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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 15th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. ZIARAN
(Vice-Chairman)

(Islamic Republic of Iran)

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

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)
(A/46/3, A/46/19, A/46/132-E/1991/58, A/46/163, A/46/171-E/1991/61,
A/46/204-E/1991/80 and Add.1 and 2, A/46/263-E/1991/88, A/46/288, A/46/467,
A/46/477, A/46/493, A/46/520; A/C.2/46/2, A/C.2/46/5; A/C.2/46/L.8 and Corr.1,
L.10, L.11 and L.12; E/1991/32)

1. Mr. NATHON (Hungary) said that Hungary was embarked on a bold process of transition that would enable it to join the community of developed democracies. Striving to eliminate the consequences of four decades of planned economy and a monolithic one-party political system, his Government was working towards the rapid establishment of a true market economy. The transition was a complex phenomenon that called for an attack on many fronts, because the institutions, the legal framework, the enterprises and everything else had to be created.
2. Such radical changes had negative effects as well, substantial price increases and inflation in particular, and thus at the same time a solid social safety net must be established. Hungary was ready to assume the sacrifices such an undertaking entailed, but believed that only a favourable international economic climate could ensure the success of the transformation under way in Hungary and elsewhere in Central and Eastern Europe, itself of primary importance both for Europe and for the world as a whole.
3. Hungary was ready to face free competition and the laws of the market and to open up its own domestic market, and from its partners it was expecting not assistance but mutually advantageous economic cooperation. In that connection, it welcomed the attitude taken by the European Community, as reaffirmed in the statement made in the Committee by the representative of the Netherlands on behalf of the Community.
4. The priority his country accorded to Europe did not mean that it did not wish to develop economic relations with other countries. On the contrary, it had already introduced, at the initiative of the Government of the Netherlands, a programme of tripartite cooperation by which the Netherlands provided assistance to Hungary to develop its technical, scientific and educational ties with third-world nations. Although limited, that programme was already working well, and some other Western European countries had shown interest in participating in it.
5. His delegation welcomed the fact that the Economic and Social Council had at its Special High-level Meeting the previous summer focused on the recent developments in Central and Eastern Europe. As many speakers had stated in the current debate, the attention given to those changes in no way diminished the commitments already assumed by the industrialized nations vis-à-vis the developing countries.

(Mr. Nathon, Hungary)

6. At the same time, when it came to specific commitments and benefits, the needs and capabilities of countries belonging to certain categories should be re-examined from time to time. As the Committee for Development Planning had indicated in the section of its report (E/1991/32) relating to criteria for identifying the least developed countries, one must at all costs avoid politicizing the debate, and specific economic and social indicators should be retained as the basis for including countries in the list of least developed countries or for graduating them from it. Similar criteria should, in fact, be defined for including countries in other categories, and political considerations should not be the determining factor.

7. Mr. AVRAMOV (Bulgaria) said that he considered the outcome of the latest session of the Economic and Social Council to be very positive, a confirmation of the tendency towards a constructive dialogue among member States on the most pressing issues of international economic cooperation. The Council had sought to break with routine and concentrate on several of the most urgent issues, in compliance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 45/264. It was encouraging to note that so many ministers and so many administrative heads of specialized agencies had attended the Special High-level Meeting, which had been the great innovation of the session. The major policy theme selected directly affected Bulgaria, which could only reiterate the position its delegation had taken at the Meeting, namely, that the integration of the economies of Eastern European countries would help to accelerate world economic development. Bulgaria in no way expected that the assistance granted to it to enable it to carry through the extremely long and painful process of transition it was currently undertaking should be to the detriment of the developing countries.

8. As a number of speakers had pointed out, the process of restructuring the economic and social sectors of the United Nations should not be restricted to administrative and organizational aspects but should also seek to improve the efficiency and authoritativeness of its organs, especially the Economic and Social Council. Improved coordination between the United Nations and the specialized agencies, which would allow the entire system to function more smoothly, was a key element in that process.

9. Within that general context, regional and interregional cooperation was expected to play a new role. In Europe, the process had already been well defined by the Economic Commission for Europe, and Bulgaria, aware of the Commission's importance in European cooperation, hoped to participate in its future work. The new priorities in the programme of work of the Commission, namely, environmental protection and the development of economic cooperation in the fields of transport and statistics, fully corresponded to Bulgaria's interests. In its view, the Commission's future success would depend on the changes it made in its structure and methods of work, and its success in those areas would determine its place in the development of cooperation in Europe. It must also coordinate with other international organizations like the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the General

(Mr. Avramov, Bulgaria)

Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Bulgaria was firmly convinced that technical cooperation for development could be a very important factor in world economic growth, and the United Nations system for technical cooperation was currently capable of playing a greater role in the life of the international community.

10. Mrs. FREUDENSCHUSS-REICH (Austria) said that since the high-level meeting on the item at the Economic and Social Council's summer session, the economic and social repercussions of the reforms under way in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union had become even more evident. Given her country's proximity and historical ties to some of those countries, it was aware of the need to provide them with economic and political support in order to promote stable and balanced development and thus contribute to their integration in the European and world economy. Her country had already committed to them a total of 15 billion schillings in aid which, based on the calculations of the Commission of the European Community, represented roughly 4 per cent of the total for international assistance, or four times the regular share based on each country's GNP.

11. Moreover, as a member of IMF and the World Bank, her country actively participated in the establishment of macroeconomic adjustment and stabilization programmes in the Eastern European countries and was one of the founding members of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. It also contributed to the industrial development fund established for Yugoslavia by the European Free Trade Association and had made a substantial contribution to the regional environment centre at Budapest.

12. That assistance did not reduce her country's aid to developing countries which, calculated as a percentage of GNP, had increased slightly in 1990. Her country had also announced its intention further to improve significantly the composition, volume and quality of its official development assistance to developing countries.

13. While her delegation welcomed the changes in the Council's methods of work and, in particular, the introduction of the high-level meeting held during the summer session, it agreed with the President of the Council that the meeting had not been a perfect model with respect to the organization of its work, although her delegation believed that the informal exchanges of views had been very useful. In the future the Council should endeavour to rationalize its work even further in order to enhance its quality, in particular, by strictly adhering to the agreed upon time-limits for interventions. Representatives should avoid digressions, make short oral presentations and raise specific questions, and longer and more convoluted statements could be circulated in advance, accompanied by summaries to facilitate their consideration.

14. Turning to the question of combatting AIDS, she said that the figures cited by the representative of WHO on the scope of the AIDS pandemic were very

(Mrs. Freudenschuss-Reich, Austria)

alarming. They demonstrated clearly that it was a global problem requiring global action and that it went beyond the health sector, affecting the social and economic spheres as well. That was why her delegation had introduced resolution 1991/66 on prevention and control of AIDS at the second regular session of the Council and was working on a text on the subject to be submitted to the Committee.

15. As a member of the WHO Management Committee on AIDS, her country endorsed the leadership role of the WHO Global Programme on AIDS (GPA) and fully supported its priorities, in particular, the strengthening of national programmes, the improvement of prevention and the campaign to combat discrimination against people with HIV and AIDS. Legislation in her country focused on preventive measures, respect for the human rights of people with HIV and AIDS and information campaigns, all of which were coordinated by public health services with the assistance of private organizations.

16. The scope of the scourge, which could affect 30 to 40 million people by the year 2000, was so great that all members of the international community must combine their efforts to conquer it.

17. Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia) supported the positions of the Group of 77 expressed by its Chairman, the representative of Ghana. The past year had seen such rapid changes that they could be described as truly traumatic. The United Nations must adapt to those rapid changes, and initial steps had been taken to enhance the functioning of the Council, the efficacy of which had been called into question, in order to enable it to address the continuing crisis in development, the deepening impoverishment of the developing countries and the widening gap between them and the developed countries. Several General Assembly resolutions (in particular, resolutions 45/177 and 45/264) were encouraging in that regard. The Council must reassert its role and function with respect to the economic and social activities of the United Nations. The introduction of the high-level meeting at the summer session constituted a major innovation. At its most recent session, the Council had analysed the impact of the recent evolution in East-West relations on the growth of the world economy, in particular on the economic growth and development of the developing countries, as well as on international economic cooperation. The meeting could have been structured more efficiently and greater emphasis could have been placed on dialogue and deliberation, rather than on a succession of traditional speeches. Consideration should be given to adopting a set of ministerial recommendations at the end of future high-level meetings.

18. The new evaluation of the severity of the economic decline in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union did not augur well for the developing countries, for whom the likelihood of gaining new market and trading opportunities with the countries of Eastern Europe was decreasing. Moreover, the financial needs of those countries might substantially outstrip available resources. He was therefore pleased with the reassurances given by donor countries to the effect

(Mr. Wibisono, Indonesia)

that funding for the recovery of Eastern Europe would not be at the expense of the developing countries. His delegation considered that a new allocation of SDRs would be needed in the near term and that it would be necessary to tap into the "peace dividend" over the long term. As the Secretary-General had suggested, an international conference on development financing should be convened.

19. The resolutions of the Council and the General Assembly on the revitalization and restructuring of the Council responded to an incontestable need, namely, to enhance the efficiency of the United Nations in order to alleviate the plight of the developing countries. The fact that an increasing number of people were sinking daily into hopelessness and absolute poverty was extremely serious. There was reason to hope, however, that the renaissance of the Organization, already evident in the political sphere, would also be extended to the economic and social fields. While the Council should be able to exercise its role as a principal organ of the United Nations in those fields, its restructuring alone would not guarantee success unless Member States agreed to make effective use of intergovernmental machinery.

20. It was also imperative to strengthen multilateral cooperation in international economic affairs. Indeed, the globalization of the world economy and the growing interdependence of States were such that States could not achieve their national objectives alone. In that regard, the Declaration on International Economic Cooperation, in particular the Revitalization of Economic Growth and Development of the Developing Countries, adopted by the General Assembly at its eighteenth special session and the International Development Strategy for the Fourth United Nations Development Decade were important instruments of multilateral cooperation.

21. With respect to the capacity of the United Nations to respond to emergency situations arising from natural or man-made disasters, there was a pressing need to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the existing machinery, since the disasters, and the emergency situations to which they gave rise, were so diverse.

22. Mr. ABOLHASSANI (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that global economic growth was lagging behind population growth and that some developing countries were experiencing zero or even negative economic growth. A major international and national effort was thus urgently needed. The developing countries were undergoing profound changes and, to attract financial flows, many had liberalized their investment policies and shifted their development strategies towards the exterior. In an attempt to increase resources, some had reduced their expenses, including subsidies. The international community, in particular the developed countries, should respond to those efforts by providing resources and new technologies, on favourable terms, and by increasing access to their markets since without increased financial resources, the economic transformation in the South would be in jeopardy. In

(Mr. Abolhassani, Islamic Republic of Iran)

that regard, the convening of an international conference on development financing, as proposed by the Secretary-General, was of paramount importance.

23. While the first Special High-level Meeting of the Economic and Social Council, held in the summer of 1991, had not met all the expectations of the participants, it could serve as an example for future high-level meetings. With respect to the content, he welcomed the commitment of the developed countries and the multilateral financial institutions to ensure that their efforts to respond to the needs of the economies in transition would not be at the expense of their programmes of assistance to the developing countries.

24. The practices of the Zionist entity in Palestine and in the other occupied Arab territories were depriving the Palestinians of their basic rights, including their right to earn a living. The report of the Secretary-General on "Israeli land and water practices and policies in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab Territories" (A/46/263) indicated clearly that the Israeli authorities had adopted a series of measures which had resulted in the abrogation of the laws in force in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip before the Israeli occupation (para. 5). Those authorities had, moreover, imposed restrictions on agricultural expansion and the use of water by the Palestinian Arab inhabitants, thereby reducing the area of Arab land under irrigation, while irrigated areas in the Israeli settlements had been increased (para. 2). He cited several other passages from the same report on the same issue (paras. 34 and 43). While appreciating fully the efforts of various United Nations agencies to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people, he believed that that assistance, as necessary as it was, should not lead the international community to shirk its responsibility, which was to eliminate the root cause of the crisis, namely, the occupation. It was to be hoped that the resolution to be adopted by the Committee would include concrete measures to be taken and that those measures would be adopted by the General Assembly.

25. Ms. STOKES (New Zealand) said that the world-wide transitions and revolutionary changes were the principal themes of the forty-sixth session. A new generation of global problems such as the connection between environment and development, drug abuse, and crime had been added to issues which remained priority topics, such as poverty, disease and hunger in the developing world and the debt and economic recovery. The Economic and Social Council had, therefore, to transform itself into a coordinated and responsive forum for global dialogue and effective international action. Her country endorsed such a revitalization and was ready to cooperate in action which would build on the measures referred to in resolution 45/264.

26. The first Special High-level Meeting of the Council had dealt with the repercussions of the changes in Eastern Europe, which had opened up a new era of cooperation by means of which the region would be gradually integrated into the international economy. New Zealand wished to play a role in that process

(Ms. Stokes, New Zealand)

and intended to expand its contacts with Central Europe. It would continue to contribute to the technical assistance programmes of the Group of Twenty-four and to the work of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). It was undeniable that the needs of the developing countries, in particular the least developed countries (LDCs), remained urgent and that external assistance should at least be maintained at its current level.

27. In order to strengthen economic recovery in the industrial and the developing worlds, it was vital to respect the commitment made during the Uruguay multilateral trade negotiations to put an end to protectionism. The Commonwealth Ministers of Finance, at a recent meeting in Kuala Lumpur, had stressed that those negotiations should lead rapidly to a significant and balanced outcome, particularly with respect to trade barriers and distortions in the markets for agricultural products. It was time for the GATT negotiators to take some decisions.

28. The International Conference on Population and Development was to take place in 1994. Before then, subjects such as the relationship between population, development and environment, between population and the status of women and between population growth and ageing would be studied by groups of experts. Population growth was a major obstacle to sustainable development, and any proper consideration of development needs would have to address the issue of population. The preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) had highlighted the relationship between population pressure, unsustainable consumption patterns, lack of economic growth and environmental degradation. New Zealand would continue to support the work of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and other international population organizations, and the problem was an important element in its bilateral assistance to the South Pacific countries. Rapid population growth in the region coupled with low economic growth had meant static or declining per capita income. For cultural and religious reasons, family planning was a highly sensitive issue, and multilateral organizations, in particular UNFPA and IPPF, were best placed to provide advice and assistance to Governments in the region, often in association with local non-governmental organizations.

29. Regarding HIV infection, she welcomed the successful cooperation and collaboration within the United Nations system in combating the rapid spread of AIDS.

30. The Committee for Development Planning set forth in chapter V of its report criteria for identifying least developed countries. It was important to maintain the objectivity and integrity of the Committee's research. Dismantling parts of its proposals or adding new categories to accommodate particular countries would undermine the very concept of least developed countries. New Zealand's own official development assistance (ODA) programme would continue to focus on the developing countries of the South Pacific, including a number with least developed country status. New Zealand

(Ms. Stokes, New Zealand)

recognized that some countries, although not meeting the criteria for least developed countries, might face short-term problems; an example was Namibia, to which New Zealand had provided special assistance.

31. New Zealand wished to express its continued support for the work of the Statistical Commission, assisted by the Statistical Office of the United Nations and the statistical divisions of the regional commissions and the statistical units of the specialized agencies. The Commission, which was responsible for developing international standards, international statistical services and official statistics in member countries and coordinating the statistical work of United Nations organs, was one of the more successful of the functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council. New Zealand, for example, which lacked resources for its own official statistical agency, relied on the United Nations system of national accounts to measure its gross domestic product and other macro-economic variables, as did many other countries in the same situation.

32. Mr. GOMEZ (United Nations Development Programme) said that, although the AIDS epidemic had been visible for over 10 years, people were only now beginning to understand all its ramifications. It was an epidemic that spread with alarming rapidity and was different from other diseases: the incubation period averaged 10 years in the developed countries, possibly less in the developing countries, the majority of those infected were adult men and women in their economically most productive years, the associated diseases, such as tuberculosis, were now a serious problem in most affected communities, and a person once infected was infectious for life, often without knowing it.

33. The epidemic continued to gain ground, encouraged by seasonal labour, civil unrest, warfare and poverty. That meant the rethinking of approaches to development assistance, for in certain countries AIDS would use up private and public savings while the Government faced increasing demands for housing, social security and food subsidies and productivity was reduced through illness and death. Everything must be done to minimize the personal, social and economic costs of the epidemic by effective prevention programmes.

34. In 1987, recognizing that the epidemic was more than a health issue, WHO and UNDP had entered into the WHO/UNDP Alliance to Combat AIDS, under which UNDP had contributed more than \$30 million to the WHO Global Programme on AIDS. Account must be taken of the multitude of ways in which the epidemic had changed the lives of people all over the world, because it was only by understanding the human impact of the disease that the urgent and compelling needs it had created could be tackled. That implied a whole range of programmes from prevention to treatment and support for those surviving after the death of a family member.

35. At its June 1991 session the UNDP Governing Council ates had adopted a policy framework for its response to the HIV epidemic which complemented the WHO/UNDP Alliance, specifying the role of UNDP and the United Nations. WHO

(Mr. Gomez, UNDP)

had actively participated in the development of the policy framework. The extent of the epidemic's developmental dimensions demanded a comprehensive and interdisciplinary response from the world community. Governments and non-governmental organizations were increasingly calling on UNDP to help them respond in a comprehensive and integrated manner. A training programme was being prepared.

36. In conclusion, he emphasized three related aspects of the AIDS problem. First, UNDP attached great importance to the global leadership provided by WHO. Secondly, while General Assembly resolution 44/211 called for the execution of technical assistance projects by Governments, in the context of AIDS prevention there were certain particular problems which UNDP would examine carefully, and if necessary provide special procedures for dealing with them. Lastly, the dramatic spread of AIDS and its devastating implications for economic and social development in developing countries clearly showed the need for additional human and financial resources.

37. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) observed that General Assembly resolution 45/264 had introduced significant changes in the work of the Economic and Social Council, which should be transformed into a more dynamic instrument, in view of the wide-ranging development crisis that confronted the majority of developing countries. The broad parameters of multilateral cooperation had been identified in the Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its eighteenth special session and in the Substantial New Programme of Action for the 1990s for the Least Developed Countries. The success of those instruments would, however, depend on the readiness of the international community to take specific initiatives and to spur action on a wide front. The Council, its subsidiary bodies and the General Assembly were all uniquely placed to make contributions in that regard. The high-level debate during the Council's summer session, introduced by resolution 45/264, should enable Member States to identify critical areas for collective action and to improve mechanisms for the coordinated follow-up and implementation of the various decisions. Bangladesh would actively participate in the discussions during the current session on the relationship between the work of the Council and that of its subsidiary bodies. It was important not to undermine the main goals for which individual subsidiary bodies had been created. At the same time, the activities of those bodies should not be confined to a limited number of areas.

38. The Council's continuing work on development finance, the external indebtedness of developing countries and other important issues had been the subject of lengthy discussions during its summer session, and various ways and means had been suggested to put an end to the pressures currently being felt on the international economic scene. The idea of an international conference on development financing had also been suggested by the Secretary-General and supported by the Group of 77. Several important recommendations had also been made during the summer session of the Council on the various international conferences planned. Bangladesh attached great importance to the

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

International Conference on Population and Development and hoped that its organizational details could be worked out during the current session of the General Assembly.

39. The Council had also discussed the need for timely and adequate humanitarian assistance in the event of disasters, including natural disasters, and several interesting proposals had been floated. As one of the most disaster-prone countries in the world, Bangladesh had an abiding interest in promoting agreement on all constructive suggestions which could strengthen the capacity of the international community to cope with such disasters.

40. Finally, the new criteria recommended by the Committee for Development Planning for identifying the least developed countries and revising the list of countries should be more comprehensive and more suited to assessing the fundamental structural handicaps of the least developed countries. Moreover, care should be taken to base all actions pursuant to those criteria on adequate statistical evidence and on an objective evaluation of the situation in individual countries and of their vulnerabilities. The graduation rules should also take into account the needs of each country at a precise point in time before a decision was made to remove a country from the list. An analysis should also be made of the resource implications of the application of the United Nations criteria, including additional steps to help the countries in that group in the areas of debt relief and external trade.

41. Mr. LEGWAILA (Botswana) said that Botswana was willing to host the Preparatory Committee of the Conference on Development and Population.

42. The views of the Group of 77 had already been presented by the representative of Ghana and he would therefore limit his comments to Chapter V of the report of the Committee for Development Planning.

43. The proposed new criteria for identifying the least developed countries did not take into account the situation of countries whose earnings were derived not from production but mainly from the sale of assets. Gross domestic product was an indicator that distorted such situations while per capita net domestic product, which took into account the depreciation and depletion of natural resources, would reflect reality much more accurately. In the view of his delegation, due weight should also be given to the economic diversification index. Botswana was highly dependent on revenues from the mineral sector, especially diamonds, the prices of which it did not control. In 1988/1989, diamonds accounted for 77 per cent of export earnings and over 50 per cent of government revenues, while the share of manufacturing stood at only 4.2 per cent of GDP. Economic diversification was therefore at a very low level as reflected in the share of manufactured products in the import bill. The relative weight of the three elements of the proposed criteria varied from country to country. The graduation rules should therefore only apply when a country satisfied all three criteria.

(Mr. Legwaila, Botswana)

44. The national development plans of the developing countries were adopted with definite assumptions concerning the level of available resources, which was essential if external assistance was to be used efficiently. Botswana had made the assumption in its seventh national development plan that external assistance would remain at current levels. If Botswana were to be graduated now, that level of external assistance would not be forthcoming and there would be a major disruption of development programmes. It would therefore be appropriate to give countries due for graduation a grace period of at least five years so that they could take that factor into account in their development plans and ensure that development momentum was sustained.

45. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan) said that in several instances at the second regular session of 1991 of the Economic and Social Council, steps had been taken to make discussions less formal but more relevant and productive, in particular during the Special High-level Meeting on the impact of the recent evolution of East-West relations on the growth of the world economy. The discussions on the report of the South Commission and on the economic, social and environmental consequences of the situation between Iraq and Kuwait, as well as the exchange of views on strengthening multilateral economic cooperation, had also been fruitful. The dialogue with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions and with the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund, now firmly established, had deepened mutual understanding between Member States and the organs and agencies responsible for development and international financial matters. The use of the Chairman's summary and the decision to amalgamate certain agenda items and examine them only once every two years had saved the Council considerable time.

46. Nevertheless, the reform process should be continued. In particular, the schedules agreed upon for restructuring the subsidiary bodies should be observed and consultations on the matter should commence without delay. The Council should try to reduce its workload. At its organizational session for 1992, it should take up one or more major general policy themes for the Special High-level Meeting, and it was important to strike a balance between social and economic issues.

47. His delegation had participated in the discussions of the Commission on Transnational Corporations. While appreciating the significance of the work of the Commission and that of the Centre on Transnational Corporations, it was convinced that those bodies did not have the requisite expertise to continue dealing with questions such as foreign debt and the environment, which should be addressed in other forums. Furthermore, the discussion on the code of conduct for transnational corporations did not take into account the current reality of the world economy. Developing countries now regarded direct investment and the activities of transnational corporations as essential to their development, and his delegation accordingly welcomed the decision to postpone negotiations on the code.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

48. The General Assembly was due at its forty-sixth session to decide on the new criteria for inclusion in the list of least developed countries. That was an important decision which would have an impact on Japan's aid policy. It was most important that the decision reached should not be viewed as arbitrary, since that might damage the credibility of the category.

49. The Secretary-General had proposed convening an international conference on development financing. Although that was an important issue, it had already been discussed, in particular at the eighteenth special session of the General Assembly, at the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and in the International Development Strategy. It was also dealt with regularly by the IMF and World Bank. Moreover, it was on the agenda for the next session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. It did not therefore seem necessary to devote an international conference to the issue.

50. Lastly, his delegation welcomed the fact that the Council had decided on the objectives of the 1994 Conference on Population and Development, as well as on its preparatory process. The Conference should contribute to the advancement of the activities of United Nations bodies in relation to population, particularly in developing countries.

51. Miss HASSAN (Egypt) said that significant changes had been introduced at the second regular session of 1991 of the Economic and Social Council which were the first indication of success in the endeavours to revitalize the Council and were an important step forward in the United Nations reform process. The Special High-level Meeting on the impact of the recent evolution of East-West relations on the growth of the world economy had been particularly well attended. Both the level of representation and the intensity of the discussions reflected the magnitude of the issue and had led to a stimulating debate. Being the first of its kind, it had not been a perfect model of organization, but the experience acquired during it should be useful for future meetings of that kind.

52. The mechanism for the informal exchange of views, conceived in the context of the revitalization of the Council, had facilitated interaction between delegations and with the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions and the Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund. Her delegation hoped that that kind of consultation would continue and would be extended to the World Bank.

53. The discussions had emphasized the need to revitalize growth and development in developing countries and had shown that development finance, both concessional and non-concessional, was a crucial element in achieving that goal. Her delegation therefore welcomed the proposal of the Secretary-General to convene an international conference on development finance and hoped that the modalities for holding it would be decided on at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly.

(Miss Hassan, Egypt)

54. Given the importance of population issues for sustained development, she welcomed the Council's adoption of a resolution convening an international conference on population and development. Her delegation would play an active role in the preparations for the Conference, which would contribute to the promotion of the population activities of United Nations agencies in the developing countries.

55. No task was nobler than that of saving lives and helping people in danger. The international community should therefore devote its full attention to the question of emergency humanitarian assistance. Her delegation had taken part in the preliminary discussions on the matter in Geneva, and regretted that they had failed to produce concrete results. Since a country's level of development directly affected its level of preparedness to respond to natural disasters, the vital need to step up action in the economic and social spheres could not be overemphasized.

56. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 45/264, a timetable had been drawn up detailing the stages of the reform process. Her delegation would also play an active part in the work relating to the restructuring of subsidiary bodies.

57. Mr. GISLASON (Iceland), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, expressed grave concern at the rapid spread of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The figure of 8 to 10 million HIV-infected people provided by the World Health Organization (WHO) was undoubtedly a conservative estimate. Today everybody realized that the virus knew no national borders and that it was affecting all sectors of the population and not only so-called "high-risk groups". Precautions were therefore necessary, and information campaigns were of vital importance in that connection. In view of the way in which the virus was transmitted, it was pointless to discriminate against HIV-infected people. Otherwise, those who suspected that they were infected would reject voluntary tests and continue to spread the virus to others. Restrictions on travel and immigration in respect of HIV-infected people were also unjustified, and such human rights violations should be ended immediately in those countries where they existed.

58. AIDS was not only a health issue but also a development issue; it should therefore not be left solely to health authorities, but should also be the concern of planning and finance authorities. The pandemic hit adults in their most productive years. Agricultural and industrial productivity losses, together with a decline in human resources and skilled manpower, would be the result. Furthermore, since the developing countries did not have the financial resources to hospitalize all those affected, women would bear the heaviest burden, which would divert time from their other important tasks.

59. It was therefore vital to coordinate preventive action by all the organizations in the United Nations system. While WHO should continue to have the leading role, other agencies such as UNICEF and UNDP and, in particular,

(Mr. Gislason, Iceland)

the World Bank, should also be involved, and their responsibilities must be clearly defined in the light of the fields where they had comparative advantages.

60. The HIV/AIDS issue must be given high priority. The Nordic countries would continue to provide multilateral and bilateral aid, but their aid would represent only a small part of what was needed. All donors should participate in the effort.

61. Although the subject was difficult to discuss because of its private nature and the moral and religious taboos surrounding it, there was no alternative to open and frank discussion of the issue. It was in the interest of future generations that the subject should be kept on the agenda of the General Assembly.

62. Mrs. AMARASEKERE (Sri Lanka) said that the question of human settlements would assume particular importance in the coming decade, especially in connection with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. She commended the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) for its strong leadership and its efforts at national and international levels.

63. Human settlements issues had become increasingly complex. Despite considerable progress in developing strategies and policies, as well as technical cooperation, the outlook world wide remained discouraging. According to current estimates, nearly 1 billion people were without shelter and the developing countries would have to plan for shelter for an additional 1 billion people. Moreover, the prospect of urbanization of poverty loomed large, while the importance of investment in human settlements for socio-economic growth, human development and protection of the environment had not yet been recognized. However, the debate on sustainable development and the environment had highlighted the importance of national and international long-term action. Her delegation welcomed the consensus achieved by the Commission on Human Settlements at its thirteenth session, and hoped that the General Assembly would adopt Commission resolution 13/2.

64. Nearly 20 years after the Vancouver Conference, it was time to convene another international forum to discuss human settlements issues again, in the form of a United Nations conference, possibly to be held in 1997. Such a conference would offer an opportunity to review the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, and to discuss the relevant conclusions of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which was to be held in 1992.

65. She welcomed the Secretary-General's proposal to convene an international conference on development financing. The restructuring of the United Nations intergovernmental machinery in the economic and social sectors must be preceded by careful consideration of the issues involved.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.