments to identify their own priorities and co-ordination arrangements, and the inherent flexibility of operational activities, which derived from the fact that they met many different needs and were carried out under different mandates and local conditions.

7. He had been requested to submit a proposed three-year schedule for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211 by all the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. In addition, the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1990/82, had requested him to submit a precise and comprehensive schedule for the implementation of all the provisions of the General Assembly resolution that required action by the United Nations system, concentrating on those activities that, in his view, required priority attention. The requisite information was provided in the addendum to his report. However, given the complexity of the task, including the need to conduct extensive, system-wide consultations and to condense a vast array of data, it had not been possible, as yet, to produce a detailed and definitive schedule. The schedule would therefore require further elaboration. It was therefore proposed that updated information regarding action taken by organizations in the system should be provided at regular intervals. Certain bench-marks had been proposed to facilitate the monitoring of progress in the implementation of key provisions of the resolution.

8. Paragraph 17 (g) of the resolution requested him to conduct a study aimed at developing the concept of a document containing the system's integrated operational response to the national programme framework of recipient countries. That study was contained in addendum 2 to his report and the views thereon of resident co-ordinators, field representatives of United Nations agencies and recipient countries had been sought. All organizations in the system had expressed a desire to engage in collaborative programming. The limits of a narrow sectoral approach had been recognized, and programming by objectives, which required cross-sectoral and inter-agency co-operation, was being more widely used. Such programming must occasionally take regional considerations into account. He was particularly interested in hearing the reactions of Committee members to the ideas and recommendations put forward on that complex and challenging subject.

(Mr. Blanca)

9. An important issue dealt with in resolution 44/211 was the need fully to enable Governments to assume the execution of programmes and projects funded by the United Nations system for development. The responses of resident co-ordinators on that subject were reflected in paragraphs 104-113 of his report and in addendum 5 thereto. It was obvious that substantial efforts to enhance national capacities for execution were still required, with greater attention paid to the supporting role of the field offices of UNDP and other agencies. UNDP Governing Council decision 90/21 was an important step in that regard and would undoubtedly increase national execution of UNDP-supported projects.

10. The question of co-ordination at the country level had remained under review in 1990. The performance of the United Nations system in that area had improved, as noted at the recent joint meeting of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and ACC. Practical steps had been taken to strengthen the team approach under the leadership of resident co-ordinators. The Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ (OPS)) had played an important role in promoting system-wide co-ordination, and resident co-ordinators had been asked to suggest additional steps that could be taken to strengthen the team approach at the country level, and he expected to be able to report on that matter in 1991. He also acknowledged the positive work undertaken by the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP).

11. Chapter II, section D (paras. 154-206) of his report concerned recommendations on which additional guidance was sought. He drew particular attention to the recommendations on food aid (paras. 184-188), which responded to paragraph 17 (e) of resolution 44/211. Two other important subjects discussed in that section of the report dealt with field representation of the United Nations system (paras. 159-166) and the provision of multidisciplinary technical advice (paras. 170-174). While those issues would be reviewed in greater depth the following year, they might warrant some consideration during the current year.

12. As noted in paragraph 206, the magnitude of the tasks emanating from General Assembly resolution 44/211 meant that he would need both staff support from the organizations of the system and additional extrabudgetary resources. Thus when considering any new activities, delegations might wish to bear the possible budgetary implications of their decisions in mind.

13. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that the many momentous events that had occurred during the past year had improved the prospects for peace, democracy and development during the next decade. Perhaps the most potent development was the growing sense of global community that united the world as it moved into the 1990s. There was also a growing awareness that the real purpose of development was to enlarge people's range of choices. Thus the fact that developing countries had done more to increase adult literacy, reduce infant mortality and lengthen life-spans in 30 years than the industrialized world had achieved in a century served as a reminder that development did in fact work and that funds for international assistance had made a critical difference. However, continued progress required that development priorities be better focused.

(Mr. Draper, UNDP)

14. Those were some of the central messages of the Human Development Report 1990, published by UNDP. The publication was an excellent form of technical co-operation, for it distilled national policy experience and presented it to busy decision-makers in an accessible form.
15. He was pleased to see the emphasis placed in the new draft international development strategy on human resource development and popular participation in development decision-making and he welcomed the statement and comprehensive report presented by the Director-General. At its most recent session, the UNDP Governing Council had approved several decisions concerning policy guidelines which were similar in thrust to General Assembly resolution 44/211. That resolution had called for a multi-sectoral approach to development at the field level, under the leadership of the resident co-ordinator and had reaffirmed the central funding role of UNDP and the leading role of resident co-ordinators in disaster relief and rehabilitation. UNDP had done much to strengthen co-operation at the field level in JCGP.
16. The Governing Council's new emphasis on a programme approach, rather than a project approach, meant that UNDP must focus on building and strengthening national capacities in six key areas: poverty eradication and grass-roots participation, the environment, management development, technical co-operation among developing countries, technology transfers and women in development.
17. In the first area, 55 per cent of programmable resources for the fifth programming cycle had been allocated to the least developed countries, and UNDP had played an important role in the organization of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries. UNDP supported grass-roots activities in many least-developed countries, including Benin and Bangladesh. The Partners in Development Programme sought to encourage local non-governmental organizations to support such activities with micro-grants of up to \$25,000; that programme currently comprised more than 270 projects in 65 developing countries. Nevertheless, much more needed to be done.
18. In the area of the environment, UNDP was involved in a variety of initiatives to help developing countries manage their natural resources. Together with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Bank, UNDP was involved in the establishment of a \$1-billion global environment facility to combat major environmental threats and was helping to launch the operations of the fund established in connection with the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. UNDP was actively involved in preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and was working with other international organizations in the area of tropical forestry. Support totalling \$500 million had been provided to environmental programmes and projects in developing countries in Africa and Asia. UNDP experts were assisting with the recycling of precious metals and the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in China and exploring ways to halt the pollution of the Black Sea in collaboration with the countries of that region. Despite all those efforts, however, much more needed to be done.

(Mr. Draper, UNDP)

19. In the area of management development, UNDP was active in both the public and private sectors. Since 1989, the UNDP Management Development Programme had dispatched 70 missions to developing countries to help with personnel training and the upgrading of public services. UNDP was also actively involved in the upgrading of management capabilities in Eastern Europe.

20. In the area of technical co-operation among developing countries, the UNDP Special Unit for Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries had organized four meetings during the past year at which developing countries had arranged to trade technical expertise with their neighbours. Much remained to be done to ensure that technical co-operation among developing countries was fully integrated into development activities where appropriate.

21. UNDP was deeply involved in the transfer and adaptation of technology for development. By spraying and other technologies, various dangerous parasites were being eliminated. Blood screening technology was being brought to the developing world to combat the spread of AIDS, weather-forecasting technology was being brought to the water-starved Sahel, and a cheap and simple pump to bring safe water to remote African villages had been installed in thousands. One of the major challenges ahead was that of convincing industrialized countries that transferring environmentally sound technologies to their less developed neighbours at little or no cost was in their own interest.

22. Lastly, UNDP was deeply involved in promoting women's issues in development, feeling strongly that women must be both participants in and beneficiaries of development activities. Through its Division for Women in Development in particular, UNDP screened all major products for gender sensitivity and alerted all staff to the importance of women's issues and involvement. The affiliated fund UNIFEM had improved the lives of tens of thousands of poor women in developing countries by providing them with access to credit, training and technologies.

23. In the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, it had been stressed that women's involvement in decision-making was essential to develop and maintain safe water supplies. The World Conference on Education For All had had the improvement of female literacy as a key goal. Greater female literacy had great ramifications for the developing world, in that educated women tended to have fewer and healthier children.

24. On the issue of support costs, agreement between UNDP and the United Nations agencies was central to the future partnership of the United Nations development system. UNDP had assiduously consulted with its agency partners to reach an equitable agreement. It was essential to set up a partnership that worked.

25. UNDP had just concluded a successful pledging conference in which the confidence of the member Governments had been underscored by their financial contributions. Funding for core activities for 1991 was estimated at \$1.12 billion, a 7 per cent increase over 1990. While that was an impressive increase, it had to be noted that half of it resulted from the declining value of

(Mr. Draper, UNDP)

the dollar, and that it was still below the commitment of an 8 per cent increase set by UNDP's Governing Council in June. Even 8 per cent would allow little scope for increasing service to developing countries, which needed so much help. However, UNDP was studying its own practices to make sure as much as possible of the contributions actually reached the field.

26. Finally, he said that a significant reduction in headquarters administrative and staffing overhead expenses was expected in 1992-1993. The reduction would not impinge on the brand-new recruitment programme, which represented an attempt to get the very brightest and very best staff.

27. Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund) said that in the past two years UNFPA had carried out a number of programming improvements in view of the need for rigorous and effective action in the 1990s. In particular, it had sought to define a comprehensive and focused strategy for population programming based on strategic planning, greater understanding of the socio-cultural context of programmes and more systematic use of monitoring and evaluation.

28. In 1989, the UNDP/UNFPA Governing Council had expressed its confidence by approving the 1990-1991 budget for administrative and programme support services, including new regular posts at headquarters and in the field. Focus in the past few years had been on improvement of UNFPA's own operations. The Fund had stressed the need for a multi-disciplinary longer-term approach in partnership with all concerned. A key element of such an approach was UNFPA's new programming methodology. Following an in-depth review of current activities and future needs, a strategic framework was established for a given country's population programme.

29. Since population programmes could not succeed without strong co-ordination, UNFPA had been focusing on strengthening co-ordination. The Fund's staff had been instructed to synchronize programmes with those of other organizations, and to follow Government planning cycles. Other initiatives during the past two years had included steps towards greater decentralization and delegation of authority, which, unfortunately, would be of limited effect until all other United Nations organizations followed suit. The agency support system was under review, and an arrangement was being defined which would rely more on regional multi-disciplinary teams of technical advisors, as had been recommended by the report of the Expert Group on agency support costs.

30. To commemorate the twentieth anniversary of the start of UNFPA's operations in 1969, the Fund had undertaken a large-scale assessment of population programme experience world wide. The Governing Council had noted with satisfaction in 1989 that population programmes in the past two decades had contributed to increased awareness of population issues, increased access to family planning information and services and lower infant, child and maternal mortality.

31. In order to focus attention on the urgency and importance of population issues in the context of overall development, 11 July had been designated World Population

(Mrs. Sadik, UNFPA)

Day. A very large number of countries seized the opportunity to promote awareness and formulate population policies. The world population currently stood at around 5.29 billion. According to the most recent United Nations estimates, by the year 2000 the figure would be 6.3 billion, which was higher by 139 million than the projection made in 1984.

32. The fastest growth would come in the least developed and poorest countries. The situation in the African countries was the most alarming, given that the population of sub-Saharan Africa was growing at 3.1 per cent a year, faster than any other region. It would be around 1 billion by 2010 and reach 1.3 billion by 2025. There was reason for some optimism, however, since recent years had seen significant changes in official attitudes to population issues. At the present time, UNFPA was helping all countries in the region with comprehensive multi-sectoral population programmes, and every country included at least some family planning information and services in its maternal and child care programmes.

33. The population in Asia now exceeded 3 billion. While the region as a whole had made substantial progress in lowering fertility rates, the rate in southern and western Asia averaged 2.3 per cent. UNFPA had carried out a study in 1989 to ascertain why the demographic achievements in the region had been less than desired. The resulting recommendations were now being implemented by the countries concerned, UNFPA and the donor community.

34. All Latin American and Caribbean countries now accepted family planning. Here, too, remarkable changes had taken place, as exemplified by the recent strong statement by the President of Peru in favour of family planning. In the Arab States, while fertility and infant and maternal mortality remained high, most countries included family planning as an integral part of maternal and child health care. UNFPA was promoting improvements in the status of women, maternal and child health care and family planning in the region.

35. Despite the many encouraging developments, projections for the coming few decades showed that there would be an aggravation, not only of problems associated with rapid population growth, migration, uneven population distribution, the role and status of women and continuing rapid urbanization, but also of emerging demographic issues such as population aging and the AIDS epidemic.

36. That situation was the background to the UNFPA Report on the Implications for Population Programmes of the Amsterdam Declaration and on Efforts to Develop Further the Analysis of Resource Requirements for International Population Assistance (DP/1990/44). The report stressed the remarkable consensus displayed at the Amsterdam Forum, and underscored the urgent need to increase support for population programmes. It had been estimated that, in 2000, the minimum annual cost of supporting a balanced, comprehensive population programme would be in the order of \$US 9 billion - double the present expenditure. If UNFPA alone, programme expenditures and requirements would easily reach \$US 500 million by 1994. UNFPA's resources would increase by 10-11 per cent in 1991, to reach \$233-235 million.

(Mrs. Sadik, UNFPA)

37. While deeply grateful to all donors for their continued strong support, she said that resources for the vastly increasing population programmes needed to be substantially increased.

38. Given the challenges of the 1990s and that fact that increased population meant increased energy use, resource consumption and environmental stress, it was heartening that a consensus was emerging on the need to give the highest priority to poverty alleviation and to human development. It was also heartening to see the stress placed by many recent international meetings and agreements on the importance of population variables. By the same token, UNFPA was greatly concerned to see that population dimension had been virtually ignored in the preparations for the Conference on Environment and Development.

39. The 1994 International Meeting on Population would provide an occasion to review and prioritize policy and programme options beyond 2000. The shape of the twenty-first century would largely be determined by what was done, or left undone, during the next decade. It was a collective responsibility to take the decisions which would widen rather than narrow the range of choice for those who were to follow.

40. Mr. JOLLY (Deputy Executive Director of UNICEF) said that UNICEF believed that the 1990s held unprecedented potential for human progress and economic development, provided that lessons could be learned from the positive as well as the negative experiences of the 1980s. The operational activities of all parts of the United Nations system had a key role to play in mobilizing support for seizing the opportunities of the 1990s. Governments must give clear leadership, which required clear consensus goals and a practical vision.

41. A number of efforts were under way to help define such goals. There was increasing acceptance of the need to broaden the approach to adjustment to include adequate goals on the human side. UNICEF welcomed the growing consensus that human development and poverty eradication should be a central concern.

42. Experience had shown that, providing that goals were specific and feasible, inexpensive and politically acceptable, they could help promote efficiency, and act as a stimulus to political action and popular mobilization. Despite the economic and social problems of the 1980s, by setting itself specific goals for, inter alia, immunization coverage and oral rehydration therapy, UNICEF had succeeded in dramatically reducing the number of infant and child deaths. The reduction in such deaths in 1990, as a result of those two health measures alone, was estimated at 3.5 million. Immunization coverage had risen from 15-20 per cent in 1980 to the present 75 per cent.

43. The process of formulating common goals and strategies had been significantly advanced by the World Summit for Children, which had endorsed seven major goals: reduction of under-five child mortality rates by one third from 1990 levels or to 70 per 1,000 live births, whichever was the lower; reduction of maternal mortality rates to half of 1990 levels; reduction of severe and moderate malnutrition among

(Mr. Jolly, UNICEF)

under-five children by one half of 1990 levels; the achievement of universal access to safe drinking water and to sanitary means of excreta disposal; the achievement of universal access to basic education and completion of primary education by at least 80 per cent of primary-school-age children; reduction of adult illiteracy to at least half its 1990 level, with emphasis on female literacy; and protection of children in especially difficult circumstances, particularly armed conflicts. Those seven goals were part of a broader list of 22 specific targets, and together with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, represented a comprehensive programme for deep-seated change.

44. The Second Committee also had an important leadership role to play in the implementation of those goals. Achievement of the goals of human development would call not only for increased resources, but also for a change in priorities with respect to their use. Only a small fraction of the resources earmarked for aid was actually used in direct support of human development; for example, only 1.5 per cent of such resources were allocated to family planning and related activities. The industrialized countries which were members of the Committee should therefore commit themselves to finding ways to restructure aid budgets to meet such priority areas as health, water, basic education and nutrition. The necessary additional resources could perhaps be sought in a combination of debt relief measures and also from the savings resulting from reduced military expenditure.

45. General Assembly resolution 44/211 emphasized the centrality of the national government's goals and strategies and the role of the United Nations system in helping to develop and achieve those objectives. That philosophy was at the heart of the "programme approach" and was closely associated with the Fund's approach of "management by objectives". In UNICEF practice, that meant the provision of assistance through a long-term country programme of support to a defined range of national activities. Over 90 per cent of UNICEF resources were directed to or through such country programmes, each prepared by the Fund's country staff with the Government of the country concerned and in close collaboration with the Fund's other United Nations partners. The country programme approach could greatly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of all operational activities of the United Nations system, as well as inter-agency co-operation in support of the country action. The decentralized programme approach was the focus for many of the actions which had been called for by CCSQ (OPS), and due account should be taken of that Committee's recommendations and experience.

46. Mr. NAVAJAS-MOGRO (Bolivia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that there was an urgent need to increase, in real terms, resources for the operational activities of the United Nations system. Such resources should be used exclusively for programmes and projects in developing countries. The developing countries should assume full responsibility for the implementation of projects financed by the United Nations system, and should be given greater degree of flexibility in selecting executing agencies. The work carried out so far in the area of operational activities for development had not gone far enough to achieve the economic and social development of the developing countries. Moreover, recent

(Mr. Navajas-Mogro, Bolivia)

events seemed to presage difficult times for the international community, in particular for the developing countries.

47. The impact of the technical assistance provided by the United Nations system to the developing countries in order to promote their self-reliance and national capacities was still limited. Many developing countries continued to depend on international civil servants for the development, monitoring and assessment of their projects and programmes. Moreover, the current trend towards bureaucratization made it difficult to attain the objectives of the international agencies. Similarly, the centralization and lack of co-ordination of the United Nations system in the area of development co-operation was not conducive to an effective solution of the problems of underdevelopment. In some cases, rules and procedures became obstacles to technical co-operation for development.

48. The Group of 77 wished to reiterate the validity and importance of the principles outlined in the consensus of 1970, as well as the need to implement General Assembly resolution 44/211 which underscored the role of UNDP as the central funding mechanism for the United Nations system of technical co-operation, and the need to strengthen co-ordination and to decentralize capacity and authority in the United Nations system with regard to operational activities. In order to achieve those two objectives, the role and responsibilities of resident representatives and resident co-ordinators must be strengthened. The United Nations system of technical co-operation must be better integrated and adapted to national development programmes. The programming cycles of all United Nations agencies should be harmonized with and adapted to the planning periods of government programmes, and the project approach should be replaced by a programme approach. Resolution 44/211 also stressed the need to reorient execution modalities, in order to enable the recipient Governments to exercise their management and co-ordination responsibilities and strengthen their national capacities.

49. Paragraph 33 of that resolution reaffirmed the provision contained in resolution 32/197 concerning the representation of developing countries at the executive management and other central decision-making levels of secretariat structures in the area of operational activities for development of the United Nations system and requested the Director-General to report on the implementation thereof. In implementing resolution 44/211, the relevant agencies of the United Nations system should take account of national programmes as well as the guidelines contained in the Declaration on International Economic Co-operation, the Declaration adopted at the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and the World Summit for Children, and the new international development strategy.

50. Mr. NAVARRETE (Chile) expressed deep concern that one of the fundamental principles which had inspired the establishment of UNDP, namely, universality, was not being observed. Some of the new criteria established by the Governing Council of UNDP at its thirty-seventh session had resulted in significantly lower indicative planning figures (IPFs) for the fifth programming cycle for the

(Mr. Navarrete, Chile)

countries of Latin America. That was particularly worrisome since profound economic and social changes were taking place in that region. The task of UNDP was to help developing countries to attain sustainable levels of economic and social progress in keeping with the policies and resources of the respective countries.

51. Universality was one of the basic principles which had inspired multilateral technical co-operation for development within the United Nations. His delegation associated itself with the appeal made by various delegations to the Governing Council to examine the matter in order to return, in the near future, to the principle of universality on the basis of equality and broad participation.

52. As of April 1990, as part of the fourth national programme of technical co-operation for Chile, 51 different projects had been carried out. The principal emphasis had been placed on support for national scientific and technological development and initiatives to decentralize that process through the participation of institutional, human and capital resources from diverse regions of the country. In order to achieve those objectives, priority had been given to support for technological innovation or adaptation for the productive sector, combined scientific and technological research programmes, and professional training programmes. The Government of Chile had just completed a review of the projects for the current cycle, which had confirmed the validity of the objectives and results achieved to date.

53. In paragraph 7 of its resolution 90/34 on the fifth programming cycle, the Governing Council of UNDP indicated that UNDP should focus on building and strengthening national capacity in six specific areas: poverty eradication and grass-roots participation in development; environmental problems and natural resources management; management development; technical co-operation among developing countries; transfer and adaptation of technology for development; and women in development. The programmes which the Government of Chile planned to carry out in the period corresponding to the fifth programming cycle clearly pertained to those areas. Chile was confident that, in co-operation with UNDP, it would be able to carry out a programme of activities which would directly benefit the Chilean population.

54. Technical co-operation among developing countries was the fruit of the experiences gained from the development process in third world countries. The need to eliminate the costly factors of uncertainty and to progress in the search for solutions to problems which all developing countries had encountered at one time or another, made such co-operation essential and developing countries must increasingly resort to it. The Government of Chile firmly supported such activities both from a regional and inter-regional point of view, and was exploring and implementing ways to accelerate South-South co-operation.

55. Mr. MALONE (Canada) said that the changes in the global political situation lent even greater importance to the new directions in the Organization's operational activities. The report before the Committee (A/45/273 and Add.1-5) stressed the fact that scarce grant resources for development should be channelled

(Mr. Malone, Canada)

to the poorest countries; the United Nations system must concentrate on areas of demonstrated strength or value; and priority must be assigned to strengthening national capacities at all stages of the programme and project cycle. The report also brought out the necessity for greater harmonization of procedures and practices among United Nations development organizations; a more integrated approach to agency programming; and the decentralization of authority and capacity.

56. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation had an important leadership role in co-ordinating the follow-up to General Assembly resolution 44/211. The necessary resources must therefore be made available to him - not through extrabudgetary contributions, but rather directly from the regular budget. The Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational activities) (CCSQ/OPS) was to be commended for building an inter-agency consensus on improving the resident co-ordinator system, even if its proposals did not fully reflect the Canadian appeal to strengthen the co-ordinator's mandate. His delegation also wished to recognize the work of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) in co-ordinating operational policies concerning common premises, the harmonization of procedures and collaborative programming.

57. Decentralization, proposed by the Director-General in the final volume of his report (A/45/273/Add.5), was an interesting concept but must be viewed in the larger context of achieving greater co-ordination of field activities at the country level. His delegation was concerned that the integrated operational response, once a relatively simple idea involving inter-agency collaboration on programming, might be evolving into a bureaucratic and burdensome concept.

58. If properly implemented, the decision on agency support costs could represent one of the most significant changes in the functioning of the United Nations Development Programme since the consensus of 1970. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would endorse the UNDP Governing Council's decision to shift the focus of agency participation from separate projects towards programme and sectoral policy functions. His delegation also supported the Council's stress on national execution of projects. That, however, should not imply the mere financing of national goods and services, but rather the transfer of external capacities to recipient countries. Moreover, the shift to national execution should not outpace UNDP's ability to provide appropriate support. His delegation commended UNDP for stressing co-operation with the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the participation of women in development. In view of the relationship between population issues, maternal and child health, literacy, the status of women and the environment, UNDP should be included in the plans for closer collaboration between UNFPA and UNICEF.

59. His delegation was particularly interested in the review by the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (CFA) of the World Food Programme governance issues, including the relationship between WFP, the Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations. The governance of WFP must reflect the fact that it had become the largest-disbursing grant-based

(Mr. Malone, Canada)

organization. His delegation welcomed the participation of the United Nations Secretariat in the review. Increasing the responsibility of Governments, through CFA, for all aspects of the programme would represent an important step. The Executive Director should also be fully accountable to CFA in discharging his managerial responsibilities.

60. Human development must have at its base the survival, protection and development of children. The commitment made at the World Summit for Children had been extraordinary. The Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit must be concretely reflected in the work of the United Nations.

61. Mr. Amaziane (Morocco), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

62. Mr. GEBREMEDHIN (Ethiopia) said that his delegation attached particular importance to the three-year schedule for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. Indeed, in spite of landmark efforts to streamline operational activities, the pace of progress continued to be slowed by the elaborate administrative structure of the United Nations development system. Change had become essential. The focus must be on the needs of developing countries rather than the needs of the United Nations system.

63. In July 1988, during a mid-term review of its fourth UNDP country programme, Ethiopia had engaged in a frank and constructive exchange of views with UNDP officials, with representatives of each specialized agency in attendance and some improvements had been instituted. However, problems remained with respect to the approval of project documents; cumbersome financial and procurement procedures; the auditing of nationally executed projects; reporting requirements; and the provision of technical backstopping by agencies. Indeed, the tasks of satisfying headquarters requirements and reporting to governing bodies continued to undermine the common objective of capacity-building within recipient countries. As a consequence, Ethiopia's fourth cycle indicative planning figure (IPF) might not be fully utilized and would have to be carried forward to the fifth programming cycle.

64. His delegation recognized the importance of the decisions already taken by UNDP and UNFPA in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/211 and appreciated UNICEF's long-time responsive, flexible approach in its country offices. It also took note of JCGP's joint letter on harmonization and joint programming addressed to the field offices.

65. His delegation concurred with the proposals to decentralize authority and the country office structure. Decentralization should improve the capacity to provide technical advice to Governments in all phases of projects or programmes, with a view to building the institutional capacity of recipient countries. The decision-making, financial and technical aspects of country office operation must be more uniform. Such uniformity could best be achieved by collaborative exercises at the headquarters level, including the co-ordination of institutional objectives and activities. Decentralization in the country structure would also ensure

(Mr. Gebramedhin, Ethiopia)

similar treatment of Governments and agencies and greater support for national execution. Existing procedures favoured agency execution, even where national capacities had been demonstrated, compelling Governments to scale down projects in proportion to agency grants.

66. Ethiopia had opted for national execution of 35 per cent of its UNDP-funded projects and 40 per cent of UNFPA projects. Indeed, a UNDP-sponsored study had shown that in Government-executed projects, 10 per cent less was spent on personnel than in projects executed by United Nations specialized agencies and expenditures for equipment were higher. Disproportionate agency expenditures on experts were another reason why Ethiopia preferred national execution of programmes. It was not his country's intention to compete with the specialized agencies, but the agencies should bear in mind that their mission in developing countries was not to perpetuate their presence there.

67. The effort to make country offices flexible and more responsive to national objectives must begin at headquarters. Funding agencies must adhere to uniform rules and procedures in respect of their country offices in order to achieve greater co-ordination at the country level. Budgets, personnel policy and expertise could then be adapted to facilitate the tasks of individual country offices. In conclusion, his delegation supported the recommendations contained in paragraphs 155 to 205 of the Director-General's report. Some of those recommendations, i.e., the common understanding of concepts and terms, should not be limited to inter-agency machinery, but rather should include Member States and the United Nations development system as a whole.

68. Mr. HUSLID (Norway) said that the Nordic countries welcomed the new system for operational activities outlined by General Assembly resolution 44/211, which recognized recipient countries as central actors in every phase of the development process. The Director-General would have a crucial co-ordinating role in ensuring that the resolution was fully and properly implemented and the Nordic countries appreciated the schedule he had established to that end. The fact that some governing bodies of United Nations organizations had yet to respond should in no way paralyse the overall initiative.

69. The Nordic countries fully agreed that developing countries should have greater responsibility in planning and implementing United Nations technical assistance. External assistance should focus on building national capacities and should make greater use of national resources and expertise, local NGOs and women's productive capacity.

70. The respective roles and functions of the specialized agencies must be assessed so that their know-how could be used more effectively. The agencies must play a greater supportive role, providing valuable inputs to recipient countries in the formulation of their national and sectoral development strategies. In that connection, the review of the World Food Programme was an important step in ensuring the proper governance of United Nations organizations.

(Mr. Huslid, Norway)

71. The Nordic countries supported the initiatives concerning national execution and agency support costs decided by the UNDP Governing Council at its thirty-seventh session. However, putting those decisions into practice would require a great deal of realism. Consultations on those issues must take place in a climate of co-operation and lead to concrete suggestions that would enable the United Nations system to address national development needs more adequately.

72. Referring to national execution, he stressed the importance of implementing administrative procedures and training programmes to improve the capacities of both recipient Governments and United Nations field offices. By no means should national execution be considered a means of transferring administrative responsibility from one United Nations organization to another. Rather, the concept must be geared to each country's capacities and circumstances. National execution must also take into account the tripartite nature of the United Nations development system and define the new roles to be played by its various organizations. Participation by sources outside the system could increase national efficiency and also serve as a model of efficiency to executing agencies of the United Nations.

73. The United Nations system must develop greater flexibility in responding to specific country needs. That would require a significant delegation of authority from headquarters to the country offices. The Nordic countries believed, however, the technical appraisal capacity of headquarters should be strengthened simultaneously with the move towards decentralization.

74. They fully supported the initiative of the JCGP to harmonize United Nations and national programming cycles. The Director-General's proposal concerning a national programme framework, which would form the basis for an integrated programme response by the United Nations system, was interesting. The Nordic countries would appreciate more information on the willingness of developing countries to provide such a framework.

75. The Governments of recipient countries had a key role to play in improving the co-ordination of external assistance. Concrete mechanisms to that end must be elaborated through dialogue between the countries and United Nations organizations. Such dialogue could be stimulated by resident co-ordinators. The role of the co-ordinators must be strengthened and the necessary resources must be provided to them, without creating a new layer of bureaucratic mechanisms in the process.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.