



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. de ROJAS (Venezuela)

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

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/41/3, A/41/118, A/41/123, A/41/179, A/41/315, A/41/319 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2, A/41/320 and Add.1, A/41/326, A/41/329, A/41/342, A/41/344, A/41/346, A/41/354, A/41/382, A/41/410, A/41/415, A/41/461 and Corr.1, A/41/462, A/41/474, A/41/588 and Corr.1; A/C.2/41/6, A/C.2/41/7; A/C.2/41/L.2, L.3, L.4, L.14; E/1986/68; E/1986/L.30, annex)

1. Mr. EL GAOTH (Mauritania) said he welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on countries stricken by desertification and drought (A/41/346-E/1986/96), which described briefly the harmful effects of two natural disasters that had afflicted Mauritania for almost 20 years, namely drought, whose ravages were well-known, and desertification, which was often overlooked, although it had already swallowed up more than two thirds of Mauritania's territory and attacked some 20 other countries in the region. His delegation hoped that all the recommendations in the report, particularly the one concerning the organization of the round table in which the competent United Nations agencies would participate, would be applied rapidly. Mauritania would seek to ensure the success of the roundtable by inviting the countries whose generosity had never failed it, to which it expressed its deepest gratitude.

2. Parallel to the steps it had taken to combat the consequences of adverse climatic conditions and the recent plague of locusts, his Government had sought to elaborate and implement various short-term and medium-term programmes aimed at halting the deterioration of the country's social, economic and financial situation. The projects before the Second Committee reflected his Government's determination to continue improving and restoring the basic economic equilibria essential to sustained and lasting growth. Mauritania hoped that the international community would be generous and help it to implement these energetic measures it had adopted despite their high social cost.

3. Mr. ABU-KOASHI (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) expressed heartfelt condolences to the people of Mozambique for the tragic death of their President, who had also been a friend of the PLO.

4. He noted that the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/41/319-E/1986/72) suggested the fielding of a mission to prepare a programme: the ensuing delay was regrettable, and he would like to receive assurance that the mission would be sent and that the programme requested would be available for consideration by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1987.

5. Despite certain shortcomings, the PLO was satisfied with the current system of channelling United Nations and other assistance to the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, especially in view of the current difficulties. The system was functioning and should not be tampered with. However, Jordan was attacking it directly by proposing its so-called "development plan" for the occupied Palestinian

(Mr. Abu-Koash, Observer, PLO)

territories. Did Jordan seriously believe that the international community was still not aware that the so-called development plan was simply one of the measures undertaken in co-operation with the United States and Israel to undercut the political power of the PLO in the occupied Palestinian territories so as to facilitate the creation therein of an Israeli-Jordanian condominium? A distinction should be made between aid intended to arrest the deterioration in the living conditions of the Palestinian people caused by the Israeli occupation and so-called plans which were merely political bribes aimed at limiting the wide support of the Palestinian people for their sole legitimate representative, the PLO, and perpetuating the Israeli occupation. Whatever they did, the United States, Israel and all those who co-operated with them in their fight against the PLO in the guise of economic or other plans could not purchase the will and conscience of the Palestinian people or separate them from the PLO.

6. He called upon the international community to help the United Nations Development Programme to build and equip the fishery port whose construction, costing about \$15 million, had recently been approved. That would be the first step in a project to establish a seaport that would give Palestinian firms and products direct access to external markets. The Israeli occupying Power had no right whatsoever to prevent the implementation of development projects for the Palestinian people, for its occupation was illegal.

7. Lastly, referring to Economic and Social Council decision 1986/67, which transmitted to the Council, at its second regular session of 1987, the draft decision submitted by the United States of America concerning the admission of Israel to the Economic Commission for Europe, he said he would oppose the admission of Israel to any United Nations regional commission so long as it occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories. He would also oppose any similar attempts concerning South Africa until the apartheid system had been dismantled.

8. Mr. BAHADIAN (Brazil) said that his country's position concerning the preparation of the code of conduct for transnational corporations had sometimes been used as a pretext to justify the scanty progress achieved. However, Brazil was ready to accept not one but two sets of rules, so that the text of the code could be finalized, and hoped that its constructive attitude would be reflected in the Committee's work.

9. Mr. BAKER (Office of the Director General for Development and International Economic Co-operation), replying to the PLO, said that the Secretary-General had in fact approved the fielding of a mission to prepare a programme of economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people; the mission, whose mandate and duration, as well as other details, had yet to be decided, should take place early in 1987.

AGENDA ITEM 82: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR (A/41/3, A/41/295 and Corr.1)
- (b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (A/41/3, A/41/308, A/41/369 and Corr.1, A/41/395, A/41/396, A/41/522, A/41/538, A/41/592, A/41/593, A/41/616, A/41/679; A/C.2/41/L.8)

10. Mr. BITAR (Lebanon), referring to the question of the lack of security for international staff in Lebanon and their absence from that country, recalled that security Phase V, declared by the United Nations, was still in effect, although it no longer truly corresponded to reality. With a few rare exceptions, the international staff evacuated from Lebanon were still not permitted to return. However, the situation in that country was not as bad as people tended to believe and certain areas had already been calm for a long time. It should therefore be possible to take into account both considerations relating to the safety of such personnel and the need to continue implementing the development projects begun in Lebanon. His Government had taken many steps to improve security in Beirut itself and hoped that the Secretary-General would at last be able to fill the post of Co-ordinator of Assistance for the Reconstruction and Development of Lebanon.

11. His Government, which had never stopped implementing its reconstruction programme, in so far as possible and subject to the availability of funds, was in the process of defining new projects that could be implemented in the current circumstances, with the assistance of the United Nations system and donor countries. Significant problems still remained unsolved, however, and Lebanon hoped that it would be able to count on increased external assistance. Such assistance was necessary because Lebanon had paid and continued to pay an enormous price for policies which were not its own and originated in regional and world-wide conflicts: conflicts between the Lebanese alone could not explain the scope, severity and duration of the violence. The Lebanese people were nevertheless determined to overcome the crisis and transform Lebanon once again into the oasis of peace and fraternity it had been in the past.

12. Mr. KEFFYALEW (Ethiopia) said that the relentless efforts of the people, party and Government of Ethiopia, as well as the generous assistance of the international community, had made it possible to prevent the drought which had stricken the country in 1984-1985 from becoming a catastrophe. The drought had shown the extent to which positive international co-operation could help to remedy numerous problems and how indispensable the United Nations was. His delegation therefore regretted the decision to close the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa in the near future. Ongoing activities remained necessary and should not fall victims to reform and restructuring measures taken for reasons of economy.

13. The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) also played a significant role in areas affected by natural disaster. In view of the increasing frequency of disasters, both man-made and natural, the United Nations system should give proper attention and support to UNDRO so that it could strengthen its humanitarian activities.

(Mr. Keffyalew, Ethiopia)

14. Natural disasters knew no borders, which was why several East African countries had decided to create the Intergovernmental Agency for Drought and Development (IGADD), which was now fully operational. Each State member of IGADD had committed itself to making the Agency a strong institution which was capable of co-ordinating the various activities undertaken by member States not only to tackle the consequences of natural disasters but also to help solve subregional developmental problems that made those countries vulnerable. As member countries' resources were limited, however, the generous assistance of donor countries, governmental and non-governmental agencies and financial institutions were needed if it was to act effectively.

15. At its thirteenth special session, the General Assembly had adopted a Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development aimed at responding to the short- and long-term development needs of Africa. The African countries, for their part, had reaffirmed that the main responsibility for African development rested with them and had agreed to accord top priority to the development of their economic and social sectors and to mobilize their available resources to that end. The magnitude of the problem was such, however, that the international community had committed itself to supporting Africa's efforts. Ethiopia hoped that the developed countries would participate in that important endeavour and was for its part ready to participate actively in the implementation of the Programme of Action.

16. Mr. BASTIAN (German Democratic Republic) said that his country, which sided firmly with the peoples of Africa, Asia and Latin America in their struggle for socio-economic progress and against all form of imperialist oppression, also had a policy of providing emergency relief to all countries which needed it. Thus, in 1985, it had provided urgent relief in the form of equipment, medicines, foodstuffs and other essential goods to 24 countries. It had also sponsored General Assembly resolutions 40/232 and 40/234 on assistance to Nicaragua and Mozambique respectively. The citizens of his country were in solidarity with the struggle of the people of Nicaragua against the imperialist attacks of the United States and sent donations to that country for reconstruction work. In 1985, the Solidarity Committee of the German Democratic Republic had also provided humanitarian assistance to PLO, SWAPO and ANC. Lastly, his country, had sent emergency relief, through the International Committee of the Red Cross, to the victims of the earthquake in El Salvador.

17. It was regrettable that certain States had yet to abandon their attempts to use relief operations as a means of exerting pressure on progressive developments in countries stricken by emergency situations. The apartheid policy of the Pretoria régime had adverse consequences for the persistent struggle against emergency situations in the African front-line States. Thus, in the past five years alone, the economic damage caused to the countries of southern Africa had amounted to more than \$US 10 billion, making the adoption of mandatory sanctions against the South African régime all the more imperative.

18. With regard to the letter dated 16 July 1986 addressed to the Secretary-General by 11 Western States (A/41/461), table 3 annexed to that letter

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(Mr. Bastian, German Democratic Republic)

gave a false impression of the activities undertaken by his country and other socialist States in the field of disaster relief. For an accurate account of such activities, he referred members to the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/41/295.

19. With regard to resolution 1986/47 of the Economic and Social Council concerning the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO), his delegation endorsed the principles set forth in paragraph 3 whereby relief operations of the United Nations system must respect strictly the sovereignty of States affected by emergency situations. It also supported UNDRO's future activities and co-ordination measures and believed that the framework in which those activities had been dealt with thus far in the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly had proved successful.

20. Lastly, with regard to disaster preparedness, it must be pointed out that no country was immune from industrial disasters and that the latter should be taken into account, in co-operation with other international organizations, in emergency planning. His country therefore supported the relevant activities undertaken by UNDRO, in co-operation with UNIDO, UNEP and IAEA, and had signed the conventions on early warning and assistance in the event of a nuclear accident adopted at the special session of IAEA held at the end of September 1986.

21. Ms. ADIWOSO (Indonesia) said that, being itself a country prone to natural disasters, Indonesia had consistently supported the activities of UNDRO. The increasing complexity and magnitude of the relief provided in recent years, which had quadrupled since the beginning of the decade, had called for greater co-ordination of relief operations within the international community, highlighting the important role of inter-agency consultation.

22. One of the most important lessons to be learned from the unprecedented disaster that had swept Africa was the need for improved preparedness and prevention for which, as with relief operations, primary responsibility rested with recipient Governments. All relief operations should be carried out and co-ordinated in conformity with the priorities of the countries concerned. National systems of readiness such as early warning and public education systems were thus essential, as were long-term scientific, technical and policy measures combined with economic, social and legal measures and information and training efforts, in order to lessen the impact of disasters. In Indonesia, UNDRO was involved with UNDP and donor countries in pre-project planning for strengthening Indonesia's national disaster management capabilities.

23. It was ironic that, at a time when UNDRO must deal with an unprecedented number of emergency situations, the General Assembly had appropriated fewer funds to it for the biennium 1984-1985 and extrabudgetary contributions had been extremely uncertain. Her delegation wished to recall that the Economic and Social Council itself had emphasized how essential it was for the international community to place UNDRO on a sound financial basis and to respond positively to the appeals of the Secretary-General for contributions to the Trust Fund.

(Ms. Adiwoso, Indonesia)

24. With regard to special economic assistance programmes, she recalled that doubts had been expressed recently as to the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of such programmes and that the Secretary-General had been requested to report and present recommendations on ways and means of enhancing the implementation of those programmes, including the mobilization of resources necessary for their implementation. The Committee had before it not only the report of the Secretary-General (A/41/308) but also decision 1986/165 of the Economic and Social Council which recommended to the General Assembly the adoption of a draft resolution endorsing the key recommendations of the Secretary-General on that subject. As in the Council, her delegation supported the draft resolution, on the understanding that the views and interests of countries benefitting from special programmes would be taken fully into account.

25. Mr. WILLIS (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the countries of the European Community, said it was useful to recall that the intention of the special programmes of economic assistance was to provide short-term assistance to countries experiencing specific and immediate problems and they must be clearly distinguishable from regular programmes of the United Nations system. In order to make the best use of available resources and respond effectively to needs, a more precise definition of those programmes must be agreed upon so as to avoid duplication and competition. The programmes should also be integrated into existing co-ordination mechanisms. In that respect, the EC countries welcomed the further involvement of UNDP and the World Bank through round tables and consultative groups. They also welcomed the lead co-ordinating role that had been accorded to the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa.

26. Draft resolution A/C.2/41/L.8 was a first step towards enhancing the efficiency of special economic assistance programmes. If the concept was to retain its value, programmes should not be renewed automatically each year, as was sometimes the case. The EC countries therefore strongly supported the recommendation in paragraph 3 that the special economic assistance programme for a country should terminate after the review mission and that any continuing responsibilities should then be transferred to the regular programmes of the system. It was essential that the number of beneficiary countries should be limited to those genuinely in need of such assistance. The countries which had been included in the programmes for several years should therefore be urged to reassess their needs and study the possibility of integrating such aid into regular development programmes.

27. Mr. CHEKAY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that in 1985 the volume of assistance provided by the USSR to developing countries had constituted 1.5 per cent of its gross national product and had increased by 7 per cent compared with the previous year. In that same year, through the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the Soviet Union had also provided assistance on 35 occasions to 28 countries faced with emergency situations.

28. His delegation believed that special economic assistance and disaster relief should be provided only on the request of the Governments concerned and should not

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(Mr. Chekay, USSR)

serve as a pretext for interference in the internal affairs of States. It therefore objected to the recommendations of certain United Nations missions which favoured the penetration of private capital into the developing countries.

29. The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator unquestionably carried out useful work, but it was increasingly becoming involved in implementation activities, to the detriment of its co-ordination functions. The USSR was opposed to the use of special programmes of the Office to provide assistance in situations which were not really natural disasters. It thus felt that paragraph 15 (h) of the report of the Secretary-General (A/41/593) was, to say the least, inappropriate. Moreover, the mechanism of inter-secretariat consultations on questions of disaster relief should operate solely on an ad hoc basis and at the request of the States concerned, as was envisaged in General Assembly resolution 36/225. Under no circumstances should that mechanism be a substitute for intergovernmental bodies, in particular the Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, and it was not authorized either to judge the exceptional nature of a situation arising in a particular country or to decide on the need for assistance from the United Nations without the agreement of Governments. The Secretary-General should therefore submit to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly a clear and detailed report on the activities of that mechanism.

30. The USSR took note with satisfaction of the activities of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator aimed at supporting the efforts made by developing countries to prevent and overcome natural disasters, and it believed in the value of seminars, such as the seminar held in the USSR, with the participation of the Office and other bodies, concerning the prediction of earthquakes and measures to be taken to limit damage. The Office should be encouraged to make more rational use of the means available to it, however, particularly its personnel, which was top-heavy, as could be seen from annex II of document A/41/295.

31. The USSR supported the recommendation in document A/41/308 that special economic assistance programmes should be conceived of as performing an essentially catalytic role of limited duration in response to special situations and agreed with the Secretary-General that it was not the responsibility of the World Bank to implement the General Assembly resolution on the provision of special economic assistance. Section II of the report accorded too much importance to the round-table process of UNDP and the meetings of consultative groups of the Bank in formulating national development plans, co-ordinating policies and mobilizing resources. The Soviet Union also wished to point out that under the pretext of co-ordinating assistance, the major Western countries were trying to interfere even more in the economies of liberated countries and pursue a policy of neo-colonialist exploitation, as was revealed by paragraph 68 of document A/41/592. Thus the round tables and consultative groups sought to establish conditions favourable to transnational corporations in the developing countries and to limit the role of the public sector. In view of those circumstances, the attempt made by 11 Western countries to discredit the assistance provided by the Socialist countries was provocative and completely failed to take into account the real situation, which was more accurately described in the report of the Secretary-General (A/39/267).

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(Mr. Chekay, USSR)

32. His delegation firmly condemned the policy of the South African racist régime and was convinced that international assistance would not be able to play its role fully until Israel's occupation of Arab lands and its policy of aggression against the Palestinian people had ended.
33. Ms. DANIELSEN (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that today no one questioned the need for disaster preparedness or was unaware of the delays in the provision of assistance and hence the additional suffering which could be caused by a lack of information and co-ordination. It was therefore essential to structure the various mechanisms of the United Nations system and co-ordinate the actions of bodies concerned with disaster relief such as the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, UNRWA, UNHCR and also UNICEF, UNDP and WFP, so as to ensure that they could act swiftly and efficiently.
34. The Nordic countries continued to believe in the value of special economic assistance programmes, the number of which had increased considerably since they had been introduced 10 years previously. However, they believed that the programmes should be clearly differentiated from regular programmes and should be aimed solely at alleviating crises. Moreover, their implementation was not satisfactory, and should be entrusted to the regular operational system of the United Nations so as to avoid duplication and strengthen their effectiveness.
35. On the subject of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, the Nordic countries noted with satisfaction the good functioning of the computerized Disaster Information Data Base System and the improved situation reports, which - if they were to be really effective - should however be prepared in close co-operation with the various agencies in the United Nations system. Furthermore, note should be taken of the efforts made by the Secretariat to improve the evaluation of UNDRO.
36. The crisis in Africa demonstrated the need to reconsider the relationship between emergency aid and medium- and long-term development assistance. Links between the central functions of the United Nations and field operations must be improved, duplication must be minimized and sufficient use must be made of the available resources. In other words, the time had come to review the role of the United Nations in the area of emergency assistance, particularly the relationship between UNDRO and UNDP.
37. The Office for Emergency Operations in Africa, which would soon cease to function as a separate entity, had proved that the United Nations could play a constructive and effective role in a crisis and had shown that active co-ordination of relief efforts was crucial in order to achieve optimum results. The Nordic countries therefore suggested that the Secretariat should consider how the various relevant United Nations agencies providing emergency relief could best be organized, co-ordinated and rationalized in order to ensure the most efficient utilization of resources.

38. Mr. KIBEDI (Uganda) said that his delegation attached great importance to agenda item 82, particularly sub-item 82 (b), which dealt with the situation in Uganda, among other things. For years the Ugandan people had been subjected to a reign of terror, with nothing but a diplomatic silence as a reaction from the rest of the world. When the National Resistance Movement had come to power after years of fighting, it had found a country in a state of devastation. It had given high priority to safeguarding the fundamental human rights of all Ugandans and set up a Government of national unity, in which virtually all political groupings - including some of the Movement's former opponents - and the military were participating in order to achieve national reconciliation. All Ugandans had been encouraged to join in the national reconstruction endeavour. The goal of the Government's ten-point programme was to make Uganda into a democracy that was focused on development in all areas, co-operated with other African countries and defended the human and democratic rights of its brothers in other parts of Africa, in the context of an economic strategy based on the concept of a mixed economy.

39. The Secretary-General's report provided a considerable amount of useful information and detail about the various problems confronting Uganda. The Ugandan Mission was entirely at the disposal of all those who believed they could offer Uganda some practical assistance and therefore wished to have further details.

40. The Ugandan Government fully recognized that it could not depend entirely on external help to redress the country's economy. It had therefore already implemented measures designed to reduce unnecessary public expenditure and stressed self-help projects throughout the country. Guided by the democratic principles on which its policies were based, it consulted the Ugandan people on matters affecting them directly and was endeavouring to encourage them to take an interest in their own affairs and to elect their own representatives through local committees. Under the Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation Programme, much work had already been carried out under the direct responsibility of the Ministry of Rehabilitation. UNDP, UNHCR, UNICEF and a number of other agencies, as well as friendly countries, were providing assistance in areas where the needs were most pressing. Uganda, which required both immediate and long-term assistance, was now asking the international community to come to its aid. The Ugandan Government itself would spare no effort in its endeavour to restore peace, democracy, unity and prosperity to the country.

41. Mr. RAKOTONAIVO (Madagascar) said that he had noted with great interest the information set forth in the Secretary-General's report in document A/41/295. Since Madagascar was frequently the victim of natural disasters owing to its geographical position, it attached particular importance to the activities of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in the areas of prevention and the strengthening of the various forms of intervention. It also welcomed the effort made by UNDRO with a view to strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to disasters through the improvement of the organization of concerted relief programmes and the delivery of relief supplies, through the establishment of general-purpose funding and through the improvement of the capacity to evaluate damage and estimate relief requirements within the system. At the same time, his delegation wished to reaffirm the importance it attached to the evaluation of the economic impact of disasters.

(Mr. Rakotonaivo, Madagascar)

42. On the question of the role that UNDR0 could play after the relief stage, his delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's comments on the need to accelerate the process of reconstruction and rehabilitation. That was an area where UNDR0 could provide direct liaison between possible donors and the country that had been struck by a disaster by providing information in its final reports - for the countries likely to participate in the rehabilitation plan - on the requirements identified for the final stage of assistance. With regard to the mandate of UNDR0 and the way in which UNDR0 intervened, he wished to reaffirm his support for General Assembly resolutions 2816 (XXVI) and 3243 (XXIX). Owing to its humanitarian purpose, UNDR0 had always received support from the Malagasy Government, particularly where increases in the volume of its resources had been concerned. Madagascar would continue to give UNDR0 the same support in the future.

43. His delegation wished to express the gratitude of the Malagasy Government and people to all those who had come to Madagascar's aid when it had repeatedly been struck by cyclones. As could be seen from the report in document A/41/522, the current level of implementation of the special programme of economic assistance was extremely low (under 50 per cent). It therefore appealed to the international community to continue to provide assistance at the current crucial stage of the country's rehabilitation and development.

44. Mr. ELGHOAYEL (Tunisia) said that at a time when an effort was being made to rationalize and strengthen the effectiveness of the Organization, it was important, in the consideration of programme co-ordination and implementation in the extremely important area of emergency and disaster relief, to take account of a number of relevant reports and resolutions, such as the resolution adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1986. The general trend in the debate that had taken place in the Fifth Committee on the issue in question should also be borne in mind.

45. Since the United Nations activities in the area of emergency relief operations were vital, Tunisia would continue to support fully and contribute to the bodies responsible for carrying out the operations. Moreover, it wished to reaffirm its consistent position in support of the strengthening and rationalization of co-ordination and implementation in the area in question and in support of the efforts made in that connection in the context of operational activities for development, for which UNDP remained the key executing agency. It welcomed the initiative taken by the Secretary-General with a view to ensuring the follow-up of UNDR0 activities in Africa, which confirmed the need to strengthen even further the key co-ordinating role and executing capacity of UNDR0.

46. Africa had proved to be the continent most vulnerable to natural disasters. The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 was intended to reinforce the growth and development of the African countries. Through sustained and long-term economic development, the African continent would be better adapted to resist natural disasters.

(Mr. Elghouayel, Tunisia)

47. His delegation recognized the need to separate emergency assistance from longer-term development assistance and, for that reason, wished to stress the importance of increasing the autonomy and independence of the Office of the Co-ordinator as the only means of ensuring rapid, flexible and efficient co-ordination action. It therefore considered that the mandate of the Office of the Co-ordinator should be reaffirmed in accordance with the recommendations made in 1986 by the Economic and Social Council and with other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly.

48. Mr. QASSEM (Democratic Yemen) said that the question of satisfying the needs of developing countries which were the victims of natural disasters or other disaster situations was a source of great concern because it was not covered by regular programmes of the United Nations system. A certain amount of progress had been made in that respect since the launching in the mid-1970s of the first special economic assistance programme. His delegation approved the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General submitted under General Assembly resolution 40/236 concerning special economic assistance programmes (A/41/308-E/1986/67), and in particular the remarks contained in paragraph 37 on the adjustment of programmes to the specific requirements of individual countries and the co-ordination of operations within the United Nations system so as to achieve the efficient and effective use of available resources. As the Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs had pointed out, the arrangements whereby UNDP would be responsible for implementing General Assembly resolutions relating to special economic assistance in countries where a round-table process was under way should help to improve relations between recipient countries, donor countries and those responsible for executing programmes.

49. In view of the growing number of countries benefiting from such programmes, it was important both to mobilize more financing and to improve efficiency of implementation. He wondered whether it was necessary to send inter-agency missions to countries to determine the type of programme applicable to a given situation: the Office of the UNDP Resident Representative could undertake such evaluations. His delegation was in favour of maintaining the trust fund for special economic assistance programmes for the channelling of contributions.

50. As for strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system to deal with natural disasters and other disaster situations, his delegation was in favour of the idea of disaster prevention and planning at the national level set forth in the report of the Secretary-General on the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (A/41/295-E/1986/65). The proposals and recommendations contained in the report should help improve the efficiency of the work of the Office of the Co-ordinator.

51. Mr. MULLER (Australia), referring to draft resolution A/C.2/41/L.8 entitled "Special economic assistance programmes" recommended for adoption by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session, recalled that the Australian delegation had supported the adoption by consensus of Council decision 1986/165.

(Mr. Muller, Australia)

As the report of the Secretary-General (A/41/308) made clear, special economic assistance programmes should be restricted to countries which were in need of such assistance and to special circumstances that did not fall within the competence of the regular programmes of the United Nations system, and they should be of limited duration. His delegation supported the recommendation contained in the Secretary-General's report that special economic assistance programmes should be conceived of as performing an essentially catalytic role of limited duration in response to special situations. In that spirit it had supported draft resolution A/C.2/41/L.8, which should go a long way to re-establishing the credibility of those programmes while improving their efficiency.

52. Mr. BAI XINGJI (China) said that numerous natural disasters in the past year had given rise to great tragedies. It was regrettable that mankind was still incapable of fighting most of such disasters, in spite of the economic and technical levels reached. It was, however, encouraging to note that the international community, together with the agencies of the United Nations system responsible for disaster relief, had taken the initiative to organize and provide help to afflicted countries. The results achieved had shown that international and multinational economic and technical co-operation was indispensable.

53. During the previous year China had itself suffered floods, typhoons and earthquakes which had claimed several thousand victims and had caused billions of dollars worth of damage. Taking into account the limited resources of international relief, the Chinese Government had decided to rely mainly on its own efforts to assist people in the afflicted areas in the various regions of the country. The Chinese Red Cross had also done its best to provide assistance to a number of other countries afflicted by those types of disaster.

54. The Chinese delegation approved the Secretary-General's proposal contained in document A/41/295 to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system in the area of natural and other disasters. It also approved the recommendations contained in document A/41/308 to improve the efficiency of the special economic assistance programmes. It was pleased to note that many developing countries had adjusted their development strategies and policies in line with their national conditions and had achieved positive results. However, he noted with concern that some developing countries, in particular some least developed countries, were more vulnerable to the effects of natural disasters because of their poor infrastructure and rapid population growth. Development obviously attenuated the effects of natural disasters. Aware that the growth of the developed countries would be hindered if the economic situation of the developing countries did not improve markedly, his delegation expressed the hope, as it had already done at the fortieth session of the General Assembly, that the international community would spare no effort to promote the long-term development of disaster-stricken countries in the third world to enable them gradually to take over their own reconstruction and rehabilitation and thus embark on a course of sound development.

55. Mr. TAKASHIMA (Japan) said that his country, which lived under the constant threat of earthquakes, felt deep sympathy with the Government and people of El Salvador and had instantly responded to their appeals for assistance.

56. The Japanese Government, in appreciation of UNDR0's activities, had always given the Office its full support. Since 1978 it had been contributing to the Trust Fund, and it had co-operated recently with UNDR0 by dispatching teams of experts to the sites of disasters and intended to co-operate further in that field. His delegation welcomed the international community's efforts to make UNDR0's activities more efficient. The recent proposal that, in addition to its present activities, UNDR0 serve also as an operational organization for the procurement and distribution of relief supplies should be carefully considered, in the light of the Office's mandate, which was that UNDR0 should play the role of catalyst and co-ordinator.

57. Referring to agenda item 82 (b), Special programmes of economic assistance, he stressed that it was important to enhance the efficiency of such programmes, in the light of the efforts being made to improve the efficiency of the United Nations administrative and financial functioning and to rationalize the work of the Second Committee. In order to make the most effective use of the resources available, special economic assistance programmes should be carried out only in countries which genuinely needed that type of assistance or when the assistance required fell outside the competence of the regular programmes of the United Nations system. Furthermore, those programmes should be limited in their duration. Indeed, the Secretary-General had made recommendations to that effect in his report (A/41/308).

58. Mr. SMITH (Jamaica) said that his country, located in a geographical area prone to natural disasters, attached particular importance to the activities of UNDR0 and was in favour of enhancing its capacity to play an effective role in coping with disasters. The number of disasters in which UNDR0 had provided assistance had grown considerably in the past six years and humanitarian assistance in cash or kind provided by the international community had grown to over \$2 billion in the most recent biennium. UNDR0's vital role was one best carried out from its current place within the organizational structure of the United Nations system, and deserved the full support of the international community.

59. UNDR0's activities in the area of disaster preparedness and prevention were also vital; the loss of life and the destruction that inevitably accompanied natural disasters must be minimized. Relief, no matter how well co-ordinated and effective, was primarily intended to ease human suffering and did not diminish the value of prevention in any way. Losses resulting from natural disasters were probably higher than would normally have been the case in developing countries, because financial difficulties were causing some of them to neglect maintenance and even lower building standards.

60. In recent years, Jamaica had given much attention to devising national plans and to establishing and strengthening national structures in the area of disaster preparedness. Work was co-ordinated at the sub-regional level within the framework of the Pan-Caribbean Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Project, set up in 1981,

(Mr. Smith, Jamaica)

which also provided technical assistance. Jamaica expressed its appreciation to the donors which had assisted the project, including the United States Agency for International Development, the Canadian International Development Agency and the European Economic Community. Lastly, his delegation urged member countries, particularly the major donors, to provide voluntary financial support to UNDR0.

61. Mr. BROWNE (Fiji) said that life in the Pacific Islands was largely determined by the vagaries of nature. Natural disasters in the form of hurricanes, cyclones, floods, landslides and tidal waves took a heavy toll in human and material resources, forcing a reordering of priorities in development plans. Fiji and its neighbours in the South Pacific would have been seriously handicapped in their recovery efforts, had it not been for the generous assistance received from the international community. Fiji had encouraged the concept of self-help amongst its people and had established an Emergency Services Committee, which was activated as soon as a natural disaster struck. Nevertheless, outside help remained indispensable and Fiji thanked Australia, New Zealand and the international community as a whole for their assistance. UNDR0 was particularly active and efficient. The Government of Fiji had no quarrel with the recommendation of the Group of 18 that UNDP should consider absorbing disaster relief operations, provided that the relief and co-ordinating functions of UNDR0 could be continued unaffected.

62. Mr. HASSAN (Djibouti) said that his country had been a beneficiary of a special programme of economic assistance since 1978, when the country had been facing critical socio-economic problems as a consequence of regional conflict exacerbated by the influx of displaced persons and the drought which had decimated livestock and displaced one third of the rural population. Djibouti was still providing shelter for many refugees and was still experiencing the effects of the drought. Situated in one of the most arid regions of the world, Djibouti suffered from the scarcity and irregularity of rainfall, which impeded any meaningful agricultural development; moreover, the nature of the land itself, of which only 5 per cent was suitable for cultivation, did not provide the necessary incentive to invest in agriculture. Animal husbandry, which had traditionally been the mainstay of the population, was no longer a viable means of subsistence, as overgrazing and drought had wrought a change in the ecological system. Consequently, the rural population was becoming more and more dependent on urban centres and Djibouti was importing almost all foodstuffs needed for local consumption. Prospects for industrialization were not very encouraging either, owing to the lack of raw materials and the high cost of energy. Although geothermal energy was believed to offer some promise, exploitation of that energy required capital investment and technology, which Djibouti did not possess in sufficient quantity. Under those circumstances, it was plain that developing the service sector was of particular importance, and Djibouti thanked all participants in the 1983 donors' conference.

63. The east African countries of Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, Sudan, Uganda and Djibouti, reaffirming their common desire to combine their efforts, had established the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development. The recovery and rehabilitation programmes designed to meet that formidable challenge could not be

(Mr. Hassan, Djibouti)

implemented without the support of the international community, to which the member countries of the Intergovernmental Authority had reiterated their appeal for support at the donors' conference expected to take place from 16 to 18 March 1987 in Djibouti.

64. Mr. NGARYANAN (Chad) said that the report of the Secretary-General on special programmes of economic assistance (A/41/592) presented a clear idea of the difficulties confronting developing countries. In the case of Chad, two other phenomena which aggravated the socio-economic situation could be added to the negative factors referred to in the report of the Secretary-General: the war of aggression imposed on Chad by the terrorist and expansionist Tripoli régime, which occupied over half of the national territory, and the plague of locusts, grasshoppers and rats which had attacked the crops. The emergency situation persisted, aggravated by the war effort, which drained the few resources available to Chad to relieve the sufferings of its peoples. The food situation remained precarious. In view of that uncertainty, the idea of constituting a stock of 20,000 tons of cereals to tide the country over, recommended by the FAO/WFP/multi-donors evaluation mission in October 1985, was worth reviving.

65. The solidarity demonstrated during past disasters gave reason to hope that the international community would again assist Chad in overcoming its difficulties. Although the assistance provided by countries and international organizations in 1982 had made it possible to rebuild the essential links in the economy, the assistance provided following the appeal launched in 1985 still remained at the promissory stage. Therefore, his delegation reiterated the appeal launched to the donors on 6 October by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation of Chad to fulfil the commitments they had made. Chad, a land-locked country, whose sovereignty and territorial integrity were being violated by an overarmed neighbour and which was afflicted by numerous plagues, had few resources for its development. Essentially, it counted on external financial flows to recover the economic levels it had enjoyed before the tragic events which it continued to endure, and to try to reduce the suffering of its battered peoples. The Government of Chad renewed its full confidence in the United Nations, which could be of great help in the realization of its hopes. To that end, it called upon all the States Members once again to adopt, at the forty-first session, a resolution on economic assistance to Chad.

66. Mr. MOYA-PALENCIA (Mexico) thanked the international community for its support during the 1985 earthquakes, which had caused considerable losses of human lives and property. The Governments, citizens and communities of 63 friendly countries had demonstrated their support for Mexico. Important personalities had immediately visited the disaster scene. Mexico had received 397 tons of medicines, 226 tons of medical equipment, 957 tons of foodstuffs, 365 tons of machines and vehicles, 16 tons of rescue equipment, 41 tons of tools and 862 tons of clothing, blankets and camping equipment. Rescue teams, doctors and disaster and rescue experts had also been dispatched to the scene. The first stage had been funded through the resources of the National Reconstruction Fund, the government authorities and through private sources and multilateral credit institutions. The United Nations

(Mr. Moya-Palencia, Mexico)

participated in that process from the beginning by adopting resolution 40/1 on 20 September 1985. His delegation thanked the Secretary-General for his report on international relief to Mexico (A/41/369 and Add.1), based on information communicated by the countries concerned. Mexico had wished to pay tribute to 359 Governments, entities or institutions which had distinguished themselves, and to the individuals who had done likewise in rescue, assistance and relief operations, by conferring upon them the "National Recognition Award of 19 September". He also expressed his gratitude to the United Nations and to the organizations within its system which had offered their help, such as FAO, UNICEF, UNDP, WHO, the Office of the United Nations Co-ordinator for Disaster Relief and WFP.

67. Mr. BENMOUSSA (Morocco), recalling that 22 resolutions and 3 decisions had been adopted without a vote at the fortieth session, on the item "Special programmes of economic assistance", hoped that the Committee would do the same at the forty-first session, taking account of the often disastrous situation of the developing countries concerned by those programmes. The fact that 20 African countries profited from such programmes underscored the extreme vulnerability of the majority of African countries, which experienced chaotic situations characterized by unusually severe socio-economic tensions. Africa was the least-favoured region of the world. It was a region that was potentially rich in resources, but a disaster area according to all the socio-economic indicators. That meant that the crisis could not be solved by a sprinkling of projects and programmes, even ones which were well designed and co-ordinated, but required stepped-up, consistent and long-range efforts on the part of the international community, going beyond the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990. The emergency situations must be taken into consideration to the extent that many efforts faithful and courageously undertaken by numerous African Governments were fruitless because of unpredictable complex disasters and natural plagues, which were all the more devastating because, in most African countries, there were practically no early-warning systems or disaster prevention and preparedness programmes. In that regard, the representative of the United States had correctly highlighted the recent invasion of the desert locust, which plagued 25 African countries and threatened many others. He urged the United States of America, acting through the Agency for International Development, to undertake urgently the requisite protection, treatment and prevention actions for the benefit of all the affected countries, in co-operation with the other donor countries and competent organizations of the United Nations system.

68. He welcomed the action undertaken by the United Nations Office of the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator on behalf of numerous developing countries, and expressed a justifiable concern about the fate reserved for it by the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts, whose recommendation 24 (A/41/49) stipulated "The United Nations Development Programme should be requested to consider the feasibility of taking over the functions currently performed by the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator." That recommendation, which was even more unpopular and unjustified than many others, could be criticized in many respects, as several

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(Mr. Benmoussa, Morocco)

delegations had pointed out. Moreover, the Economic and Social Council had reaffirmed at its second regular session in 1986, in resolution 1986/47, the mandate of the Office of the Co-ordinator, as defined in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI). That resolution, which aimed to set up a permanent office which would be the focal point for disaster relief matters, also specified that that office should be a distinct element within the United Nations Secretariat on the one hand, and that the co-ordinator should report directly to the Secretary-General and would be authorized to act on his behalf to relieve human suffering and to co-ordinate international assistance, on the other hand.

69. There had been 53 emergency situations in 1985, as compared to 12 in 1980. All those disasters had underscored the irreplaceable role of the Office of the Co-ordinator as a key element for the immediate mobilization and co-ordination of humanitarian emergency and relief operations, which were to be distinguished from assistance of an economic nature. The resources of the Office of the Co-ordinator came primarily from voluntary contributions and counted for a mere 0.3 per cent of the regular budget of the United Nations.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.