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Chairman: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)

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NATURAL DISASTER IN THE PHILIPPINES

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 82: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)

- (a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (A/46/186 and Add.1, A/46/206-E/1991/93 and Add.1-4)
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General debate (continued)

1. Mr. EDGREN (Assistant Administrator, Bureau for Programme Policy and Evaluation, UNDC) said that the United Nations Development Fund (UNCDF), whose portfolio of project commitments now amounted to about \$700 million, operated chiefly in the least developed countries, through small-scale grant capital assistance - irrigation schemes, agricultural development, feeder roads, housing, water supply and sanitation, health clinics and schools, etc. - bringing the people of the least developed countries improved conditions of living and opportunities for economic and social development. The Fund's objectives were first to meet the basic needs of the lower-income population and, by providing opportunities for income generation, to encourage the spirit of enterprise and to contribute through formation of domestic savings to national investment and economic development of the country. It sought to ensure responsibility-sharing by beneficiaries of the running costs of the social infrastructure put in place. In all sectors of its programme, UNCDF would continue to build on that foundation to assist in achieving locally-directed, sustained development.

2. In the current state of world development, poverty was more widespread than ever and the list of least developed countries (LDCs) threatened to grow. In those conditions, the most appropriate vehicle for assistance was in the form of grants. The effectiveness of UNCDF's activities had been recognized frequently, for example at the Paris Conference of September 1990.

(Mr. Edgón)

In the Programme of Action adopted at that Conference donor countries had been called on to consider a 20 per cent annual increase in funding for UNCDF until the end of the decade. As a review of the 1991 Pledging Conference showed, that objective was far from being achieved.

3. Turning to the United Nations Volunteers programme (UNV), he said that it had become a key element of international technical cooperation as it supplied perhaps as much as 20 per cent of the long-term expatriate technical personnel serving in developing countries, especially in the LDCs. In some fields, such as agricultural development, health and education, and the reconstruction of a region after a crisis, its role might even be critical.

4. The typical volunteer, with advanced university training, long experience in developing countries and above all an unusual degree of personal commitment was able to play a complementary role to that of other technical cooperation personnel. The volunteers formed the crucial link between the policy-strategic level and the people those policies and strategies were intended to benefit, and they could provide technical and on-the-job training support to local administrators and technicians who had to deliver services.

5. The expansion of the United Nations Volunteers programme reflected the growing interest in it. With the nearly 2,100 volunteers in the field, the programme continued to expand, and it played a particularly important role in countries like Afghanistan and Namibia, which faced dramatically altered circumstances. That would certainly also be true for Cambodia.

6. The activities of the volunteers extended to every aspect of development but two areas should be pursued more actively: support to community-based initiatives in close collaboration with grass-roots organizations and emergency response activities.

7. With the increased concern for strengthening the national capacities of countries and making use of national talent, programmes should aim to encourage a mix of international and local volunteers to bring about the exchange of knowledge, ideas and skills, stressing the team approach rather than the earlier standard "counterpart" expert approach. The Participatory Development Programme of the United Nations Volunteers was particularly important in that respect.

8. The United Nations Volunteers programme had already begun to expand systematically its support for community-based initiatives, for example in helping local communities cope with the socio-economic impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic or to develop programmes with the combined contributions of regular international organization personnel, United Nations Volunteers and grass-roots field workers to meet the basic needs of low-income communities - rural development activities in Lesotho, small-scale credit in the Gambia or support for women's initiatives in Pakistan. The traditional role of the United Nations Volunteers programme had been to assist in post-crisis

(Mr. Edgren)

rehabilitation and reconstruction (Afghanistan, Angola and Mozambique) and long-term relief capacity-building programmes, as in Ethiopia, but during the past year it had also intervened in emergency situations, in cooperation with other United Nations bodies. Thus, in Liberia, it had enabled the United Nations Disaster Relief Office (UNDR0) to manage its first field operation. It seemed clear that UNV would be called on increasingly to help in that area of emergency relief and rehabilitation and its potential role should be taken fully into account in the current debate about a coordinated structure in the United Nations system for emergency response.

9. Mr. GANTCHEV (Bulgaria) said that the operational activities for development were a key element in the efforts of the international community to give the recipient countries the capacity to revitalize their economies and achieve sustainable development. However, the goals of those activities had changed in the light of the profound changes now taking place in international life and the evolving international strategies for development. UNDP should therefore continue to adapt its programmes to the needs, objectives and priorities of Member States, and the confidence the Programme enjoyed from all would help it to meet the challenges of the 1990s.

10. The annual report of the Director-General (A/46/206 and Add.1) contained a comprehensive review of the measures adopted to strengthen the whole United Nations system of operational activities, and the efforts to strengthen the role of the Resident Coordinators and to synchronize the international efforts with national programmes were to be welcomed. UNDP's Governing Council, at its thirty-eighth session, had stressed that the principal goals of its future activities should be human development, the self-reliance of nations and the sustainability of development. As many delegations had pointed out, human development should become one of the key components of United Nations operational activities in the future. The Programme's efforts to promote entrepreneurship as a major factor for sustainable development, and the fact that it now had a Division for Private Sector in Development, were commendable. Environmental protection should also be a permanent task of UNDP programmes, particularly in countries in transition, as it could prevent further detrimental effects on the environment.

11. The growing number of emergencies and the increasing flows of displaced persons and refugees rendered more urgent the need to create economic and social conditions which would stem migratory movements. The operational activities of the United Nations could be useful in a planned and coordinated response to that need.

12. With regard to self-reliance, emphasis should be placed on strengthening the national capacity of recipient countries to deal with managerial problems, not only to benefit the different sectors of their economy (see UNDP decision 91/24), but also to create an economic climate conducive to change.

(Mr. Gantchev, Bulgaria)

13. UNDP activities in the next programming cycle should make broader use of the programme approach. He hoped that future support costs arrangements would improve the implementation of UNDP-funded projects by combining national execution with the considerable potential of the implementing agencies.

14. Bulgaria reaffirmed its support for the recommendations in General Assembly resolution 44/211. The Nordic project could contribute substantially to the success of that important undertaking.

15. Mr. SZEDLACSKO (Hungary) said that, after years of gradual development and systematic efforts to dismantle rigid structures, Hungary had progressed in an orderly transition to a popular democracy. As it had the necessary legal framework for a pluralistic society, it had been able to embark promptly on the establishment of a market economy. It was of vital importance that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe should succeed in their transition, as the political and economic stability of the continent would be thereby strengthened and those countries would be able to contribute to the prosperity of their partners. A tripartite cooperation system had accordingly been launched on the initiative of the Government of the Netherlands, which was helping Hungary to strengthen its ties with developing countries in the areas of science and technology and education. Preliminary results were encouraging and other Western European countries had shown interest in that form of trilateral cooperation.

16. While Hungary bore the burden of its own transition, the process would only succeed in a favourable external climate. Hungary therefore welcomed the adoption of decision 91/24 by the UNDP Governing Council and it looked forward to cooperation with all parties concerned in its implementation, particularly within the fifth programming cycle. The interrelated programmes implemented at the country and regional levels should focus on management skills, privatization, mitigation of the negative consequences of the transformation, the development of an information infrastructure and the environment. The success of those programmes depended on good coordination, utilization of national expertise and close consultation between UNDP and the Government, while the Government retained the main responsibility for the implementation of the programmes. It was particularly important to make rational use of the available funds, in view of the sharp drop in UNDP funds allocated for the fifth cycle to Hungary and to the region as a whole. Additional external resources would be required. Care should also be taken not to launch any programmes until the project documents had been signed by at least three countries.

17. Referring to General Assembly resolution 44/211, he said he hoped the consensus would be reached on a resolution concerning operational activities, which could form the basis for the comprehensive policy review in 1992. As human development was an essential aspect of development and of the operational activities of the United Nations, the UNDP report on the issue was extremely useful and Hungary welcomed the inclusion of the human freedom index, which should, however, be further refined.

(Mr. Szedlacsko, Hungary)

18. Hungary set great store by the fundamental principles of operational activities: universality, voluntary nature, neutrality and multilateralism. Despite the problems which it had to overcome, Hungary hoped to develop mutually advantageous relations with all countries and would not disregard the problems of the less fortunate nations. Events in Central Europe should not divert capital flows away from the developing countries. In that spirit, Hungary had increased by a third its voluntary contribution to United Nations activities for development.

19. Ms. THORPE (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the 12 members of the Caribbean Community which were members of the United Nations (Antigua and Barbuda, the Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago), said that operational activities for development played an important role for the small countries of the Caribbean Community, which were pursuing their development goals in the face of uncertainties in the world market and the erosion of their terms of trade. For them, technical cooperation remained of critical importance at all stages of development. There was no point at which countries should be penalized for attaining a certain level of development by being deprived of the benefit of operational activities. On the contrary, those activities should permit States to consolidate their progress and to pursue development in a context of democracy. As the world entered the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, it would be more appropriate to increase the resources assigned to technical cooperation for development, in view of the growing number of least developed countries or low-income developing countries and of the continuing needs of other developing countries. Part of the peace dividend resulting from the improvement in East-West relations should be channelled in that direction.

20. The dialogue on operational activities for development should draw inspiration from General Assembly resolution 44/211, which had been adopted in a climate of increasing support for the reform and revitalization of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system to respond better to the needs of the developing countries. The consensus of 1970 (annex to General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV)) and resolution 3405 (XXX) on the new dimensions of technical cooperation were, however, of continuing relevance. Governments had sole responsibility for the formulation of their national plans, priorities and objectives and for the integration into their national plans of activities financed by multilateral and bilateral assistance. Decisions 91/32 and 91/37 of the UNDP Governing Council represented progress achieved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211, in that they promoted a reorientation of the activities of the specialized agencies and called for increased national execution, since the resources assigned for administrative support had been cut to a minimum during the fifth programming cycle.

(Ms. Therpe, Trinidad and Tobago)

21. The full benefits of the new agency support costs arrangements would only be felt if resolution 44/211 was fully implemented. Governments must be free to exercise their management and coordination responsibilities; the rules and procedures governing programming and project cycles must be simplified and harmonized; the programme approach must be further developed and, in the interests of greater self-reliance, national execution must become the norm; and the system of resident coordinators must be reappraised.

22. With regard to the Director-General's report (A/46/206), the countries of the Caribbean Community supported women's full participation in technical cooperation activities, both as agents and as beneficiaries. The Committee should give the Director-General further guidance for the next triennial review of operational activities, particularly in the areas of national execution, decentralization, programming, coordination, simplification, harmonization and the adaptation of rules and procedures. As concerned programming, the distinction between the programme approach and the project approach remained blurred in some parts of the system. A system-wide approach should allow interested States to provide for multilateral support in their national development plan; that would enhance the quality of the programmes executed. In respect of coordination, adequate machinery already existed at the policy level, but not in the field; such a mechanism might, however, take the form of a joint programming of the activities of the various United Nations bodies within the framework of the national development plan. That would minimize duplication and optimize the benefits derived from the comparative advantage of each of those bodies.

23. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) referred first to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/211. Document A/46/206 left no doubt that progress had been made, particularly with regard to the field representatives network, national execution, national capacity-building and the role of women in development.

24. In FAO's case, the FAO Conference had adopted an important resolution on the organization's operational activities and future orientation. Many of the issues discussed were similar, if not identical, to those addressed in resolution 44/211. The high cost of a number of measures recommended in the resolution gave cause, however, for concern. Like other organizations, FAO had been experiencing budget shortfalls for several years owing to the failure of some Member States to meet their obligations in a timely manner and fluctuations in the dollar, and could not introduce new structures while its budget resources were falling.

25. The support costs successor arrangements for the fifth UNDP programming cycle would have serious implications for FAO, a question to which the Governing Council had decided to return at its May 1992 session. Through the Inter-Agency Task Force, the specialized agencies were attempting to define with UNDP the functioning of those new arrangements. Yet much remained to be

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

done before the new arrangements were implemented - the scheduled date was 1 January 1992 - inter alia because of the training that the new methodology would require.

26. One of the key elements of the new support costs successor arrangements was the expansion of national execution. The Governing Council had stressed in decision 91/27 that the process must be carried out in a cooperative spirit and in consultation with the agencies and the Governments themselves. Indeed, decision 91/27 requested the Administrator to develop, in consultation with the agencies and Governments, guidelines covering the promotion and support of that new modality. It therefore came as a surprise that in certain countries an effort was being made to introduce across-the-board national execution without the necessary consultation; that had created some confusion and threatened to prejudice the support costs arrangements. Agreement had, however, been reached on interim guidance.

27. The Secretary-General's report on developing human resources for development (A/46/461) set forth three aspects of the Organization's activities in the area: the new development approach, monitoring and operational activities. FAO itself had always sought to go beyond the "basic needs" approach to improve the nutrition and living conditions of rural populations and the production and distribution of agricultural products. That called for a transformation of rural life and activities in every respect and also for active participation by rural people in the design and implementation of policies concerning them. The FAO Conference must consider a plan of action in that area. Human resources development was also given priority in the FAO medium-term plan for the years 1992 to 1997.

28. With regard to monitoring, FAO was collecting and disseminating large amounts of statistical data.

29. FAO's operational activities focused on building national capacity through rural extension work, education and training. In 1989, 105,000 persons, one third of them women, had received training. That same year, FAO had organized 3,000 fellowships and more than 200 field projects. But owing to the persistence of rural poverty, the "human resources" factor continued to place a serious constraint on economic development. Although demand for human resources development services was high, resources for that purpose had been declining in the 1980s and would probably continue to do so, particularly on the African continent.

30. Finally, while gratified at the interest shown in World Food Day, FAO regarded the text on the subject that was being circulated as inappropriate. Firstly, World Food Day was not part of operational activities nor of human resources development; secondly, the FAO Conference itself had established the Day, and it was for the Conference to decide how it would be observed; and thirdly, organizations wishing to participate in the observance of World Food Day were invited to do so, and FAO would be pleased to provide them support.

31. Mr. SUCHMAN (Czechoslovakia) appreciated UNDP's efforts to adapt to the changed situation in international relations and supported all attempts to strengthen its central role in the United Nations system, particularly in the field of human resources development. In the view of his delegation, decisions taken at the thirty-eighth session of the Governing Council were encouraging, but did not go far enough. Attention must continue to focus on the process of reform in operational activities and on ways and means of implementing the ideas contained in General Assembly resolution 44/211. The time had come to revitalize multilateral cooperation, and it was important to recall in that context the recommendations contained in the final report of the Nordic project.

32. The reform of operational activities implied a systematic decentralization and greater coordination of development activities in order to avoid duplication. In particular, it was essential to avoid endless evaluation missions which slowed the implementation of development activities and absorbed considerable human and financial resources. Since countries had not all reached the same levels of economic and social development, development programmes could not be conceived in purely general terms. The needs of middle-income countries were very different from those of countries at a low development level. It was therefore necessary to categorize countries according to level of development, and the level of IPF should be a function of those categories. In the Human Development Report 1991, an effort had been made to improve the human development index, despite the difficulties of obtaining comparable data for all Member States. Development, democracy and human rights were closely linked, and for that reason, the next issue of the report should consider living conditions when calculating the human development index.

33. National execution of projects and programmes was an important aspect of resolution 44/211. The issue was closely linked to UNDP's increased involvement in national capacity-building and the implementation of the support costs successor arrangements. IPF allocations should be used as "seed money capital" to attract additional funds from donors.

34. UNDP would have the opportunity with regard to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to demonstrate its ability to convince the donor community that the proposed regional and national projects aimed at assisting the transformation of the economies in transition would benefit the recipient countries and would be implemented effectively as a result of its efforts. The preparation of a regional programme for Europe had shown how complex and delicate the issue was, since lack of modern market-oriented management systems and problems associated with the transition period made preparation of national and regional development projects difficult. Consequently the European regional office of UNDP should be strengthened and moved to the region; UNDP's field offices in Europe also required strengthening.

35. Mr. FLORES (Mexico) endorsed the statement which had been made by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of 77. He added that changes in the international political environment had not been accompanied by similar changes in the area of international economic cooperation which was of such vital importance to the developing countries. The grave economic, social and technical inequalities which existed between countries could be reduced only through collective action, which required more effective international cooperation in all areas. The Mexican Government attached great importance to operational activities, which provided a very welcome reinforcement of national efforts. In the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation (General Assembly resolution S-18/3) and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade, the international community had established guiding principles for cooperation. His delegation expressed its concern at certain recent trends which appeared to indicate the existence of a desire to impose political conditionalities on international cooperation which would hinder efforts to strengthen the capacity of Governments to plan, control and coordinate external technical assistance and would conflict the right of each country to determine its own economic policies. It was to be hoped that operational activities would remain free of such pressures and would continue to be implemented in accordance with the wishes of the beneficiary countries, in conformity with the general principles set out in the consensus of 1970.

36. Furthermore, the disparity between requirements and the resources available for operational activities was growing. The industrialized countries, whose contribution did not reflect their vast potential, should increase their support for operational activities, which ultimately contributed to international economic growth. Operational activities should be adjusted to the changing circumstances and different requirements of the developing countries. It was very important that the amount of assistance provided to the least developed countries be increased without there being a corresponding reduction in the amount of assistance provided to the other developing countries.

37. The present reform of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations had implications for the question of operational activities. A number of proposals had been circulated and Mexico was fully prepared to consider them, the main objective being to strengthen operational activities while observing the principles of universality and neutrality and the voluntary nature of assistance. The consensus of 1970 (General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV), annex) and resolution 44/211 remained the relevant frame of reference and the restructured Economic and Social Council was the appropriate forum in which to determine the orientation of operational activities. The idea of a reorganization of the governing bodies and of the existing system of financing should be looked at carefully. The problem in fact was not so much the size of the governing bodies but rather their composition, which was sometimes seriously unbalanced, and their working methods, which sometimes conflicted with the resolutions of the General Assembly and of the Economic and Social Council.

38. Mr. RYSINSKI (Poland) observed that the economic and social sectors of the United Nations were about to enter a new phase of their development. The change in international relations made reforms which were already long overdue even more urgent. Operational activities must not be left out of the overall restructuring process and must be made more relevant and effective, and they might prove more amenable to modification than many other elements of the United Nations system, precisely because of their universal, voluntary, technical, neutral and multilateral character. Their contribution to the economic development process was unequalled. The proposals which had been put forward by the Nordic countries, in particular with regard to the creation of an international development council and the improvement of governance, had set the right tone for the discussions. Operational activities should foster within the United Nations system a spirit of managerial efficiency. The debate on operational activities should continue to be conducted on the basis of General Assembly resolution 44/211 and the international community should strive to maintain the momentum which had been generated by that resolution. The interests of all groups of countries must be taken into account and the questions of universality and plurality should not be subsumed within North-South issues.

39. Aside from traditional issues, the questions to be tackled included transition, systemic transformation and the management of development and crises in times of accelerated change. In that regard, UNDP Governing Council decisions 91/11 and 91/24 on the role of the private sector in development and on technical cooperation in the transformation of Eastern European economies testified to the emergence of a common perspective on technical cooperation questions and might provide a source of inspiration for other organizations and a new focus for the operational activities of the United Nations. He commended UNDP for its spirit of innovation and UNICEF for its contribution to the implementation of the decisions of the World Summit for Children.

40. The viability of operational activities would depend on the ability of the United Nations system to adapt to a changing world. Specifically, support must be provided for resident coordinator functions and authority must devolve on the field offices, in light of local requirements. In addition, regional offices must be set up within the regions concerned. Furthermore, national capacities development and use should be established as a prime objective of operational activities.

41. The human development concept, which had originated within UNDP, required further analysis in all its dimensions - economic, social and political. That concept offered a means of drawing together all the major problems of development and placing them within a wider perspective. It also lay at the heart of the reform process within the United Nations. In order to avoid stagnation new blood must be brought in through a more balanced and equitable representation; that would also serve the needs of underrepresented countries such as Poland.

42. Mrs. TIKANVAARA (Finland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that economic growth in itself was not enough to eradicate poverty or ensure broad-based development. It was currently recognized that people were at the very heart of the development process and that human resources development was critical to sustainable development. That meant implementing suitable policies in the fields of health, nutrition, housing, population, environment and education. The UNDP Human Development Report was a very important step since it provided guidelines for introducing human resources development into the overall development planning process. UNDP would thus play an increasingly important role in that area.

43. The challenge henceforth was to elaborate policies and programmes for human resources development. At the national level, it meant setting priorities and deciding how to allocate resources among the various sectors so that they were used most efficiently. Military expenditures, in particular, should be reduced to the minimum required for security in order to free resources for development purposes. Austerity measures must not affect the fields of education and health, which were essential for the resumption of growth.

44. At the international level, priority areas for development cooperation under multilateral and bilateral programmes should be defined or redefined. Much remained to be done, in particular with regard to the implementation of policies and the quality of aid. In that connection, she welcomed the recommendation of the Development Committee of the World Bank concerning united aid.

45. The Nordic countries had noted with great interest that the Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women attributed the failure of traditional development policies to overcome poverty to the fact that they had not taken into account the economic and social role of women. The experience of the Nordic countries showed that a better standard of living was linked to increased involvement of women in political and economic life coupled with opportunities for women in respect of education, social services, legal rights and property. It was therefore essential for human resources development policies to incorporate women fully into that process.

46. The dismantling of ideological barriers, the end of the cold war and progress in the field of disarmament had raised new hopes. However, lasting peace and security could be achieved only when the necessary economic, social and environmental conditions were in place and when democracy and respect for human rights prevailed throughout the world.

47. The attainment of development objectives also demanded decentralization and the participation of all people in decision-making processes. That should be accompanied by accountable government, impartial judiciary and respect for fundamental freedoms. Democracy and pluralism and the implementation of economic policies which took market forces into consideration and stimulated private enterprise were essential to the full development of the individual and the unleashing of people's creative potential. That was the ultimate goal of human resources development.

48. Mr. SINGH (Fiji), recalling the vital role played by the United Nations in the development process, said that despite the very substantial progress made thus far, economic stagnation continued in most of the severely indebted countries, where the rate of population growth was higher than that of economic growth and where poverty and AIDS were taking on alarming proportions. It was therefore imperative for the United Nations to step up its operational activities in order to provide support for the efforts of those countries to solve their problems; moreover, the developed countries must honour their commitment to allocate 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to official development assistance including 0.15 per cent of GNP to the least developed countries.

49. The UNDP Human Development Report stated clearly that people were at the heart of the development process. It was, however, unfortunate that no composite human development index had been established for small countries, such as Fiji, with a population of under one million.

50. It was precisely because it was a small country that Fiji considered human resources development to be fundamental. Policies in that area were designed to improve the quality of life of the entire population; various programmes were under way to raise the level of education and improve health services and to assist the most disadvantaged population groups, particularly in rural areas. His Government was also committed to ensuring the full participation of women in the development process and had established various mechanisms for that purpose. It greatly appreciated the efforts of the secretariat of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) to implement the Jakarta Plan of Action.

51. Several international strategies had been adopted in 1990 to guide the work of the United Nations system. United Nations organizations had a major role to play in reviewing and appraising the progress made in implementing those strategies; some of them were already undertaking a review of their own structures, operations and procedures so that they might fulfil their mandate more effectively. He hoped that the others would do likewise.

52. In view of the complexity of the issues with which the developing countries were faced and the overlapping functions of the various organizations and specialized agencies within the United Nations system, duplication was inevitable. None the less, efforts should be made to continue examining ways to set up collaborative programmes by adopting a multidisciplinary approach. United Nations organizations should attempt to achieve greater coordination of their activities and strive for a more efficient division of labour based on their technical abilities while the responsibility for developing multidisciplinary programmes lay primarily with the Governments of the countries concerned, resident coordinators should, through regular consultations, help determine how best to address the substantive needs. Only in that way could operational activities be brought in line with the priorities defined by Governments.

(Mr. Singh, Fiji)

53. His delegation looked forward to the comprehensive triennial policy review of operational activities for development, which would point the way to further measures for achieving full implementation of the provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/211.

54. Mr. MACARTHUR (United States of America), referring to the UNDP Governing Council's decisions on national execution and support costs successor arrangements, said that they provided an incentive for developing countries to assume increasing responsibility for project management and accountability and for sectoral agencies to strengthen their analytical and technical support of UNDP-assisted programmes and projects. They also provided a policy framework for improving United Nations system assistance to developing countries in strengthening their national capacities to formulate and implement development programmes.

55. However, those decisions constituted only a starting point in the slow and arduous implementation process that would take a number of years to complete and which should be accompanied by consultations between UNDP, the major sectoral agencies and Governments. The reform process would clearly not be completed by the time the new triennial policy review of operational activities for development was begun. Only a very preliminary assessment of its results could be made at that time. Continuous monitoring would be required during the next triennial review, including annual reviews by United Nations governing bodies and the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operational Activities) (CCSQ/OPS), as well as in-depth evaluations at the country level. That was especially important since, at the forthcoming triennial review of operational activities, other basic questions, such as governance, coordination and financing of development and humanitarian assistance and the relationship between development and environmental concerns were likely to overshadow questions of coordination.

56. Thus it was important at present to ensure that UNDP, its major sectoral partners and Governments would evolve new modes of cooperation which were well adapted to the needs of each country and made effective use of those new approaches regarding support costs, national execution, national capacity-building assistance and the programme approach. The success achieved in those areas would affect the ability of UNDP to cooperate with other United Nations agencies which traditionally had not had a close relationship with UNDP.

57. His delegation fully supported national execution and the progressive transfer of responsibility for administrative and operational project support. However, that transfer must be accompanied by a build-up of national capacities and necessitated more effective capacity-building assistance by the United Nations system. During the transition period, which would take some time, it was essential to make optimum use of the agencies' administrative and operational support capacities in order not to drain the regular budget of the major sectoral agencies and thus the overall resources of the system.

(Mr. Macarthur, United States)

58. He was particularly concerned that, under the guise of national execution, central government units were being established with UNDP field offices support, specifically for the purpose of providing administrative and operational support to UNDP-funded projects. That was not an effective way to build up national capacities, particularly if it actually diminished the role of sectoral ministries in project implementation. He therefore called for greater collaboration within the United Nations system.

59. The effectiveness of the Resident Coordinators depended on the existence of a spirit of cooperation among country representatives of the United Nations system. His delegation was pleased with the results of the training workshops organized by ILO at Turin and followed up by national workshops involving both Government and United Nations system officials. The triennial review would provide an opportunity for an assessment of these workshops and for other measures to strengthen country-level cooperation and coordination. It would also provide information on the factors responsible for the lack of progress in other areas, such as decentralization of the major sectoral agencies' programme support capacities to the country level.

60. In conclusion, he said that greater integration of United Nations development activities at the country level would not only better meet the needs of the developing countries, but would also eliminate duplication of functions, reduce costs and increase the efficiency of United Nations assistance.

61. Mr. BURLERSON (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the great progress achieved in disarmament and the new élan of democracy led him to believe that the stagnation which most developing countries had encountered in the 1980s was a thing of the past and that new opportunities for socio-economic progress were opening up. In the years ahead, the biggest challenge would be to ensure economic development, now hampered by the debt crisis, while encouraging progress in social areas. Those two must go together.

62. The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of resolution 44/211 gave a lucid picture of what the United Nations system had done and was planning to do with respect to enhancing national participation in every facet of development cooperation, provision of technical support and advice at the country level and collaboration with national specialists in the elaboration of a programme approach.

63. The Executive Board of UNESCO had unequivocally endorsed those major policy moves and despite the constraints on the staff and resources of UNESCO caused by the absence of two among the most important Member States of the United Nations, had moved ahead in the implementation of resolution 44/211. UNESCO had launched an ambitious training scheme for all field staff, accentuating their collaboration within the United Nations development system, and had been an active participant in the workshops organized by ILO at Turin. Headquarters-to-field staff rotation had been reworked in a way that

(Mr. Burleson, UNESCO)

had strengthened the development cooperation capacities of its field staff. Finally, new administrative units had been created to reinforce the lines of communication between field and headquarters staff and to enable UNESCO to advise UNDP and recipient countries with respect to the elaboration of sector-level policies and strategies. All that bore witness to the desire of UNESCO to promote inter-agency collaboration and enhance its role in operational activities within the framework of national capacity-building.

64. The triennial policy review of the operational activities of the United Nations system should cover the main policy directions outlined in resolution 44/211, as well as other issues which had come to the fore since that resolution had been adopted. Regarding the importance attached by UNDP to national execution for the fifth programming cycle, members of CCSQ/OPS had pointed to the need for clear guidelines on the respective roles of UNDP, United Nations agencies and Governments and a clear definition of the respective roles of UNDP and other agencies in the execution of projects and programmes by Governments.

65. The new support cost arrangements had been the subject of productive consultations, which had recently made it possible to adopt a set of support cost instructions. There was now a need to agree on guidelines for national execution. A first draft of such guidelines would shortly be submitted to the Governing Council of UNDP.

66. Mr. WISIBONO (Indonesia) said that his delegation supported the statement by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of 77 and stressed that, given the economic difficulties of most developing countries, an early resumption of economic growth was crucial. Since operational activities for development were an important part of the Organization's work, their effectiveness must be strengthened. In that connection, a consensus resolution would impart new momentum to the reforms undertaken pursuant to General Assembly resolution 44/211. The operational activities of the United Nations system also took place within the general framework of a number of recent documents, including the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation and the International Development Strategy. The objective should be the translation of such international objectives into concrete action for development.

67. The report of the Director-General (A/46/206) outlined many of the economic difficulties that necessitated concerted action by the United Nations system and the first practical steps taken in that direction. Notwithstanding those advances, the operational activities of the United Nations system continued to face a broad array of problems, the most pressing of which was that of adequate resource allocation. Although the issue had been squarely broached in General Assembly resolution 44/211, the recent pledging conference had not reflected the urgent need for an increase in available resources. His delegation believed that, rather than being diverted towards such new themes as entrepreneurship, donor countries should meet the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of GNP for their official development assistance.

(Mr. Wisibon², Indonesia)

68. Another challenge for the operational activities of the United Nations system in the 1990s was the eradication of poverty, which necessitated a resumption of economic growth, effective population programmes, national capacity-building and government execution, which were undoubtedly cornerstones for effective operational activities.

69. His delegation fully supported the contention that operational activities should emphasize the human dimension of development and the need to reach the poorest and most vulnerable sections of society. In that context, the UNDP Human Development Report 1990 was a valuable contribution. However, the Human Freedom Index had no place in the publication because it ran counter to the spirit and letter of Governing Council decision 90/13 and to the consensus of 1970, as well as to General Assembly resolution 44/211, and because it was based on arbitrary criteria which were insensitive to differences in traditions and cultures. Moreover, the Index did not reflect the true scale of the problems affecting the developing countries and could lead to the diversion of attention from more serious issues, such as the adverse international environment and the asymmetry of global economic relations. Lastly, it was regrettable that the recipient countries had not had an opportunity to present their development priorities and concerns.

70. A further challenge for the operational activities in meeting the requirements of development was that of efficient coordination. Attention should therefore now be focused on the follow-up and implementation of resolution 44/211 at country level and at the level of the United Nations system. In that regard, his delegation had been encouraged by the steps taken to strengthen the role of resident coordinators. Likewise, measures to increasingly use national capacities, to expand national execution, and to delegate greater responsibility to the field were indeed overdue.

71. In addressing the new and persistent challenges confronting the developing countries, it was important not to lose sight of the basics, namely, the imperatives of the consensus of 1970, which underscored the fundamental characteristics of operational activities for development: universality, multilateralism, neutrality, and the grant nature of assistance. Those characteristics should be further enhanced especially since operational activities were expected to play an increasingly important role in the years ahead.

72. As the Director-General had warned, unless the reforms called for by the General Assembly in resolution 44/211 and by other intergovernmental bodies were carried forward with diligence and vigour, the contribution of operational activities to overcoming the problems of poverty, human development and sustainable economic growth would not be adequate to the challenge.

73. Mr. AL-QASIHI (United Arab Emirates) said that, while the Emirates supported the decision of the UNDP Governing Council to eliminate its indicative planning figure, it would not approve of the closing of the UNDP regional office, since it was still a developing country and needed the technical skills available from the Programme. The Emirates attached great importance to the Gulf Coordination Group as well as to the need to implement the programme aimed at revitalizing economic, social and environmental development in those countries affected by the crisis. In that regard, the Emirates attached particular importance to the marine environment of the Gulf and looked forward to receiving assistance, especially in the area of training.

74. On the question of human development, the Special Unit for Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries should remain under the direct authority of the Administrator of UNDP. UNICEF, for its part, had launched the concept of development with a human face and had sensitized countries to the importance of the questions of the elderly, children and women.

75. Turning to the 1991 World Bank report on global development, he supported the two-pronged strategy (promotion of economic development and provision of basic social services), as well as the conclusion in the report that technological progress was the engine of development, and expressed the hope that the Bank would contribute still further to the transfer of technology.

76. While welcoming the UNDP Human Development Report 1990 in so far as it emphasized that the real purpose of development was to enlarge people's range of choices, his delegation had serious reservations with respect to the second report, published in 1991: the concept of human freedom was all the more questionable as, by introducing that index, UNDP had skipped over several stages. Moreover, blaming the lack of progress on the absence of political will rather than on the lack of financial resources was inconsistent with the actual situation of the developing countries. Indeed, such a simplistic conclusion took no account of exogenous economic factors, such as the protectionist barriers which the developed countries erected against exports from the developing countries.

77. The Emirates was aware of the relationship between human and economic development and attached great importance to the question. Accordingly, it had reduced to 25 per cent the rate of illiteracy which, at the country's accession to independence, had been 80 per cent.

NATURAL DISASTER IN THE PHILIPPINES

78 Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines), referring to the landslides which had resulted in at least 3,000 deaths and destroyed the dwellings of 30,000 families, thanked delegations for their expressions of solidarity and announced that he would submit a draft resolution on the question since the Philippines was incapable of facing alone the consequences of the disaster.