



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 14th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. AL-ASHTAL (Democratic Yemen)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 79: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

(b) FOOD PROBLEMS

(c) NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY: REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE DEVELOPMENT AND UTILIZATION OF NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY

(d) DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENERGY RESOURCES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued)

1. Mr. BENMOUSSA (Morocco) said that agricultural and food problems constituted a major aspect of the international economic crisis. Agriculture was the basic activity in the developing world, where it employed approximately 70 to 80 per cent of the active population of the low-income countries and represented 35 to 45 per cent of their gross domestic product. The world food situation was alarming. Seven hundred and eighty million individuals did not have sufficient food to lead a normal life, more than 15 million children died each year, in the developing countries as a whole, from causes closely related to malnutrition, and those who survived suffered irreparable damage, which resulted in a massive loss of human resources.

2. The most recent report on world development in 1986 prepared by the World Bank drew attention to the fact that the food imports of the developing countries had increased to such an extent since 1975 that they were at present equivalent to the food imports of the market economy developed countries. That report also brought out a disturbing paradox when it said that, on the whole, it was the developing countries that were penalizing their farmers, although the latter generated a considerable portion of the gross domestic product and export receipts, and that it was the industrial countries that subsidized agricultural production, while the farmers in those countries represented only a small part of GDP and employment. A more effective use of resources therefore required, firstly, the elimination of excessive subsidies, sources of over-production in the industrial countries, which artificially modified the food trade structure and, secondly, the adoption in the developing countries of policies favouring farmers.

3. So far, all the indicators showed that the developing countries were by far the ones that came up against the greatest number of obstacles, whether natural, human, technological, economic or structural. In Africa, obstacles linked to natural factors were particularly grave. Arid or semi-arid areas represented 60 per cent of the continent, as against a world average of 33 per cent, and some regions had suffered from the longest and most extensive drought of the century, which had turned nearly 65 million hectares of formerly productive land into expanses of desert on the southern border of the Sahara alone. Moreover, the migratory locust was making a reappearance and reducing to naught the efforts and hopes of African population groups whose survival was already precarious.

(Mr. Benmoussa, Morocco)

4. According to ECA, the recovery of the African agricultural sector had been very slight, and the fact that it was due mainly to the return to normal rainfall showed that it was urgently necessary to find solutions to correct the structural weaknesses that characterized that sector, the lung of the African economy. The main challenge for the coming years was thus to ensure the transition to a more productive and more stable agricultural system. The food and agricultural sector was, moreover, the one to which the thirteenth special session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, on the critical economic situation in Africa, had accorded priority. Africa had fundamental needs of an extent and urgency that made it impossible for them to be met without massive and immediate action, which called for both the convergence of national and international efforts and a restructuring of global economic relations. It was therefore essential to support the enlarged concept contained in the World on Food Security Compact adopted at the twenty-third session of the Conference of FAO and the programme drawn up by that organization to avert the threat of massive and recurrent famines in Africa. To that so-called "four i" programme, so referred to by FAO to designate incentives, imports, institutions and infrastructures, Morocco wished to add the promotion of innovations and initiatives. It also believed that it was necessary to support the growth of the resources of international and regional organizations whose activities related to the development of food production or to the combating of drought and desertification, in particular, the International Fund for Agricultural Development and its special programme for Africa south of the Sahara.

5. His delegation wished to draw attention to the report of the third meeting of non-aligned countries acting as co-ordinators in the field of food and agriculture, held at Rabat in late July. That meeting had agreed unanimously on practical recommendations designed to strengthen government action in the sectors of agriculture, food and fisheries, which were recognized as having high priority in national policy and international co-operation. The programme of action for agricultural and food self-sufficiency adopted by the meeting was focused on the main products that constituted the basis of the food of developing peoples, and included, in particular, the carrying out of regional agricultural projects, the establishment of maritime fishing mixed enterprises open to participation by land-locked States, the establishment of plans for collective autonomy by product and a set of measures for mutual technical assistance between developing countries. Lastly, that meeting had drawn attention to the fact that food imports and aid, as practised so far, had created consumer habits and patterns that the developing countries could not satisfy, in view of their soil, their climate and their technology. That was one of the reasons why Morocco had submitted at the previous session of the General Assembly, a resolution entitled "Patterns of consumption: qualitative aspects of development" (A/40/179), which had been adopted by consensus. Morocco was eagerly awaiting the report to be submitted on the subject by the Secretary-General at the next sessions of the Statistical Commission and the Economic and Social Council.

6. In conclusion, he considered it regrettable that, owing to lack of time, he was not able to set forth the views of his delegation on energy problems. He wished, nevertheless to stress that, in view of the now recognized interdependence of all the countries of the world and the issues of concern to them, he hoped that a global approach would be adopted for the consideration of that question.

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7. Mr. JOSSE (Nepal) said that, as the representative of a country where agriculture had always played a dominant role, he was particularly interested in agenda item 79 (b) and had studied the report of the World Food Council (A/41/19) with the greatest attention. He noted the satisfaction expressed by the Council at the fact that world food reserves were considerable, but he noted also that the Council was concerned over the deterioration of the food situation in many developing countries.

8. In Nepal, which had a population growth rate of 2.7 per cent a year, the food problem was particularly acute. Owing to an unprecedented drought in 1986, the country was currently experiencing a serious food shortage, and the Government would have to have recourse to outside aid in order to purchase 200,000 tons of paddy that could not be produced locally. A special production and marketing programme for intermediary crops that could be planted after the rice harvest had, nevertheless, been set on foot. It was necessary also to enhance the distribution of improved seeds and fertilizers, to develop irrigation systems more speedily and to market agricultural produce more effectively.

9. In that context, his delegation noted with satisfaction the focus on food and agriculture in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. It also welcomed the fact that the Council's Asia/Africa workshops held in New Delhi and Guangzhou in May 1986 had demonstrated considerable potential for South-South co-operation in pursuing African food and development objectives. It hoped that the South Asian countries would exchange experiences in the agricultural sector, including the all-important area of irrigation and flood control.

10. Turning to sub-items (c) and (d), concerning new and renewable sources of energy, and development of the energy resources of developing countries, he noted that the fall in oil prices had not really benefited his country, because of changes in exchange rates. On the other hand, Nepal was concerned that those lower prices might presage a reduction in the official development assistance provided by a number of oil-exporting countries and diminish the international community's commitment to the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy. In that connection, his delegation commended the work of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy in co-ordinating, guiding and monitoring the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action. Nepal also took the opportunity to express appreciation to all the friendly countries and multilateral agencies that had assisted it in promoting alternative energy sources, a sector to which the Government had allocated 50 million rupees. His delegation wished to draw the attention of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy to the development of a very simple, low-cost technology for hydropower development, described by the representative of Pax Romana at the third session of the Committee. Nepal urged that Committee to take a close look at that technology with a view to its application in various parts of the developing world, where its introduction could make a substantial contribution to the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action. The report of the Secretary-General on energy exploration and development trends in developing countries (A/41/383) was interesting, but had a sobering effect in that it pointed to a decline in energy

(Mr. Josse, Nepal)

exploration in those countries and to the volatility of oil prices. Nepal, which had just embarked on oil exploration activities with the assistance of private European and American companies, was concerned about the adverse impact of those global trends on its first endeavours towards self-sufficiency, and appealed for the continued support of the international community.

11. Mr. BOECK (Austria) welcomed the focus on the problem of hunger and malnutrition at the special session on the critical economic situation in Africa, at the summit meeting of the non-aligned countries and at the Punta del Este trade consultations. While the food situation on the African continent had to some extent been eased through the mobilization of national and international support, it was still necessary to find medium- and long-term solutions and to address questions such as the productivity of the agricultural sector, marketing mechanisms and self-sufficiency in food production. His delegation also welcomed the focus on agricultural and food strategies in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. It was important to acknowledge, in that context, the promising efforts by the developing countries of the African region to improve their national food strategies. It was to be hoped that such efforts would be intensified as a result of increased international support.

12. Since 1979, Austria had been a party to the International Food Aid Convention. It attached great importance to that instrument and to the International Emergency Food Reserve. It also acknowledged the valuable work of the World Food Programme, and had therefore announced, at the Twelfth Pledging Conference for the Programme, a grant of \$US 7 million for the biennium 1987-1988. Austria had geared its development assistance programme towards certain priority areas, such as support for socially and economically weaker groups, and the development of the agricultural sector and rural areas. It therefore firmly supported the effective work of IFAD, and had pledged an increased contribution of 76 million Austrian schillings for the second replenishment of IFAD. Austria had also joined the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research. It hoped that the recent decision at Punta del Este to include the issue of agricultural trade and production in the agenda of the new round of multilateral trade negotiations represented a starting-point for a valuable discussion on such questions.

13. Mr. HILL (Australia) said that as a major agricultural producer and exporter, Australia was in a good position to talk about the "crisis" in agricultural markets, particularly wheat markets, which were currently very depressed. That was due to the slow-down of growth in the world economy, especially in developing countries with major wheat markets, to the progress made in food production by such countries as China and India, and above all to the fact that the two major producers of grain subsidized their exports and applied price support-policies to insulate domestic producers from reduced world market prices. The result was huge grain stocks, which currently accounted for twice annual world trade, and a reduction in international wheat prices of nearly 35 per cent in nominal terms over the past five years. The question was whether the world community should be concerned at that reduction. Australia believed that it should. Canada, Argentina and Australia had the lowest wheat-production costs in the world and would always

(Mr. Hill, Australia)

be reliable suppliers - if they were driven out of the market by export subsidies. Australia doubted whether global food-security objectives were served by the increasing concentration of global surplus wheat production in only two areas of the northern hemisphere. In addition, domestic production in the developing countries was likely to be driven from local markets by dumped imports of food grain. It should also be borne in mind that subsidies were very costly - \$76 billion in 1986 for the United States, the European Economic Community and Japan. Such subsidies were particularly huge in relation to the official development assistance from all the industrialized countries which were members of the Development Assistance Committee of OECD, which would amount to about \$30 billion in 1986.

14. Food-trade subsidization also had negative consequences for the mid performance of the fair trading countries in agriculture, whose prosperity was reduced and whose farmers were impoverished as a result of the trade subsidies of others. In Australia, for example, farm incomes had fallen by 40 per cent in the past three years, and that had created serious problems requiring urgent attention. The protectionist policies that led to distortions in world markets must be removed. Consideration of those problems must be a major priority in the forthcoming round of GATT multilateral negotiations, and the Second Committee must also review such problems in detail. His delegation hoped that any resolution on the item emerging from the Committee would reflect the gravity of the situation.

15. Mr. WEIBGEN (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that in most developing countries, foreign debt payments, international currency fluctuations and the drop in the international prices of most export commodities had practically eliminated the benefits that the consumer could have derived from the reduced price of petroleum. In most of those countries, it was the rural sector that consumed the most energy; that energy usually came from non-commercial sources such as fuelwood, which accounted for over 60 per cent of total energy consumption in Africa. For the developing countries, the development of new and renewable sources of energy in accordance with the Nairobi Programme of Action therefore remained a priority.

16. FAO's energy programme had two major components: the efficient use of commercial and non-commercial energy; and the development of new and renewable sources of energy. With regard to the second component, efforts were made to identify, develop and promote simple and proven technologies which could be developed in the next 5 to 10 years and could meet rural development needs. Emphasis was on biomass and on the application of solar and wind energy. Efforts were also made to promote the use of animal power to increase food production and facilitate transport. Further efforts were geared towards the judicious integration of renewable sources of energy with the prevailing agricultural production systems in a given agro-ecological zone. Assistance was also provided to developing countries in rural energy assessment and planning.

17. International co-operation in the development of new and renewable sources of energy for agricultural and rural development was critically needed, and FAO would continue to respond to its member countries' needs and carry out its responsibilities in the implementation of the Nairobi Plan of Action.

18. Mr. WORONIECKI (Poland) said that the deterioration of the food situation in many parts of the world, and especially in Africa, called for the formulation and implementation of complex measures at the national and the international levels. As stated by the World Food Council, the eradication of hunger and malnutrition was closely linked with a process of restructuring international economic relations on a fair, equitable and democratic basis and of establishing a new economic order based on lasting peace and disarmament. Renewed efforts must therefore be made to establish a comprehensive system of international security, covering the military, political, economic and humanitarian aspects, including food security.

19. With a view to raising world food output, Poland had proposed, at the special session of the General Assembly on Africa, that the principle of a free flow of information on experience should be adopted in respect of food production, processing and storage. That proposal should be supported by the World Food Council and other institutions of the United Nations system dealing with food and agriculture.

20. The origins of the prevailing food crisis could be traced back to structural imbalances which had led to a shrinkage in food demand and hence in agricultural output. Five years after recasting its agricultural policy, Poland, previously heavily dependent on imports, was close to achieving self-sufficiency in food. Nevertheless, it wished to intensify its trade and hoped to register a net agricultural trade surplus in 1990 on the assumption that the new round of multilateral negotiations under GATT auspices would lead to the removal of protectionist barriers.

21. While development and international co-operation benefited all, and particularly the developing nations, it must not be forgotten that industrialization was also an important tool for achieving food self-sufficiency and that balanced economic development required both the agricultural and the industrial sector to grow in tandem. Poland was convinced that exchanges of information could contribute considerably to food-sufficiency and economic development. The series of regional seminars organized in 1986 by the World Food Council served that purpose, and other similar seminars could likewise be organized in Europe.

22. The positive implications of the energy crisis had given way to uncertainty concerning the economic rewards of investment in energy and this had been reflected in an almost world-wide marked slow-down in energy sources exploration, the implications of which were already being felt. Self-reliance in energy and in energy planning were important for development and national economic security. While domestic efforts were essential, they must be accompanied by a reduction of uncertainty with regard to future energy exploration and development trends, by the stabilization of the world energy markets and prices, and by the increased profitability of investment in energy exploration. The assistance extended to developing countries should not infringe their national sovereignty nor conflict with their national priorities. Poland was prepared to increase its technical co-operation with the developing countries and welcomed the exchange of national and international expertise on non-conventional sources of energy.

23. Mr. KATAWALA (Mozambique) said that Mozambique was among the first seven countries in the world most in need of food supplies. It thanked all Governments and organizations which had come to its aid at a time when it had been in dire straits, and appealed to them to continue the good work. He called upon other participants to follow their example because Mozambique's deficit in cereals had been large in 1985 and should be even larger in 1986.

24. His Government was striving to increase national food output by introducing structural reforms, particularly for the benefit of small farmers and agricultural co-operatives, and by constructing silos and irrigation dams. It was, however, being hampered by natural disasters, aggression from South Africa, attacks by armed bandits and the international economic crisis. In spite of those hardships it has participated in its capacity as a member of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference in the efforts to eliminate hunger in southern Africa, and had also contributed to the formulation of the Lagos Plan of Action and the African Economic Recovery Programme for Development, both of which emphasized the role of agriculture and food production in Africa's development.

25. Referring to new and renewable sources of energy, he explained that Mozambique, because of its geography, was more particularly interested in hydroelectric power and thermal energy which would enable it to be less dependent on oil imports. Unfortunately, those energy sources were still undeveloped owing to the lack of financial and technical resources. He pointed out that utilization of the considerable energy potential of the developing countries would be beneficial to all mankind.

26. In conclusion, he welcomed the goals set by the Nairobi Conference and expressed the opinion that further co-operation among all countries, particularly among the developing countries, would make it possible to achieve great progress.

27. Mr. MWANZIA (Kenya) recalled that the elimination of hunger and malnutrition as soon as possible, and certainly by the end of the century, was one of the objectives of the International Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. Although ample food was produced globally, millions of people continued to suffer from hunger and malnutrition.

28. Africa, and particularly southern Africa, had been the centre of a critical food problem for years. Kenya therefore welcomed the adoption, by the General Assembly at its thirteenth special session, of a Programme of Action which accorded to food production and agricultural development their deserved priority. The Programme also constituted an important step which demonstrated the political will of the international community to solve Africa's overall economic problems, but practical measures for mobilizing the resources necessary for its success must be adopted without delay.

29. Most of the African countries, including Kenya, attached very special importance to agricultural development and food production and wished the international community to help them develop long-term storage facilities so as to reduce losses after the harvests. Kenya was determined to achieve food self-sufficiency and laid emphasis on programmes for enhancing its natural resource base and maintaining environmental balance.

(Mr. Mwanzia, Kenya)

30. In connection with new and renewable sources of energy, the 1985 drop in oil prices should not be permitted to overshadow the positive decisions adopted by the 1981 Nairobi Conference because the search for new sources of energy remained a valid pursuit. Energy was an important factor in the economic development of the developing countries and should therefore continue to receive the financial support necessary for the exploitation of those resources.

31. Mr. NGAIZA (Tanzania) said that his delegation fully supported the work of FAO, the World Food Programme (WFP), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the World Food Council. It was gratified to note that in its report (A/41/19), the World Food Council specifically referred to the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990. The Council had a very important role to play in implementing the Programme. Tanzania therefore strongly supported the recommendation in paragraph 20 concerning the promotion of national and regional food strategies and the mobilization of increased financial and political support.

32. Tanzania supported the WFP policy of preferential assistance to the poorest countries: in 1985, it had committed 85 per cent of its resources to food-deficit countries. The report of the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes (E/1986/102) stated that Sub-Saharan Africa remained one of the highest priorities in the regional distribution of WFP development assistance. On the other hand, his delegation noted with concern the decrease in WFP resources in 1985 as compared to 1984. It called upon donors to increase their contributions to WFP with a view to reversing that negative trend. It supported WFP efforts to promote better co-ordination of food aid and better integration of food aid in the development plans of recipient countries.

33. His delegation recognized the important role played by IFAD and was particularly impressed by its strategy for dealing with food problems at the grass-roots level, that is, the level of small farmers. That policy was in compliance with the recommendations of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, 1986-1990. His Government had recently signed a \$15 million soft loan agreement with IFAD to help small food producers. It was grateful for that assistance and hoped to receive the support of other donors. IFAD's approach to the critical economic situation in Africa was wholly constructive (A/41/19, paras. 60 and 61). His delegation welcomed with appreciation the establishment of IFAD's Special Programme for Sub-Saharan African countries affected by drought and desertification. It appealed to donors to increase their contributions to IFAD and to give generously to the Special Programme.

34. Mr. KARIM (Bangladesh) said that it was understandable for the international community to be giving increasing attention to the marketing problems created by agricultural over-production and he welcomed the agreement reached recently at the GATT meeting in Punta del Este. He felt, however, that all food and agricultural problems should receive equal attention because, despite the efforts made since the commitment undertaken by the international community in 1974 to eradicate hunger and malnutrition, the situation had at best remained the same.

(Mr. Karim, Bangladesh)

35. All strategies for fighting hunger and malnutrition should primarily aim to expand agricultural production in deficit countries and to increase demand, particularly of low-income groups, since that was the best way to accelerate economic development in the low-income and least developed countries. Consequently, it was especially distressing to note that multilateral assistance to developing countries in the food and agriculture sector was steadily declining and there was some question whether IDA resources for agricultural development in the developing countries would continue to be available.

36. The persistent drop in commodity prices was also disturbing because it affected income in the countries concerned. In that connection, greater use should be made of assistance from the World Food Programme to generate jobs and therefore, income, particularly for low-income groups in rural areas. The International Fund for Agricultural Development should also be commended upon the initiatives it had taken in job generation and FAO should be thanked for its efforts to meet the needs of the developing countries, particularly in Africa. Food and agricultural problems should continue to remain a central concern of the international community.

37. It was clear that increased use of energy sources was imperative if agricultural productivity was to be increased and that the lack of motivation of the rural population was at the root of various problems which resulted in the economic degeneration of the rural sector and of the economy as a whole. The effective use of renewable energy sources could reverse that trend, but some 2 billion people in the developing countries were still using wood and charcoal, with their adverse effects on the environment.

38. The deliberations of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy at its third session had been disappointing because of the slow pace of implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action and because the advances in the field of energy sources made in the developed countries had remained largely beyond the grasp of the developing countries. The Committee should promote the dissemination of newly acquired knowledge.

39. His delegation shared the concern expressed by the Chairman of the Group of 77 and other speakers about the definite slow-down in the exploration and development of energy resources in developing countries despite the fact that the investment requirement was quite a bit lower than in the developed countries. If the international community was to seek to reduce uncertainty and enhance the stability of world energy markets, the developing countries would have to be provided, above all, with the multilateral and bilateral financing they needed for their economic development.

40. Mr. MOKHTARZADA (Afghanistan) said that the targets established by the World Food Conference 10 years ago had still not been met. There were still 500 million people in the world suffering from hunger. His delegation shared the views of the World Food Council given in its report (A/41/19) on regional food trends, but also considered that hunger and malnutrition were the result of diminishing effective demand in the developing countries, which was itself linked with the international financial and trade crisis and the injustices of the existing economic system. But

(Mr. Mokhtarzada, Afghanistan)

most of the external factors were beyond the control of the countries concerned, which was why hunger and malnutrition could only be abolished through the establishment of a new international economic order.

41. Primary responsibility for a solution of the food crisis lay with the countries affected, but they could not achieve their goals without active international co-operation. The United Nations Programme of Action for African Recovery and Development, 1986-1990 provided a framework for such co-operation should be implemented without delay. The stagnation or reduction in external resources committed to the agricultural sector (soft-term loans, multilateral aid) was a matter of concern. Donor countries should increase their contribution to the multilateral agencies which were in difficult financial straits like the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). He recalled the proposal put forward by the Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries for the adoption of a special international programme to relieve the food crisis in developing countries suffering from chronic food deficits. The establishment of a food security system would be a first step in that direction.

42. In Afghanistan, food strategies were an essential component of the national development plan. Agriculture accounted for almost 60 per cent of the GDP and over 66 per cent of national income. It employed nearly 84 per cent of the population. Progressive measures had been taken under the programme of action of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (agrarian reform and water resources development). The following strategy was being used to improve agricultural production: establishment of co-operatives and mechanized agricultural stations, distribution of improved seeds and chemical fertilizers, provision of veterinary services and bank credits on easy terms to peasants and livestock holders. Afghanistan had enormous potential for agricultural development and by implementing those revolutionary measures, it would not only become self-sufficient, but an exporter of food surpluses to the needy countries.

43. Mr. WALTER (Czechoslovakia) said it was paradoxical at a time when world stocks of cereal exceeded the level recommended for world food security that, nearly 750 million people were suffering from hunger. The fact was that, owing to the workings of the market economy, there was no way for developing countries to use the food surpluses produced in several advanced capitalist States. The problem was a complex one involving a set of closely interrelated factors. The causes of the problem had existed before most of the developing countries had gained their independence, and developing countries were still not able to solve the problem because they remained dependent on capitalist economic centres and continued to be victims of neo-colonialist exploitation. With regard to food production, the developing countries were hampered by an inequitable division of labour imposed on them by international market mechanisms and transnational corporations. Production was determined by the requirements of the capitalist economy and not by the urgent needs of the people. In many cases the phenomenon resulted in distortions in the way production was organized.

(Mr. Walter, Czechoslovakia)

44. While natural factors were important, they were not insurmountable. A sound agricultural policy could alleviate their impact. Emphasis should be placed, in particular, on the rational utilization of local and other resources, and on the restructuring and development of agriculture, along with other branches of the economy, with substantial assistance from the public sector. The development of agriculture offered much scope for operational activities and technical assistance at the international level.

45. The solution of food problems required an overall restructuring of international economic relations on a democratic basis and the establishment of a new international economic order. In a general way, social and economic development were also tied to progress in international negotiations on the maintenance of peace, arms reduction and disarmament. It was important to strengthen the sovereignty of countries over their natural resources, to limit the undesirable activities of transnational corporations, to increase the role of co-operatives and the public sector, to make use of the experience of other developing countries which had achieved food self-sufficiency, to make full use of existing food resources and to strengthen food self-sufficiency in the various regions. His country would, for its part, continue to provide assistance to developing countries as far as it was able, on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis.

46. As to energy, a more rational utilization of new and renewable sources of energy could help to solve problems, especially if more active international co-operation was developed. The activities of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy and the Nairobi Programme of Action provided a suitable framework for such co-operation. Unfortunately, the Committee had so far not paid sufficient attention to specific issues and some countries had lost interest in its work. At the Committee's third session, the socialist countries had made suggestions for improving the situation. Resolution 1 (III) on the Committee's methods of work was a step in the right direction, but the Committee should no doubt focus its discussions on technical and scientific matters.

47. The seminars and other activities which were planned concerning the utilization of new and renewable sources of energy were an important aspect of international co-operation, but they must not pave the way for the penetration of private capital into developing countries or entail increased expenditure for the United Nations.

48. Since economic development created increased demand for energy, there was a need for careful planning and management of power production, mainly by strengthening the technical capacity of the developing countries, which often depended on imported technology and skilled manpower. The UNCTAD Committee on Transfer of Technology had reached several positive conclusions in that regard. His country was pleased to note that greater attention was being paid to TCDC and investments to develop traditional as well as new sources of energy. It also attached great importance to the symposia and other activities envisaged in General

(Mr. Walter, Czechoslovakia)

Assembly resolution 40/208. Assistance to developing countries for the development of their energy resources was an important component of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade. His country, which had helped to build some 600 industrial plants in developing countries, many in the energy sector, was prepared to pursue its substantial efforts in that field and was confident that the implementation of the measures outlined in General Assembly resolutions 38/151, 39/176 and 40/208 would promote further progress.

49. Mr. GOUDIMA (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that new and renewable sources of energy should continue to be considered on a regular basis, despite the decline in oil prices and the relative glut of the energy market. The energy sector needed to be restructured so as to ensure a more rational use of all sources of energy and to increase the proportion of energy derived from new sources. Progress had been made in connection with the Nairobi Programme of Action. As indicated in document A/41/44, new and renewable sources of energy accounted for 13 per cent of all world energy supplies. Moreover, the importance of such new sources of energy for the developing countries had been reaffirmed at the thirteenth special session of the General Assembly on the critical situation in Africa and the Eighth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries.

50. The international community, and especially the developing countries, still had far to go. The development of new and renewable sources of energy required the co-ordination of activities within the United Nations system. The proposal for an in-depth study of specific topics at the fourth session of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy deserved careful consideration since it would help to improve the Committee's efficiency.

51. Responsibility for the implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action fell first and foremost to the States concerned. Only they could mobilize the necessary resources through the public sector. Obviously, their task would be easier if peace could be strengthened, in particular by speeding up disarmament.

52. In his country, activities concerned with new sources of energy, which dealt with all known aspects of their utilization, was co-ordinated by a national committee. A nation-wide programme on new sources of energy was under preparation. It identified promising directions in the use of biomass, solar and geothermal energy. In addition, three centres had been set up to study conditions for the utilization of solar energy at high and low temperatures. Studies were under way on the photoelectric energy conversion.

53. His country envisaged an integrated approach to the solution of energy problems. Such an approach would include an evaluation of potential demand for new sources of energy, existing resources and the social and economic impact of their use. In that area, international co-operation could play an important role, particularly through the exchange of information. The information centre of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy could intensify its activities and develop exchanges with national centres.

54. Mr. McDOWELL (New Zealand) said that fish provided the only major source of protein and constituted the only important economic resource in some parts of the world, including the small developing island countries of the South Pacific. Their capacity to meet the demands of their growing population from the fisheries sector was under great pressure, and dependence on imported foodstuffs as a dietary supplement was becoming widespread. The consequences in human and economic terms had often been severe. The international community must help those countries to promote local commercial fishing and access to industrial fishing.

55. The issues considered under agenda item 79 linked basic individual needs, national economic and social objectives and the working of the international economy. Problems of rural development were not exclusively national in character, but were aspects of the international problem of equitable economic development. Sharing development between countries involved, among other things, tackling impediments to trade in agricultural products in international markets, some of which stemmed directly from governmental action intended to stimulate production. The World Food Council had always been conscious of the complexity of the problem and had for some time been proposing constructive and realistic measures for practical action. It was, however, regrettable that the recommendations contained in its current report (A/41/19) were not as firm or action-oriented as those made in the past.

56. Solutions to the problems caused by great surpluses in some countries and shortages in others would require a mix of domestic and international action relating to both emergency assistance and the restructuring of trade. Efforts had already been made along those lines. Thus, the Programme of Action adopted at the special session on the critical economic situation in Africa charted a course beyond emergency relief and his country hoped to be able to contribute to its implementation. Furthermore, the new GATT round of trade negotiations would afford an opportunity to remedy the problems of countries whose export earnings had been severely affected by the agricultural surplus exports of other countries which resorted to unfair trade practices. The two approaches described above were related. Africa would need emergency assistance for some time while the Programme of Action took root. But successful food-centred development strategies must be linked to realistic pricing policies and practical marketing opportunities. It would be desirable if the agricultural markets of the African countries, which would initially be domestic and regional, subsequently became international. To bring that about, the international community must eliminate production subsidies and measures which distorted the comparative advantage of efficient producers. The many pernicious effects of those practices (heavy penalties on consumers, increased burdens on importing countries because of the rise in prices) were well known. Thus, the relationship between the adoption of rational domestic policies and an orderly international economy was obvious. Concerted action would be much more beneficial to all countries than unilateral reductions.

57. Since his country had a post-colonial economy, its perspective on agricultural problems was closer to that of developing countries than of developed countries. New Zealand, which had formerly exported chiefly food and animal fibres to a single market, had made sustained efforts to diversify its markets and exports.

(Mr. McDowell, New Zealand)

Agricultural products, which still accounted for around 60 per cent of its export earnings, had been disadvantaged by the protectionist policies adopted in countries where the costs of production were several times higher. Nevertheless, since 1984 his country had, for its part, pursued structural adjustment policies aimed at dismantling the protectionist régimes - however limited - which it had adopted. That adjustment process was extremely painful: real net incomes for sheep and cattle raisers were expected to be at their lowest levels in 25 years, dairy incomes were projected to drop by 17 per cent in relation to the current year and farmland prices had dropped by 45 per cent in real terms between 1983 and 1986. His country therefore understood why certain countries whose assistance to agriculture was more far-reaching should have balked at the restructuring measures which were central for the health of the international economy; it hoped, nevertheless, that the new GATT round of trade negotiations would lead to liberalization of trade in agricultural products and create an environment in which efficient producers could fully exploit their comparative advantage.

58. Mr. AL-MIDELWI (Oman) said that the food problem must be given top priority at the national, regional and international levels because the survival of 500 million people depended on its solution. Hunger and underdevelopment were linked with the current crisis in the world economy. Agricultural protectionism, indebtedness and the drop in commodity prices affected the agricultural sector and caused food shortages in the poor countries. Emergency assistance could only be a temporary solution. To solve the problem, it would be necessary to establish a new economic order based on equity and justice, to diversify resources and to modernize agricultural production so as to increase food self-sufficiency.

59. The poor countries needed a real push to overcome the crisis, and the United Nations and the specialized agencies had an important role to play in that regard. The report of the World Food Council (A/41/19) contained a number of recommendations which provided a good basis for action. The World Food Council, a specialized policy body, could take various initiatives to alleviate the suffering of the poor countries and redress the agricultural imbalance. FAO had also played a positive role by promoting food production in developing countries and by providing food aid to disadvantaged countries. Also welcome in that regard had been the adoption, at the thirteenth special session of the General Assembly, of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, and his country urged its speedy implementation.

60. The developed countries had a twofold responsibility: first, to show the necessary political will to assist the world economy in overcoming the crisis and, second, to open up their markets to the products of the developing countries. His country called on them to help the countries suffering from the food crisis by giving them financial assistance and support and promoting exchanges of experience and transfer of technology in the fields of agriculture and irrigation. The developing countries, for their part, far from remaining passive, should restructure their food sector and formulate food self-sufficiency strategies. They should also co-ordinate their food security efforts at the regional level.

61. Mr. REED (United States of America) recalled that, although global food supplies were ample, following record production in many regions, agricultural performance had been uneven and hunger and malnutrition persisted. At a time of abundance, some continued to go hungry because they did not have the purchasing power to tap the large surpluses.

62. World farm output had grown more rapidly during the 1980s than before, chiefly because of higher crop yields. The green revolution had turned former food importers into net exporters. The agricultural situation had even improved in Africa since the drought, with higher output encouraged by higher real prices. However, production in developing countries could have been still more satisfactory, if certain errors had been avoided. The proper approach would have been to take measures in the field of agricultural research (better technology could raise yields and cut production costs for crops and livestock almost everywhere in the world), take action in the area of agricultural prices, avoid overvalued exchange rates (a step which was aimed at protecting emerging industries and the purchasing power of urban consumers but which also had the effect of making local production more expensive than food imports and had been the most important constraint on farm output in the less developed countries in the preceding two decades), avoid overly subsidizing urban food prices (since subsidies were the best way of discouraging farmers from producing and of encouraging consumption), endeavour to support farmers by enabling them to acquire agricultural inputs at low cost (high-yielding seeds, fertilizers and pesticides), combat insecure land tenure (farmers would not apply modern technologies if they could not count on planting the same fields for a long time) and, finally, take account of comparative advantage. Those measures were of crucial importance since high-productivity agriculture conferred enormous benefits on a growing national economy. It offered both the assurance of an adequate food supply, which was vital to national stability and health, and the prospect of export earnings. Countries which had adopted the above-mentioned policies had been successful in raising their productivity, irrespective of their climate, political system or cropping pattern. Countries that wished to apply sound agricultural development principles need not give up their growth and development aspirations, even though foreign aid and other sources of external financing were shrinking: national agricultural policies had proved to be far more beneficial than foreign assistance.

63. The prospects for African agriculture, which had been encouraging after the return of the rains, were now threatened by locust infestations. Twenty-three African countries were affected in all parts of the continent. The infestation might also spread to the Near East and southern Asia. The General Assembly should heighten public awareness of the problem and ensure that it received adequate attention throughout the United Nations system.

64. The crisis in the world trade in agricultural products, which was mainly due to heavily subsidized exports and protectionism, also required consideration. In the long term, the situation was intolerable; it was essential to put an end to the chaos of the agricultural products market. Heavily-subsidized exports from European countries had disrupted world markets; Europe had become an exporter of agricultural products and unfair trade practices had increased. In that connection, the decision taken at the recent GATT ministerial meeting to exercise greater control over the entire range of such measures, especially subsidies, was encouraging. His country hoped that those efforts would be successful.

(Mr. Reed, United States)

65. Trends in energy prices should be closely monitored. Although the renewed interest in the subject within the United Nations system was desirable, it was important not to duplicate the work already being conducted in other multilateral forums or by Governments. Moreover, it did not seem necessary to have two agenda items on energy issues, when neither of them covered the subject in sufficient depth. A more comprehensive approach would be in the best interests of Member States.

66. Mr. ANAD (Iraq) said that the food and agricultural problems of developing countries were a direct result of structural imbalance in the existing international economic order. The right to food was a human right and should be recognized as such by the entire international community, which should reject the use of agricultural policies as a means of exerting pressure and help developing countries to increase their agricultural output.

67. Governments should give absolute priority to food self-sufficiency, which, apart from being an important element of sovereignty, was a factor in economic development. His delegation welcomed the efforts of developing countries to increase their food and agricultural production. The co-operation and assistance given to the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, particularly the work of the specialized agencies and bilateral efforts to improve the agricultural production of those countries, were a positive step. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the report of the World Food Council on the work of its twelfth session (A/41/19), which showed how necessary it was for developing countries, which were the victims of protectionism and dumping on the part of developed countries, to increase regional and interregional co-operation in order to resolve the food crisis; it also showed the important role which the United Nations bodies responsible for economic co-operation between developing countries had to play.

68. In its report (A/41/44), the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy had rightly stressed the need for developing countries to exploit new and renewable sources of energy in accordance with their national priorities and to implement the Nairobi Programme of action as soon as possible. General Assembly resolutions 39/176, and 40/208 on the development of the energy resources of developing countries should also be speedily implemented. To that end, developed countries should allow developing countries easier access to energy technology. Developing countries themselves should increase their technical co-operation in the field of energy in order to increase their collective self-reliance and implement economic and technological development programmes.

69. Mr. KHALIKOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that wide-ranging and constructive co-operation was needed to solve food problems. At its twelfth session, the World Food Council had stated that hunger and malnutrition were directly linked with the international trade and financial crisis and the persistence of the existing unjust order. If food security was to be ensured, it was essential to put an end to discriminatory and coercive practices in the world trade in agricultural products, which hampered the efforts made by developing countries. In that field, as in others, relations between States should be transparent and reasonable.

(Mr. Khalikov, USSR)

70. The World Food Council, as a co-ordinating body for the United Nations system, could play a more active role. In order to increase its efficiency within the scope of its current mandate, it could place more emphasis on scientific aspects. It went without saying that its work should be directed towards the development of practicable recommendations. The proposal to establish an early-warning and information system had merit, but it should not be limited to food needs alone, which were dependent on more general factors.

71. International co-operation in the field of energy had made progress in some areas. For instance, conventions had been signed under the auspices of the International Atomic Energy Agency on a system to develop the use of nuclear energy in conditions of safety. However, the main problem - the stabilization of energy prices - had not yet been solved.

72. The work of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy was not sufficiently issue-oriented, although the Soviet delegation had noted the progress the Committee had made at its third session. An agreement had been reached with the Secretariat concerning the organization of an international meeting on practical issues connected with the exploitation of new and renewable energy sources, to be held in the Soviet Union in 1987.

73. The report of the Secretary-General on energy exploration and development trends in developing countries (A/41/383) acknowledged the decisive role of the public sector in the drilling activities of developing countries; however, a too-narrow approach in that area could be detrimental in the long term. It was regrettable that the report did not give due consideration to programmes and studies on the application of scientific discoveries to energy exploration and development and did not contain enough action-oriented recommendations.

74. His country would continue to participate actively in efforts to solve economic problems, both on a bilateral basis and within the United Nations system. The energy sector accounted for 30 per cent of the country's technical assistance to developing countries. The total capacity of power-stations completed, planned or under construction in developing countries was more than 35 million kilowatts. His country also provided considerable assistance in coal mining and oil production, catering for the overall development needs.

75. The Soviet Union had adopted national programmes in the fields of food and energy. They were being implemented by means of a sweeping reform of the country's economic and social institutions in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the twenty-seventh Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Economic measures were planned which would, *inter alia*, speed up scientific and technological progress, improve economic mechanisms, ensure widespread participation of workers in food sector management, and develop agricultural and food industries. Positive results had already been achieved in several areas, such as cereal production, and efforts would continue.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.