

General Assembly

FORTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records

SECOND COMMITTEE

45th meeting

held on

Tuesday, 19 November 1991

at 10 a.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BARAC (Romania)
(Vice-Chairman)

later: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)
(Chairman)

CONTENTS

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)(a) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued)AGENDA ITEM 88: HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (continued)AGENDA ITEM 78: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT
(continued)AGENDA ITEM 79: PROTECTION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE
GENERATIONS OF MANKIND (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned
within one week of the date of publication to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, Room DC 2-750
2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a separate corrigendum for each Committee.

Distr. GENERAL
A/C.2/46/SR.45
26 November 1991

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

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

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(a) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.52, L.53, L.55, L.56)

Draft resolution on environment and international trade (A/C.2/46/L.52)

1. Mr. KUFUOR (Ghana) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and drew attention to several changes. Concerning the second preambular paragraph, he said that "poverty" should be replaced by "underdevelopment", the original choice of the Group of 77, and expressed the hope that, in future, editors would not make substantive changes without first consulting the Group of 77. He also read out minor drafting changes to the operative part. He said that the Group of 77 attached particular importance to the integrating of the concepts of environment and development and hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution on the Trade and Development Board (A/C.2/46/L.53)

2. Mr. KUFUOR (Ghana) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77. The draft resolution reflected the outcome of the recent session of the Trade and Development Board and gave an indication of what the Group of 77 expected from the eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). It had been formulated with a view to the forthcoming session of UNCTAD and, it was hoped, would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution on adjustment of the Trade Control Measures Information System of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development, as called for by the General Assembly in resolution 45/210 (A/C.2/46/L.56)

3. Mr. KUFUOR (Ghana) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77. The Trade Control Measures Information System provided information on a wide spectrum of trade measures, including advice to exporters. It conducted analyses of trends and policies in world trade and prepared reference materials for use by trade associations in connection with the Uruguay Round. The purpose of the draft resolution was to expedite the adaptation of the Trade Control Measures Information System, in accordance with paragraph 1 (b) of General Assembly resolution 45/210. The draft resolution was practical in nature and the Group of 77 hoped of that it would be adopted by consensus.

Draft resolution on economic measures as a means of political and economic coercion against developing countries (A/C.2/46/L.55)

4. Mr. KUFUOR (Ghana) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77. Measures adopted by developed countries against certain developing countries impeded their development and the Group of 77 believed they were

(Mr. Kufuor, Ghana)

illegal. The Group of 77 attached great importance to the draft resolution, particularly the final preambular paragraph and paragraph 4. It hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 84: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.44)

Draft resolution on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti (A/C.2/46/L.44)

5. Mr. AL-NAILI (Saudi Arabia) introduced the draft resolution and said that Nicaragua and Suriname had joined as sponsors. Drawing attention to the Secretary-General's summary report on Djibouti (A/46/316), he said that, as a result of recent events in the region, Djibouti had experienced an influx of refugees and displaced persons and a decline in trade. That had occurred at a time when it was attempting to recover from the impact of severe drought. An estimate of the financial losses sustained by the Government of Djibouti was contained in the Secretary-General's report (para. 28). The international community had provided generous assistance to Djibouti, but the magnitude of the political and economic difficulties arising from its geographical location made additional support necessary. Additional resources were also necessary to promote investment, and to ease the social costs of economic restructuring (paras. 32 and 33). All Member States were urged to increase their assistance to Djibouti and to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 88: HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.54)

Draft resolution on developing human resources for development (A/C.2/46/L.54)

6. Mr. KUFUOR (Ghana) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 78: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/46/48, A/46/86-S/22226, A/46/264, 293, 308, 315, 336, 344, 423, 501/Rev.1, 520, 598; A/C.2/46/4)

AGENDA ITEM 79: PROTECTION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF MANKIND (continued) (A/46/602, 264, 273, A/46/283-E/1991/114, A/46/336, 344, 345, 501/Rev.1, 520, 598)

7. Miss ANSTEE (Director-General, United Nations Office at Vienna, and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General to Coordinate United Nations Efforts to Counter the Impact of the Burning Oil Wells and Other Environmental Consequences of the Gulf Conflict in Kuwait and in the Region) pointed to striking similarities between the man-made environmental disasters in Chernobyl and in Kuwait. Both were unprecedented in scope and nature, giving a sinister new meaning to the word "interdependence". Both had had

(Miss Anstee)

transboundary effects, and, in both cases, the full extent of the damage would be known only after close, sustained monitoring over time. The Government of Kuwait had no doubt been aware of those analogies when it requested the Secretary-General to model United Nations assistance on its response to Chernobyl.

8. In her capacity as the Secretary-General's Personal Representative, she had made a first visit to Kuwait in early October, where she had met with high-level government representatives and discussed technical matters with Dr. Al-Awadi, head of the Emergency Environmental Committee and Executive Secretary of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), and with the Kuwait Environment Protection Council. She had been accompanied by representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) so that her efforts would be consistent with initiatives already undertaken.

9. She had been taken to witness the burning oil wells and flown by helicopter over waters and lands ruined by war. All accounts of the disaster paled by comparison with reality: a wall of billowing black smoke, hundreds of metres high, interspersed with great bursts of flame, and generating intolerable heat. The desert itself was a blackened crust of burnt oil, flecked with charred vegetation and interspersed with large lakes of oil.

10. The response to the disaster had shown remarkable resilience. While the conflict had still been raging, United States authorities had estimated that, if more than 100 oil wells had been set on fire, the situation would have been hopeless. And yet, by early November, a total of 732 burning Kuwaiti oil wells had been capped, barely seven months after the war's end. The operation had been carried out by a Kuwaiti team, headed by a Kuwaiti woman engineer. In an unprecedented display of international cooperation, 27 teams from nine countries had employed inventive techniques and worked under intolerable conditions of heat, noise and danger.

11. In addition to the oil-well fires, there had been oil spills into the Gulf waters. Mines were omnipresent, the desert ecology had been harmed, and there was the problem of hazardous waste. Environmental damage caused by the war fell into three main areas: air pollution, which affected the health of the population, particularly vulnerable groups such as the elderly, children, asthmatics and those with chronic bronchitis or cardiac diseases; land pollution, which had implications for grazing and agriculture, and desert flora and fauna; and marine pollution, which destroyed the marine environment, fisheries and wildlife. The consumption of polluted agricultural produce and polluted drinking water or seafood carried additional health risks.

12. The multiplicity of responses to the monumental disaster - from Governments, non-governmental organizations, the United Nations system, academic and scientific institutions, the private sector and individuals - had made it necessary to ensure that efforts were not duplicated. Coordinating

(Miss Anstee)

and mobilizing international support for the rehabilitation process had an all-important technical aspect, which included the initial survey, impact assessment, and the identification of needs and necessary action. It also had an international aspect, for the world-wide significance of the problem must be highlighted; and a financial aspect, for there must be sufficient resources to ensure the implementation of an agreed plan of action.

13. Spectacular technical progress had been achieved, especially in assessing impact and identifying preliminary needs. Particularly impressive were the achievements of the Kuwaiti authorities, under the leadership of Dr. Al-Awadi, despite the fact that Kuwait's scientific equipment and records had been decimated. Assistance had been provided by many countries in the Gulf region, the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment (ROPME), the Saudi Arabian Meteorology and Environmental Protection Agency and the international community. The United Nations had sent a mission in March/April 1991; its findings were contained in document S/22535. She drew attention in particular to sections IV and V of that report (paras. 136-225).

14. Under the leadership of UNEP and in cooperation with ROPME, other United Nations agencies had joined in the relief effort, principally the International Maritime Organization and the World Meteorological Organization. A number of non-governmental organizations and research institutes had also furnished assistance. Many of the relief activities had been financed by Member States on a bilateral basis or through the United Nations system. UNEP had submitted a report on the first phase of an inter-agency plan of action to a ministerial meeting of ROPME in mid-October.

15. In the second phase, detailed, costed programmes and projects would be elaborated in response to the needs identified in the report. It was hoped that that would form the basis for a document to be submitted to countries outside the Persian Gulf area at the funding-strategy meeting on the proposed programme for the socio-economic and environmental revival of countries affected by the Gulf crisis, to be convened in New York in December by UNDP.

16. Technical studies indicated that the impact of the burning oil wells had been less severe than anticipated, owing to the unexpected evaporation of certain toxic elements in the smoke plume and the fact that the fires had been extinguished before seasonal winds veered in the direction of Kuwait City. However, it was impossible to predict the long-term health effects of the fires or the psychological effects on a population compelled to live in darkness all day long.

17. International concern and support must be maintained for a problem that was truly international in scope. Already the consequences of the disaster had been felt at great distances from Kuwait, and the scientific lessons learned from the experience would have universal applicability. She therefore welcomed the emphasis placed on the issue in the Second Committee and hoped that it would receive special attention at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

(Miss Anstee)

18. As programmes and projects were costed, it would become possible to estimate the financial component more precisely. Already, the global estimate was in the billion-dollar range. The UNEP fund of \$2.6 million had either been committed or actually utilized for initial technical work. Contributions in kind - services and equipment, and scientific personnel, and studies - were also necessary to restore Kuwait's shattered research capability. There were three promising sources of funding. The first was the United Nations compensation fund contemplated by Security Council resolution 687 (1991), which could be utilized in cases of damage to the environment and natural resources. She had already engaged in preliminary discussions with the administrator of the fund. However, the procedure for drawing up the fund might be lengthy, whereas the needs in Kuwait were immediate.

19. The second possible source was Kuwait itself and the Governments of the region. Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Iran and other countries had already expended considerable sums on clean-up and assessment and felt that the entire burden for an international problem should not fall on the Gulf countries alone. Moreover, the oil-well fires had cost Kuwait \$2 billion and significant losses in oil reserves. It was estimated that not even 45 per cent of the damaged wells could be restored, and overall production was not expected to reach normal levels until 1994.

20. For that reason, she hoped that the third source of funding - the international community - would provide generous assistance which could be channelled through ROPME and the Governments of the region. Thus far, her office had managed to function within the limits of the resources available to it. However, it would have to be modestly strengthened as its activities expanded. It was her intention to make a fuller visit to the region in 1992.

21. Mr. INSANALLY (Guyana), speaking on behalf of the 12 States members of the Caribbean Community, said that the Caribbean Community was pleased that preparations for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development were well under way. Since the major organizational issues had largely been resolved, the Preparatory Committee for the Conference should endeavour to reach agreement on substantive issues. In particular, there were three areas of concern, agreement on which would determine the success of the Conference, namely: the provision of new and additional financial resources to developing countries, the transfer of environmentally sound technology on concessional and preferential terms, and the restructuring of multilateral institutions for the promotion of sustainable development.

22. The Caribbean Community was firmly convinced that the commitment of new and additional financial resources for the promotion of sustainable and environmentally sound development in developing countries should be commensurate with the developed countries' responsibility for the greater part of global environmental degradation. The environmental imperative should not impose new conditions on the provision of development assistance to developing countries, and the intrinsic link between environment and development should

(Mr. Insanally, Guyana)

be observed at all times. Moreover, it was necessary to ensure that developing countries received adequate financial assistance that would enable them to participate in the final stages of the process culminating in the Earth Summit.

23. The Caribbean Community was fully aware of the role of technology in the implementation of environmentally sound policies. The small developing Caribbean countries relied on the transfer of technology, in large part from the developed North, and their success in promoting environmentally safe and sustainable development would depend on the degree to which the requisite technology was transferred to it on concessional and non-commercial terms. The Community was highly interested in developing an indigenous technological capacity, and it hoped that training would be an important component of technology transfers.

24. Multilateral institutions, in particular those which dealt with environmental issues, should plan their operations to meet the challenges of promoting sustainable development in developing countries. That would require close and continuing coordination between the relevant United Nations agencies, regional organizations and Governments.

25. The Conference should result in firm political commitments to undertake realistic programmes of action. The timely preparation of a framework convention on climate change was of particular concern to the countries of the Caribbean Community, all of which were vulnerable to climate change. The Caribbean Community had participated actively in the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee through its membership in the Alliance of Small Island States, and it would take an active part in the upcoming fourth session of that Committee, to be held at Geneva from 9 to 20 December 1991.

26. Mr. SWE (Myanmar) said that his delegation was especially pleased that, in its decision 3/2, the Preparatory Committee for the Conference had requested the Secretary-General to "integrate fully development considerations and needs and realities, in particular of the developing countries, in all Agenda 21 programme documents". While the final programme for Agenda 21 was far from complete, it was heartening that the Preparatory Committee had reached agreement on its structure.

27. His delegation was pleased that, at the third session of the Preparatory Committee, there had been general agreement on the need for financial resources from external sources to help developing countries meet the cost of achieving sustainable development and implement the programmes contained in Agenda 21. With regard to funding mechanisms, the proposal to establish a special Green Fund to provide adequate new and additional financial resources should be given serious consideration. Any funding mechanism that was established should be transparent and ensure equitable representation by developed and developing countries.

(Mr. Swe, Myanmar)

28. The transfer of environmentally sound technology on concessional and preferential terms was essential for the containment, reduction and elimination of environmental damage, but must be coupled with the protection of intellectual property rights. His delegation supported the idea of setting up a mechanism for purchasing patents on environmentally sound technology for their transfer to developing countries on non-commercial terms.
29. Of particular interest to his delegation was the issue of forests. While Myanmar was still formulating a definite position, it considered that any framework for global cooperative action on forests should uphold the principle of the sovereignty of States over their own natural resources and take into consideration the role of forests in economic development, including the subsistence requirements of developing countries. The framework should encompass all types of forests in all countries, and take account of the legitimate needs and concerns of the developing countries in their efforts to achieve sustainable development and eradicate poverty.
30. Mr. BABINGTON (Australia) said that his delegation was concerned that, with only a little more than six months remaining before the Conference, many major issues were not being dealt with quickly enough. Negotiations should therefore be speeded up in order to ensure its success.
31. Success would depend largely on how effectively it dealt with the twin concerns of environment and sustainable development, and also with the cross-sectoral issues of financial resources, transfer of technology, trade and the environment, resource pricing and economic instruments. In addition, a great deal of work remained to be done on institutional questions.
32. His delegation hoped that the Conference would go beyond rhetoric and stimulate early, cooperative, practical and innovative approaches to achieving environmentally sound and sustainable development. The Conference should also develop practical strategies to deal with other important cross-sectoral issues, such as poverty alleviation and population, health and education, the role of indigenous peoples, and the concerns of women. Women were crucial to environmentally sound and sustainable economic growth and development, and their concerns should figure prominently in the work of the Preparatory Committee and the Conference itself and should be duly reflected in the Earth Charter and Agenda 21.
33. The framework convention on climate change should lead to the establishment of a permanent mechanism to coordinate efforts to control climate change. In order to be effective, that instrument should gain the adherence of the greatest possible number and most suitably balanced spread of countries, address all aspects of climate change, set limits on all greenhouse gas emissions not controlled by the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and include a full range of implementation measures. The convention should allow countries to develop strategies appropriate to their circumstances. In particular, it should address the interests of

(Mr. Babington, Australia)

low-lying, coastal, arid and semi-arid and small island countries. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the valuable contributions being made to the negotiating process by the Alliance of Small Island States.

34. His delegation hoped that an international convention to protect biological diversity would be concluded in time for the Conference. Such a convention should contain legally binding obligations and recognize the important contributions that traditional cultures could make.

35. Mr. TANLAY (Turkey) said that the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference should result in the adoption of final decisions on all the recommendations to be submitted to the Conference. That session should therefore be devoted exclusively to negotiations. His delegation hoped that the Earth Summit would lead to the adoption of the Earth Charter, Action 21, a framework convention on climate change, a convention on biological diversity, and proposals regarding institutional arrangements.

36. His delegation was pleased that decision 3/2 of the Preparatory Committee took account of the need to differentiate the actions to be taken by developed countries and those to be taken by developing countries. The consensus reached on that decision was a token of the common determination of States to prepare a wide-ranging Agenda 21 programme containing objectives, activities and means of implementation for specific action proposals.

37. Regional preparations for the Conference were of great importance, and the declarations and related documents issued at meetings held at Bergen, Bangkok, Mexico City and Abidjan had brought to light a number of common positions. Those declarations pointed out that the special problems of the developing countries must be taken into consideration and that the industrialized countries were chiefly responsible for global environmental damage. It had also been underscored that the environmental considerations were an integral part of development, which meant that, in order to achieve sustainable development, the developing countries must have access to environmentally sound technologies and to additional financial resources; those two points should guide the work of the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee and of the Conference itself.

38. Mr. VASILIEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet Union attached paramount importance to the growing involvement of the United Nations in developing and implementing international strategies to reverse environmental degradation. A cooperative spirit at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee would ensure that the final documents of the Conference - Agenda 21 and the Earth Charter - reflected a new global consensus that laid the economic, legal and organizational foundations for international cooperation in environmental protection. It was important that the preparatory process and the work and outcome of the Conference fully reflected the indivisibility of the biosphere, the interdependence of the modern world and the rights of future generations. The preparations should

(Mr. Vasiliev, USSR)

allow for the participation of a wide range of States, intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as business and scientific circles.

39. The fourth session of the Preparatory Committee should focus on substantive negotiations to reach agreement on the draft final documents of the Conference. Every effort should be made to complete work on the Earth Charter and Agenda 21 and to reach agreement on framework conventions on climate change and biological diversity. It would also be desirable to draft an instrument dealing with forests. Work on the texts of protocols and other legal instruments that would supplement those conventions could be begun immediately after the conventions were signed and could reflect the outcome of the Conference.

40. In order to ensure the success of the preparations for the Conference, all participants should adopt a universal and comprehensive approach that respected the interests of all States. In order to achieve consensus and avoid unnecessary polemics, efforts should be concentrated on singling out and expanding areas of agreement. Such an approach would facilitate solutions to such complex issues as financing environmental activities at the global and national levels and the development of intergovernmental technological cooperation, including the transfer of technology.

41. The Soviet Union intended to carry out a well-considered national environmental policy and also take part in international cooperation projects on the basis of mutually acceptable conditions and principles. That would provide a real opportunity for ensuring the sustainable and environmentally sound development of the Soviet Union, which counted on the understanding and support of the international community.

42. A large and as yet almost untapped source of additional resources for environmental protection activities should be the savings from reduced military expenditure, both in the North and in the South. The conversion of military production for environmental purposes afforded considerable opportunities. The Soviet Union was seriously studying ways of using its air and naval bases to respond to such environmental problems as forest fires and oil spills.

43. The preventive aspect of United Nations environmental activities should be further developed. The international community should give serious consideration to environmentally criminal economic activities that could cause irreversible environmental damage. The United Nations - in particular, its prestigious International Law Commission - should examine the issue of environmental crimes, making use of existing international experience in that field.

44. Mr. In-Hyuk KWON (Republic of Korea) said that his delegation was pleased with the progress accomplished thus far by the Preparatory Committee. The Conference would provide an important opportunity to elaborate an innovative strategy for a sustainable future which did not jeopardize the environment or constrain development. At its final session, the Preparatory Committee should undertake frank assessment of past achievements and failures and provide guidance to facilitate the success of the Conference.

45. Environmentally sound and sustainable development should be the goal of developed and developing countries alike. The environmental objectives which the Conference hoped to achieve required the well-coordinated cooperation of both groups of countries, based on the principles of justice and fairness. Since it was the developed countries that were primarily responsible for creating risks to the global environment, they should take the lead in protecting it and bore the major responsibility for remedying environmental problems. Developing countries should share the burden to the extent that financial support and the transfer of clean technologies enabled them to do so. In addition, the unique situation of newly industrialized economies, including his own, which were experiencing rapid economic growth and had a high potential for further development, should receive due consideration, and regulatory measures for environmental protection should not impede their economic development.

46. With regard to the environment and international trade, while efforts within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) to liberalize world trade should continue, environmental regulations should not be used as non-tariff barriers against the exports of developing countries.

47. Many differences remained to be resolved before work on the formulation of the Earth Charter and Agenda 21 could be considered successful. The Earth Charter should reflect a high standard of moral and political norms for all States and individuals in the pursuit of sustainable global development. Agenda 21 should highlight concrete action plans for an environmentally sound and sustainable development strategy.

48. If the goals of the Conference were to be fully implemented, substantial progress must be made on such cross-sectoral issues as the transfer of technology, funding mechanisms and institutional frameworks. A workable mechanism to promote the wider accessibility of environmentally clean technology should be elaborated on the basis of respect for free-market principles. Intellectual property rights must be redefined in order to resolve the serious contradiction between the need to place clean technology at the disposal of all who needed it and the need to protect the interests of the owners of such technology. His delegation proposed the establishment of a special United Nations task force to study practical modalities for the promotion of technological cooperation between developed and developing countries. Incentives such as tax deductions and favourable financing terms for private companies from industrialized countries which actively promoted technical cooperation with the developing countries merited further study.

(Mr. In-Hyuk Kwon, Republic of Korea)

49. With regard to the need to provide developing countries with additional financial assistance, an innovative mechanism should be established with contributions from developed countries, given their historical responsibility for global environmental degradation. Users' fees, emission charges and tradeable permits based on the "polluter pays" principle deserved careful consideration. While the Global Environmental Facility was a good starting point, the funding resources should be expanded substantially to implement a vast array of action plans to be included in Agenda 21. The institutional framework needed in order to follow up on the work of the Conference could be provided by strengthening existing coordinating functions within the United Nations system and by expanding UNEP so that it could effectively integrate environmental and development issues and promote financial and technical support for the developing countries.

50. Public awareness regarding global environmental protection was increasing daily in his country. To facilitate its active participation in the Conference, a government task force was preparing policy recommendations and guidelines for national activities relating to the Conference. His Government's report would be available by the end of 1991.

51. With reference to the proposed framework convention on climate change, he said that any control scheme for greenhouse gas emissions should regulate emissions of all such gases, since global warming could be mitigated only by reducing their total volume in the atmosphere. The importance of the sinks of those gases must be recognized and the net-emission concept should be taken into account in establishing stabilization targets.

52. Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) said that the preparations for the forthcoming Conference - which were taking place during a period of far-reaching change in the international arena - had generated a dynamic negotiation process which should lead to decisions that went beyond the adoption of yet another programme of action or the refurbishment of international machinery for policy implementation. A genuine change in prevailing attitudes was required. The effectiveness and credibility of the decisions to be taken at the Conference depended on the capacity of Governments to overcome prejudices and established interests. The argument that the transboundary nature of some environmental problems faced by the international community called for a reduced role for Governments and an overhaul of the notion of State sovereignty overlooked the trend towards greater interdependence among nations. Effective strategies to deal with environmental and developmental challenges required efficient action by Governments as well as the private sector.

53. The overall mandate for the Conference established in General Assembly resolution 44/228 must be fulfilled; it was not enough to agree only on some of the issues. It was unfortunate that delegations had been unable at the third session of the Preparatory Committee to make the required progress on the central questions of financial resources and the transfer of technology.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

54. The need for funds could not be addressed simply by reallocating resources, which would be contrary to resolution 44/228. Official development assistance was declining and the transfer of financial resources to developed countries remained a serious problem, particularly for several heavily indebted countries of Latin America. His own delegation and the delegation of Argentina had submitted a proposal to the Preparatory Committee calling for the establishment of a fund for the promotion of sustainable development, one objective of which was to finance solutions to environmental problems and make investments necessitated by the incorporation of environmental concerns in development programmes and projects. The fund should also focus on expanding national technological capacities.

55. Bold action was needed in the Preparatory Committee to ensure that developing countries would be able to adopt environmentally sound policies based on the best available technology. The discussion should not be confined to repeating assertions that technologies were the domain of the private sector and that Governments therefore could not redress the imbalance between developed and developing countries in that regard. An innovative approach to intellectual property rights was needed, and possible actions included the reduction of the period of patent protection, financial incentives for funding research and development pertaining to clean technologies, and licensing arrangements that would ensure the access of developing countries to such technologies, without prejudice to adequate remuneration for investments in research and development.

56. Agreement on matters relating to financial resources and the transfer of technology would facilitate progress in the negotiations on Agenda 21 and on the final declaration of the Conference. The two documents should express the consensus of the international community on the political basis that should govern the action to be required of all States, in accordance with their respective levels of responsibility, for the protection of the environment and the promotion of development. They should also reflect the commitment of the international community, particularly those countries which had done most to deplete the environment, to deal with the environmental and developmental challenges from a rational and balanced perspective.

57. His delegation looked forward to the successful outcome of negotiations under way in the respective intergovernmental negotiating committees working on conventions on climate change and on biological diversity, and hoped that those conventions would be open for signature at the Conference. Further scientific research was needed to determine all the effects of the accumulation of greenhouse gases and the role of the sinks of such gases. Agenda 21 should include programmes to facilitate the fulfilment of the obligations to be undertaken by States under the convention on climate change. The Preparatory Committee could supplement the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on climate change by agreeing on activities to be included in the programme areas of Agenda 21 on the protection of the atmosphere which had been identified at the Committee's third session.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

58. The commitments of the developed and the developing countries would, of necessity, differ, since the developed countries bore the primary responsibility for excessive levels of greenhouse gas emissions, while the developing countries played only an insignificant role in their accumulation and should not be expected to make commitments inconsistent with their national development needs. Commitments regarding the sources and sinks of greenhouse gases should be balanced.

59. The ability of the developing countries to participate in any international regime to prevent climate change would depend on the provision of new and additional financial resources and on the transfer of technology, issues which required close attention in the negotiations.

60. Mr. SHEBANI (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his country had, on numerous occasions, urged the world, and particularly the affluent countries and those that had caused mass environmental destruction in the past, to be governed by reason in their approach to environmental protection. It had done everything in its power at the bilateral, regional and international levels to call attention to the dangers posed to the environment and to warn of the consequences of its abuse and exploitation.

61. His country supported cooperation in devising ways and means of preserving the planet, since the integrity of the environment was in the interest of all. The role of the United Nations in environmental protection was to be commended, and Libya was ready to play its part for the success of the 1992 Conference. There were grounds for hope that the Conference would adopt recommendations and resolutions of great significance to present and future generations.

62. It had been cooperation among agencies, together with financial and material support provided at the national level, that had rescued Libya and its neighbours in the Mediterranean region from the dangers of the screw-worm infestation. Libya appreciated the efforts made and the assistance provided by the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the International Atomic Energy Agency and other bodies in eliminating that pest. The expenditures made, however, had undoubtedly been at the expense of development.

63. Libya, as well as many other developing countries, continued to suffer from the after-effects of the colonialist era. Colonialism had left behind it, quite intentionally, a legacy that had caused the gravest harm to the environment of countries that had acceded to independence. It had left extensive minefields, without providing maps showing their location, and it had left continuing tear and destruction. His country still suffered from the remnants of international and colonialist wars in which it had had no part, and those remnants continued to cause much damage to the environment and to consume enormous financial and human resources. Hundreds of plantations had been burnt, much livestock had been killed and many innocent people had been

(Mr. Shebani, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

killed or mutilated by mines and other explosives. Remnants of war and the accidents that they caused were a heavy burden for the environment and development, and they constituted an enormous obstacle to progress. His country therefore had a legitimate right to stress the principle of compensation for the damage caused by them.

64. Many resolutions had been adopted by the United Nations and other organizations calling upon the countries responsible to provide the necessary information and technical assistance for the removal of remnants of war and to pay compensation for the losses to which they gave rise. The countries concerned should display a sense of responsibility and respond to the appeals of the international community to meet their obligations under the terms of the General Assembly resolutions on the matter.

65. Libya had spared no effort to improve the environment while working for growth and development. It had done much for the development of the human being, had reclaimed thousands of hectares of land and had played a pioneer role in promoting education, health, housing, transport, telecommunications and the welfare of children and women. In doing so, it had encountered many environmental problems and challenges to development, the most salient of which were desertification and the scarcity of water resources.

66. In that context, it had executed the greatest man-made river project ever known, and therewith it aspired to overcome adverse environmental circumstances and ensure a life of dignity for future generations. Under the project, water was being pumped from deep beneath the Libyan desert and transported to the coast for use as drinking water and in agriculture and industry. Phase I of the project had been completed, and 2 million cubic metres of water were being pumped every day. The project demonstrated the determination of the Libyan Arab people to meet the challenges of the environment, growth and development, and that people looked to the international community for support for its efforts and for assistance in the financing of the further expansion of a great humanitarian and environmental project that would promote development and combat desertification.

67. Mr. MONTAÑO (Mexico) said that his country accorded high priority to environmental issues in its development policy and was convinced that a responsible solution to local environmental problems contributed substantially to the solution of global problems. The Tlatelolco Platform on Environment and Development adopted at the Latin American and Caribbean Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Conference held in his country in March 1991 stated that the solution of environmental problems and the promotion of sustainable development depended heavily on international cooperation and, in particular, on the availability of new and additional resources and access to environmentally sound technologies on concessional terms. The developed countries should be the major contributors in view of their greater responsibility for the global process of environmental degradation.

(Mr. Montaña, Mexico)

68. It was clear from the report of the third session of the Preparatory Committee that greater political will was required, particularly on the part of the developed countries, to resolve the outstanding substantive issues, disagreement on which was impeding a clear expression of the link between environment and development. The developing countries stood ready to play a constructive role in the negotiations.

69. The Conference should serve as a forum for the adoption of agreements, and not as yet another negotiating phase. Agenda 21, one of the most important topics to be discussed, should include practical priorities and commitments while allowing room for the later incorporation of new relevant features. The Earth Charter should be a legal document which should provide guidelines for promoting the development of environmental law and incorporate principles relating to environment and development.

70. The funding mechanism to be established should reflect the level of commitments adopted and it should accord equal priority to global and local problems. Decision-making should proceed on an equitable basis.

71. Noting that institutional arrangements would be critical in ensuring that agreements reached at the Conference were carried out, he stressed the need for a representative United Nations forum which would keep issues relating to the environment and development under constant review. To that end, the activities of UNEP should be strengthened.

72. His delegation supported the adoption of an instrument containing commitments relating to the preservation of biological diversity as well as to financial resources and technology transfer. However, his delegation would not support a binding instrument requiring the developing countries to make commitments on the conservation of biological diversity without concomitant commitments on the part of the developed countries to pay for their access to that biodiversity. The level of resources committed by the developed countries should be commensurate with the effort of developing countries to conserve biological diversity.

73. While all States shared the responsibility to reduce emissions of ozone-depleting substances, the proposed convention on climate change should establish differentiated commitments for developed and developing countries, since the former were the major source of emissions implicated in global warming. The negotiations under way should result in qualitative and quantitative commitments for emission reduction.

74. With regard to forests, his delegation favoured the adoption of a non-binding international consensus on principles governing the conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests which respected the right of States to administer their forest resources in accordance with their national interests.

(Mr. Montaña, Mexico)

75. With regard to the oceans, his country believed that the principles enunciated in the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provided the appropriate framework for the conservation and sustainable development of the oceans and their resources. The Convention safeguarded the sovereign rights of coastal States in waters within their jurisdiction.

76. With regard to the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, his country continued to favour the adoption of a protocol to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal which would establish procedures governing responsibility and indemnification. The responsibilities of developed and developing countries in that regard should differ. Countries which produced hazardous wastes, including nuclear wastes, should dispose of them in their own territory and should not export them to developing countries.

77. The Rio Conference would be the first step in a process whereby the international community would elaborate new forms of cooperation for the preservation of the environment and access to sustainable development, as called for in General Assembly resolution 44/228. He urged delegations to demonstrate flexibility at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee, for it would be difficult to reach a consensus at the Conference on any issues left pending during that session.

78. Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal) said that the general enthusiasm for the Conference testified to the growing concern of the international community with safeguarding the environment. The Conference should be a landmark event resulting in a fundamental change in approach towards the environment.

79. In Nepal, environmental deterioration was having a devastating impact. As a small step forward, his Government had created a national framework for development and conservation and an environmental impact assessment system. The conventional economic philosophy of mass production and unrestricted choice governing market forces was directly opposed to the principle of careful use of finite natural resources. The grinding poverty of one fifth of mankind had wrought havoc on fragile natural resources. For example, people living in remote areas of his country might not be aware of the chain reaction resulting from deforestation, but they knew its immediate consequences: landslides and fuelwood shortages. Despite that knowledge, abject poverty compelled them to cut more trees in their struggle for survival. While it was encouraging that the international community had recognized at last the vital link between development and environment, its actual behaviour had not yet changed.

80. With regard to preparations for the Conference, the proposed institutional and legal instruments were too important to be left outside the Conference mechanism if effective and continuing implementation of Conference decisions was to be ensured. The proposed Earth Charter and the Agenda 21 programme were both welcome developments.

(Mr. Acharya, Nepal)

81. Under cross-sectoral issues, poverty, health and education and their relationship to environment must be emphasized, along with transfer of environmentally sound and appropriate technology to developing countries. Additional funding would be required to help developing countries implement programmes adopted at the Conference. In the administration of such a fund, the principle of equity, capacity and contribution to environmental damage should be weighed. Strengthened partnership was the only way to achieve lasting action to reverse environmental degradation. Active participation by a large number of non-governmental organizations was also important, because of their wide influence at the local level.

82. The fundamental question to be answered at the Conference was how to safeguard the future without neglecting the present. Short-term sacrifice might be required, but such sacrifices could be viewed as high-return investments.

83. Ms. PERKOVIĆ (Yugoslavia) said that preparations for the Conference had entered a substantive phase, but progress so far had been disappointing. Failure to treat environmental problems as an integral part of development could endanger the entire process. More flexibility and cooperation was required on the part of all participants in the preparatory process. Because of their responsibility as major polluters, the developed countries should demonstrate greater readiness to change their production and consumption patterns. Likewise, they should support the efforts of developing countries by providing new and additional financial resources and favourable access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Consequently, developing countries would be in a position to take a more active part in environmental protection and could use their own resources in a more rational way.

84. The report of the Preparatory Committee (A/46/48) illustrated the complexity of the issues involved. The deliberations had not yet provided answers to questions such as how to deal with poverty as a major cause of environmental degradation in developing countries; how and at what pace to make qualitative changes in development policies and international cooperation in order to achieve sustainable development; and how best to ensure the realization of national priorities by relying on subregional, regional and global cooperation. Her delegation welcomed the agreement reached on the structure and organization of Agenda 21 and the progress on the question of transfer of technology. Useful suggestions concerning general rights and obligations to be incorporated in an Earth Charter had been made, but difficult negotiations on the draft still lay ahead. Among other important issues to be dealt with by the Preparatory Committee were protection of the atmosphere, forests, seas and oceans and soil, and hazardous-waste management.

85. Yugoslavia had finalized its national report for the Conference, although the report had been written during a time of economic and political turmoil. Still, the report was a product of concerted efforts by all republics, and they had all given it their endorsement. The work on the report had confirmed that many environmental issues in Yugoslavia could not be treated in isolation

(Mr. Perković, Yugoslavia)

successfully, and their resolution required comprehensive international support. Her Government expected the Conference to propose an effective system of assistance to developing countries in addressing environmental problems within a framework of sustainable development.

86. Mr. JIN Yongjian (China) said that a positive result of the preparations for the Conference was the large number of developing countries which had intensified their consultations and coordination on environment and development in order to facilitate their participation. His Government had hosted a conference on environment and development at the ministerial level in June 1991, with more than 40 developing countries participating; their positions were reflected in the Beijing Declaration. The efforts of the international community since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 44/228 had established a good foundation for the success of the forthcoming Conference; nevertheless, serious problems still remained.

87. The relationship between environmental issues and development must be further rationalized. Within the framework of Agenda 21, many proposals for addressing environmental issues had been made, but so far, no detailed documentation had been proposed on development issues such as external debt and unfavourable terms of trade. The relationship between poverty, economic growth, international trade, commodities, external debt and net transfer of resources should be the focus of the next stage.

88. Environmental issues must be closely linked to such cross-sectoral issues as financial resources and transfer of technology. Because of time constraints, the Preparatory Committee had not held in-depth discussions on those issues at its third session, but the developed countries had not been ready to discuss the matter in any detail or to make commitments. With just over six months left before the Conference, the Preparatory Committee must begin negotiations on financial resources and transfer of technology. Every delegation must be fully prepared for the negotiations on essential cross-sectoral issues, and a strong political will would be vital to ensure substantive progress.

89. The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on a framework convention on climate change established by General Assembly resolution 45/212 had made significant progress. Climate change had a bearing on the social and economic interests and even the survival of all countries, though developed and developing countries bore different responsibilities for climate change and had varying capacity to address its impact. The convention, therefore, should be based on the principle of equity and differentiated responsibility between developed and developing countries, and it should contain specific commitments by developed countries to provide new and additional financial resources and related technology to the developing countries for joint efforts in response to global climate change. The conclusion of the convention, however, would be only a starting point for a long-term process of addressing climate change.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.