

UNITED NATIONS
General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE
28th meeting
held on
Friday, 1 November 1991
at 10 a.m.
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 28th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ZIARAN (Iran)
(Vice-Chairman)

later: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)
(Chairman)

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Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/46/SR.28
8 November 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Ziaran (Iran),
Vice-Chairman, took the Chair

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

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)
(A/C.2/46/L.27)

Draft resolution on least developed status and special assistance for Namibia
(A/C.2/46/L.27)

1. Mr. NAADJIE (Ghana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, introduced the draft resolution drawing particular attention to the first and second preambular paragraphs. He expressed the hope that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION
(continued) (A/C.2/46/L.26)

Draft resolution on the report of the South Commission (A/C.2/46/L.26)

2. Mr. NAADJIE (Ghana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, introduced the draft resolution which reflected the receptiveness of the international community to the bold and imaginative proposals contained in the report of the South Commission. He urged the Committee to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

(i) ENTREPRENEURSHIP (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.25)

Draft resolution on entrepreneurship (A/C.2/46/L.25)

3. Mr. DUGAN (United States of America), introducing the draft resolution, announced that Ukraine had joined the list of sponsors. The draft resolution addressed three broad areas: measures to enhance the coordination of the activities of the United Nations system in promoting entrepreneurship, measures to strengthen communication and coordination among the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, and measures to strengthen the private-sector focus of the United Nations system. His delegation hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

4. Mr. AVALLE (Argentina) said that his delegation had joined the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.25.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/46/3)

AGENDA ITEM 83: INTERNATIONAL DECADE FOR NATURAL DISASTER REDUCTION
(continued) (A/46/3, A/46/266 and Add.1-E/1991/106 and Add.1, A/46/336, 344 and 520)

AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)
(A/46/3, 288 and 306)

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF COORDINATOR (A/46/568)
- (b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (A/46/217-E/1991/94, A/46/316, 369, 452, 457, 458 and 557)

AGENDA ITEM 85: INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECONOMIC REHABILITATION OF ANGOLA (continued) (A/46/396)

AGENDA ITEM 91: EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REHABILITATION OF LIBERIA (continued) (A/46/403)

5. Mr. BURTON (United States of America) said that his delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the review of the capacity, experience and coordination arrangements in the United Nations system for humanitarian assistance (A/46/568) and agreed that the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO) should be strengthened so that it could better fulfil its mandate. For example, UNDRO had an important role to play in improving early warning systems and in disaster reduction and disaster mitigation efforts. The Office should be commended for its work with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on a joint disaster manual and the implementation of a joint training programme in disaster management.

6. His delegation had been among the co-sponsors of General Assembly resolution 44/236 which, inter alia, had proclaimed the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and had adopted the International Framework of Action for the Decade, and it hoped that the Decade would yield tangible results. His delegation urged the Secretary-General to ensure full and careful coordination among the various United Nations agencies, particularly with UNDRO, to avoid duplication of effort.

7. During the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly his delegation had been able to support most resolutions that called for voluntary assistance to particular countries to help them deal with special circumstances which had a serious negative impact on their development efforts. Positive developments in Angola during the past year augured well for the adoption by consensus at the current session of a resolution which would contribute to the restoration of peace and a democratic government there. His country had provided \$US 130 million in humanitarian assistance to Liberia since the beginning of the conflict there and it hoped that the Committee would prepare a draft resolution to facilitate assistance to displaced persons and refugees in Liberia and contribute to the establishment of a democratically elected government and respect for human rights.

8. Humanitarian assistance must, of course, be provided as expeditiously as possible wherever it was needed. However, it also was essential to marshal the resources and the scientific knowledge and capabilities at the disposal of

(Mr. Burton, United States)

the international community in order to enable countries in the Horn of Africa and elsewhere to become self-sufficient in respect of food.

9. His Government welcomed the significant changes taking place in Ethiopia and hoped they would have a positive impact on stability throughout the Horn of Africa. The opportunity existed for hundreds of thousands of refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes and resume productive lives in security. His Government, which had contributed over \$US 300 million in 1991 in humanitarian assistance, was prepared to support repatriation, reintegration and development programmes and called on other donors to do likewise in support of peace and stability in the region.

10. Mr. AVANESOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his delegation commended the activities undertaken in 1991 in connection with the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction; in particular, the first sessions of the Special High-level Council and the Scientific and Technical Committee had been rather productive. The High-level Council's New York Declaration was of special relevance to the Decade. Further measures should be taken to ensure that the activities of the Decade were of real use to the national services. The United Nations should make specific practical recommendations to government and non-governmental organizations regarding the most efficient way of setting up mechanisms to reduce vulnerability to natural disasters. Particular emphasis should be placed on the development of preventive mechanisms, including early warning systems.

11. The activities of national mechanisms for dealing with natural disasters could be improved through the dissemination of international experience in mitigating the consequences of natural disasters. Such actions should be linked with similar actions in dealing with man-made and environmental disasters.

12. In order to implement the programme of the Decade, the Soviet Union had established the USSR National Committee for the Decade as well as a Centre for Liaison with International Organizations. Soviet representatives took part in the work of the Special High-level Council and the Scientific and Technical Committee of the Decade. The USSR National Committee had concluded a number of bilateral agreements on mutual assistance in cases of natural disasters, in particular with Italy and Germany.

13. His delegation commended the work of UNDR0 in mobilizing emergency assistance to countries affected by natural or industrial disasters, and it was prepared to broaden its cooperation with that organization. UNDR0 should play a more active role in implementing the goals of the International Decade and should help strengthen the capacity of the United Nations in the area of disaster prevention and mitigation and to improve coordination among the organs and organizations of the United Nations system in that area.

14. Ms. KOFLER (Austria) said that, while the international community's awareness of the potential for mitigating natural disasters had increased, additional efforts should be made to reduce the vulnerability of countries to natural disasters, establish effective early warning systems and improve disaster management on the basis of existing prevention and preparedness strategies. The progressive development of national committees and focal points was a valuable basis for the effective implementation of Decade activities.

15. Her delegation had noted with great interest the recommendations of the Special High-level Council contained in its New York Declaration of 10 October 1991. In particular, the proposal to incorporate natural disaster activities within plans to achieve sustainable development and to bring that policy to the attention of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, merited further consideration. Her delegation also supported the Council's suggestion that the General Assembly endorse bringing together representatives of national committees in a world conference on natural disaster reduction in 1994 as part of the mid-term review of the Decade.

16. Her delegation appreciated the valuable and highly professional work carried out by UNDR0, in particular its efforts to alleviate the effects of the cyclone in Bangladesh earlier in the year. Austria had made an overall contribution of \$1.5 million to UNDR0 and other intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations that had responded to that emergency situation. Her delegation was pleased with the strengthened relationship between UNDR0 and UNDP, in particular with the positive impact of the UNDP/UNDR0 Disaster Management Training Programme.

17. The international community should endeavour to improve all aspects of natural disaster reduction, bearing in mind that the mitigation of the impact of natural disasters was directly related to sound economic, social and environmental development.

18. Austria participated actively in the meetings of officials in charge of national emergency relief services. Those meetings had repeatedly underscored the importance of upgrading technical tools, such as communication and information management systems, as one way of improving the efficiency of search-and-rescue initiatives. Earlier in the year, the Austrian Government had hosted an international workshop dealing with search-and-rescue activities, which had been organized by UNDR0. In the context of disaster-related information management, her delegation welcomed the efforts being made to strengthen and expand the existing United Nations International Emergency Network (UNIENET) with a view to establishing an interactive electronic network for emergency-management and disaster-reduction purposes.

19. Ms. STOKES (New Zealand) said that the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction was well under way and substantial progress had already been achieved. About one hundred national committees or focal points had been established, and their activities were increasing. The New York Declaration

(Ms. Stokes, New Zealand)

adopted at the inaugural session of the Special High-level Council would help promote the goals of the Decade. Her delegation endorsed the Council's call for countries to recognize the importance of incorporating natural disaster activities within plans to achieve sustainable development.

20. New Zealand had established a national committee, and was involved in a number of measures to minimize loss of life and damage caused by disasters. Such measures included the maintenance and improvement of meteorological services and the upgrading of radio transmission throughout the South Pacific region. It had also undertaken official development assistance (ODA) projects in which its expertise in earthquake-engineering technology had been used to improve local building practices. Another project had involved the building of houses designed to withstand cyclone-force winds. Through its ODA programme, it was contributing to long-term rehabilitation in the wake of natural disasters; in that regard, its activities had not been confined to the South Pacific. In recent years, there had been a growing emphasis on improving regional disaster-relief coordination in the South Pacific, including cooperation with United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations.

21. In the long-term, global warming could become the most significant natural disaster confronting the countries of the South Pacific. Global warming would have a cumulative effect within the next 50 years. The most serious problem was likely to be the associated rise in sealevel, which would affect low-lying coral atolls and the low coastal plains of high volcanic islands. Moreover, it was widely believed that global warming led to an increase in the number and intensity of tropical cyclones. Associated changes in the marine environment as a result of global warming were also likely to create economic and social difficulties, particularly for the island developing countries of the region. New Zealand was currently engaged in scientific and technical work relating to global warming.

22. Mr. BABINGTON (Australia), recalling the terrible devastation wrought by natural phenomena during the past 20 years, said that his delegation strongly supported the United Nations International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. Disaster mitigation efforts ideally should involve the use of appropriate and sustainable technology which maximized scarce economic, technical and infrastructure resources. A major task of the Decade was to promote public awareness in disaster-prone countries of the potential for disaster reduction and to place greater emphasis on pre-disaster prevention and preparedness.

23. His delegation particularly welcomed the report contained in document A/46/266 and Add.1 and the recommendations in the New York Declaration of the Special High-level Council. His delegation strongly agreed with the Council that all countries should form national committees for the Decade and should recognize the importance of incorporating natural disaster activities within plans to achieve sustainable development and to undertake actions to reduce

(Mr. Babington, Australia)

vulnerabilities through the application of disaster-mitigation strategies. Special attention must also be paid to protecting children from natural disasters and their consequences.

24. His country was contributing to the Decade by undertaking activities, through its Decade coordination committee, focusing mainly on the south-west Pacific region. Its major contribution would be the Pacific Disaster Preparedness Programme, the purpose of which was to assist participating countries with the development of national programmes, including hazard and vulnerability analyses, counter-disaster planning and damage assessment. A key feature was the preparation of a series of emergency operations and training manuals currently in use in some 35 countries.

25. In order to enhance the ability of the United Nations to respond to humanitarian emergencies, it was necessary to strengthen and reform UNDRO. While it was true that several factors had limited the Office's past performance, its strengths should not be overlooked. Those included improved information-gathering, the preparation of timely situation reports on individual disasters, and enhanced disaster mitigation and management training, the latter in conjunction with UNDP. The new UNDRO office in Fiji had a great potential to improve the coordination of donor-funded disaster preparedness activities in the south-west Pacific region, and his country looked forward to working with that office.

26. It was necessary to define the mandate of UNDRO more clearly and encourage improvements in performance. While UNDRO had originally been envisaged as the focal point in the United Nations for disaster relief activities in general, it had increasingly come to be regarded solely as a natural disaster mitigation and relief organization. The Office should play a major role in both natural and man-made emergencies. Its role as a clearing-house for information about emergencies and relief activities and its work in disaster prevention and forecasting and stimulating preparedness should be expanded. UNDRO should play the leading role in, and provide secretariat servicing for, a standing inter-agency committee which would meet regularly in Geneva and would also meet automatically in response to any major humanitarian emergency. His delegation also envisaged a role for UNDRO as the central point for the collection of information on the standby capacities of countries, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. The current session of the General Assembly should establish the framework for a strengthened UNDRO and for improved coordination of the response of the United Nations system to humanitarian emergencies.

27. Mr. KOIKE (Japan) said that various natural disasters during the past year had again demonstrated the critical importance of disaster prevention and preparedness in achieving damage reduction. International cooperation in that area should be strengthened, taking advantage of available scientific and technical means.

(Mr. Koike, Japan)

28. His Government had consistently taken the initiative in promoting the goals and objectives of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction and was pleased to note from the report of the Secretary-General (A/46/266 and Add.1) that nearly 100 national committees or focal points had been established to promote the goals of the Decade and that many had begun to promote disaster mitigation activities. It was also gratifying to note that regional interest in the issue was growing, as illustrated by the various meetings convened on issues relating to natural disasters. He drew particular attention to a meeting convened at Tokyo on 9 October to discuss ways to promote international cooperation to prevent and reduce earthquake damage. His Government would continue to be active in that area.

29. The report of the Secretary-General on the Decade demonstrated that the United Nations had made substantial progress in its Decade-related activities. The New York Declaration was a particularly useful document. His delegation hoped that the members of the Council would work energetically to fulfil the important mandate entrusted to it. The programme for the Decade prepared by the Scientific and Technical Committee was a major contribution in the area of disaster prevention and preparedness, and every nation should take it into account in formulating its own programme. The programme also should be given serious consideration by all international organizations concerned with disasters and development, and the General Assembly should endorse the Committee's work. The proposed world conference on natural disaster reduction would provide a major opportunity to assess the progress made in formulating and implementing relevant policies, and his delegation would support the proposal.

30. His delegation commended the secretariat of the Decade for the work it had accomplished with the limited financial and human resources at its disposal and believed that it deserved increased support from the international community. Early in 1991 his Government had contributed \$US 500,000 earmarked for Decade activities and it had recently contributed an equal amount to the trust fund for the Decade. His delegation appealed to other countries to extend strong support to the secretariat of the Decade.

31. In pursuing the goals and objectives of the Decade, the United Nations should place higher priority on disaster mitigation in the assistance it provided to developing countries and should increase its efforts to sensitize the world community to the importance of the problem. Every organ of the United Nations system should work towards that end, and the General Assembly should adopt a resolution calling for strong support for the various initiatives of the Decade.

32. His Government highly appreciated the activities of UNDR0 and had consistently provided it with financial support. His Government had particularly high regard for the UNDR0 information report, to which it often referred in formulating and implementing disaster assistance programmes in response to specific disasters, and would like to maintain close cooperation

(Mr. Koike, Japan)

with UNDRO on activities in that area. His Government hoped that useful meetings such as the recent meeting of officials in charge of national emergency relief services would be conducted more frequently.

33. Mr. Burke (Ireland) took the Chair.

34. Mr. CHINYAMA (Zambia) said that his statement would focus on the reports of the Secretary-General on special assistance to front-line States and other bordering States (A/46/369) and international assistance for the economic rehabilitation of Angola (A/46/396). The peace agreement in Angola was firmly in place and a transitional arrangement to bring sustained harmony and economic growth and development to that country augured well for the future. The negotiations were continuing in Mozambique, while in South Africa, violence was still prevalent and the Pretoria regime had not yet entered into good-faith negotiations to draft a democratic constitution with truly representative parties of the black majority. Nevertheless, the future belonged to peace.

35. Years of aggression and destabilization had severely undermined the development of southern Africa, creating a need for substantial reconstruction, rehabilitation and structural adjustment efforts; those would have to be undertaken against a background of historic international political and economic developments. Political changes aimed at reinforcing democracy created a risk of social instability, and it must be borne in mind that while democracy was a prerequisite for economic development, economic development itself was essential if the gains of democracy were to be consolidated.

36. There was no doubt that the studies being undertaken by some countries which provided special assistance to front-line States and other bordering States on their future relations with the region in a post-apartheid era would have a major impact on southern Africa's relations with the international community. He underscored the importance to the countries of the region of reconstruction, rehabilitation, market access and debt relief and urged the international community to bear in mind that apartheid remained firmly in place and that major obstacles had yet to be overcome. The international community should maintain pressure on the Pretoria regime in order to encourage it towards the path of reconciliation, peace and democracy.

The meeting rose at 11.15 a.m.