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at 6 p.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 47th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)  
later: Mr. BARAC (Romania)  
(Vice-Chairman)

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The meeting was called to order at 6 p.m.

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/46/264, 273, A/46/283-E/1991/114, A/46/336, 344, 345, 501/Rev.1, 520, 598, 602)

1. Mr. SEZAKI (Japan), stressed the importance his Government attached to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to be held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the work being done in preparation for it. With only one session of the Preparatory Committee remaining, it should streamline its work, focus attention on the most pressing issues and make every effort to reach agreement. His Government was particularly interested in the ongoing negotiations on a framework convention on climate change, a convention on biological diversity and an agreement on forests, all of which, it hoped, would be completed in time for the Conference.
2. With regard to cross-sectoral issues, his delegation was fully aware of the high priority which the developing countries, in particular, accorded to the question of financial resources and transfer of technology; steady progress on those issues had been achieved at the sessions held so far, and at its last session the Preparatory Committee should make an effort to fill the gaps by identifying the real needs of developing countries and devising practical means of meeting requirements. That work would be facilitated by a commitment to environmental protection on the part of developing countries.
3. In that connection, his delegation noted that the Global Environment Facility had become a focus of attention, raising expectations within the donor community but giving rise to some reservations among developing countries. Careful study should be given to that institution's function as a financing mechanism, taking into account the possibility that its system of governance, scope of activity and management policies would evolve in time.
4. With regard to the costing exercise that the Preparatory Committee had requested the Secretariat to undertake, he noted that in his statement at the Committee's 43rd meeting the Secretary-General of the Conference had indicated that the figures to be presented would not be complete but would be in the nature of an estimate. His delegation nevertheless greatly hoped that agreement would be reached on those issues and, to that end, would participate actively in the debate.
5. The issue of institutions did not, in his view, fall solely within the province of the Preparatory Committee, but was a matter which, in view of its relevance to the entire United Nations and to the ongoing restructuring and revitalization of the Organization's economic and social sector, the Committee could address under the cluster of items currently under consideration.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

Although the views expressed in the Preparatory Committee had been of a preliminary nature, a measure of agreement had been reached on a number of important points, including the need for effective utilization of existing mechanisms as against the establishment of a new institution, the importance of coordination among intergovernmental organizations and secretariats, the relevance of the issue to the ongoing process of restructuring and revitalizing the economic and social sector, and the need to take into account other results of the preparations for the Conference. His delegation considered that, although the issue of institutions was a complex one, consensus might be reached by adopting a practical approach and building upon those points of agreement.

6. As for the Earth Charter, his delegation favoured a clear and concise document setting forth key principles and general rights and obligations.

7. With regard to Agenda 21, he strongly felt that the Preparatory Committee should not produce a bulky and detailed document but, rather, should endeavour to reach agreement on a truly action-oriented programme which could easily be translated into government policies and private-sector initiatives. Proposals such as that appearing in the section on the protection of oceans and seas, which would establish a new regime defining the rights and obligations of States in very precise terms, gave grounds for concern. His delegation wondered whether such attempts were consistent with the basic aim of Agenda 21 and feared that they might add to the difficulty of the tasks still to be carried out in the very limited time-frame of the fourth preparatory session.

8. With regard to the relationship between the environment and development, his delegation, too, recognized how important the development of developing countries was to the promotion of environmental protection. At the same time, he felt that, when considered in relation to development, the goal was potentially a divisive one. Apportioning blame would be a futile exercise; a better course would be to consider ways of improving a situation in which unsustainable production and consumption patterns in affluent societies, on the one hand, and environmentally insensitive development and absolute poverty in less privileged countries, on the other, were both damaging the environment.

9. Against that background, his country had committed itself to playing an active role in development assistance, with particular emphasis on the environmental field. Recalling the announcement made by his Government at the Arche Summit Meeting held in Paris in July 1989 that it would expand its development assistance in the field of the environment to 300 billion Japanese yen, or \$US 2.3 billion, for a three-year period beginning in 1989, he stated that in only two years Japan had almost achieved that goal.

10. The aim of the preparatory process being to integrate the cooperation extended at all levels by Governments and private sectors, his delegation noted with interest the growing number of events and programmes, several of them stemming from the preparatory meetings, designed to promote that goal.

(Mr. Sezaki, Japan)

Those relating to his country included an environmental congress for Asia and the Pacific held in Tokyo on 4 and 5 July 1991, which had adopted a Declaration putting forward a number of proposals for action for consideration by the Conference, as well as the convening of a high-level group of financial and policy leaders scheduled to meet in Tokyo in April 1992 to discuss financial issues relating to the Conference. The latter meeting, to which the Secretary-General of the Conference had also referred in his statement, was not a governmental undertaking.

11. Mr. MONGBE (Benin), referring first to the Preparatory Committee's report on its third session (A/46/48, vol. II), noted that the Preparatory Committee had adopted by consensus a draft agenda for the 1992 Conference; that decision was, however, open to review at the Preparatory Committee's fourth session in the light of decisions taken at the current session of the General Assembly. His delegation was concerned as to whether the Preparatory Committee would succeed in defining the needs of developing countries for financial resources and technology to enable them to incorporate ecological considerations in their development policies, or in agreeing upon how those needs could best be met. So far, the Preparatory Committee had failed to arrive at a precise definition of the developing countries' needs in that field, despite their efforts to explain their problems and make proposals.

12. However, his delegation remained optimistic: in its decision on the structure and organization of Agenda 21, the Committee had undertaken to take into account the need to differentiate between the responsibilities of developing countries and those of industrialized countries. The decision also included a new chapter on means of implementation which were to enable developing countries to achieve the objectives of Agenda 21. His delegation greatly hoped that the ambiguities still hanging over the financial resources issue would be dispelled before the Preparatory Committee's fourth session, with a view to attaining a consensus acceptable to all parties.

13. The question of transfer of technology was as important as that of new and additional financial resources. His delegation hoped that the Conference would go beyond adopting the principle of transfer of technology on concessional or preferential terms to elaborate an international economic and ecological policy favourable to the promotion of transfer of technology and to the capacity and means of developing countries to adapt transferred technology to their requirements. A major challenge of the preparatory process was to develop such a strategy for the transfer of sustainable and environmentally sound technologies. Access to such technologies should be made available on a non-commercial basis and should be accompanied by measures designed to strengthen the recipient countries' capacities for their utilization.

14. Referring to the second African regional ministerial conference held at Abidjan from 11 to 14 November 1991 in preparation for the 1992 Conference, he said that the conference had adopted a Declaration, a common African position on environment and development, and resolutions relative to the preparations

(Mr. Mongbe, Benin)

for the 1992 Conference and to African participation in negotiations on the conventions on climate change and biological diversity. In addition, an African programme of action on environment and development was in preparation and would be forwarded to the Conference secretariat by 30 December 1991. After acquainting the Committee briefly with the contents of those documents, he said that the conference had attached particular importance to establishing institutional and other mechanisms to guarantee the implementation of Agenda 21, and had also recommended the maintenance of the headquarters of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in Africa and the strengthening of the UNEP Regional Office for Africa as a means of supporting the environmental programmes of African States. Lastly, he expressed his delegation's support for the idea of establishing an international fund for financing sustained development in Africa.

15. Turning to item 79, he remarked that the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on a framework convention on climate change showed a tendency to focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions rather than on developing the capacity to absorb such emissions. It was a well-known fact, however, that tropical and subtropical deforestation had considerably reduced the capacity of nature to absorb carbon dioxide. Negotiations on the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions should, inter alia, cover the question of reforestation of such areas. His delegation hoped that the first provisions of the framework convention would be completed at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee's fourth session, to be held at Geneva in December 1991.

16. He called upon all countries participating in the Conference, and especially the wealthier ones, to make firm undertakings to implement the decisions to be adopted by the Conference. A consensus should not represent the triumph of the ideas of a particular group of States or of one hemisphere but should be the result of a common political will to save the planet from an ecological catastrophe.

17. Ms. FRITSCHÉ (Liechtenstein) said that the draft agenda for the Conference adopted by the Preparatory Committee signalled the participants' readiness not only to reach common agreement but also to join in a common commitment to take the necessary action. Her Government viewed the Conference as offering the possibility of changing the course of environmental policy to incorporate development concerns. The partnership which had to be established between ecology and economics should involve the identification of mutual obligations, respect for the concerns of others and, where necessary, compensation. Application of the most appropriate production technologies and environmentally sound techniques for the disposal of used goods were of the highest importance. Environmental education, pricing incentives and the incorporation of environmental costs in the price of goods were essential measures alongside the consequential application of the "polluter pays" principle, the principle of precautionary and preventive action and the principle of cooperation.

(Ms. Fritsche, Liechtenstein)

18. Her Government attributed the greatest importance to the implementation of international conventions in the field of environmental protection, and commended the efforts to finalize a framework convention on climate change and a convention on biological diversity. It was also prepared to make its contribution to common efforts to support the developing countries in their pursuit of sustainable development. It welcomed clear arrangements in respect of all supporting measures, whether institutional or financial, in the field of environment and development.

19. Her delegation welcomed the Preparatory Committee's recommendation that the Conference should address key elements relating to women's critical economic, social and environmental contributions to sustainable development. Women had traditionally been to a large extent excluded from policy formulation relating to human settlements. Discrimination prevented many women in both the North and the South from having access to housing, mortgages and land ownership. Households closely reflected the conditions of the surrounding physical environment, and it was women who bore the main responsibility for protecting their families from pollution, poor sanitation and poor housing conditions. Women also faced the greatest risk from handling contaminated products within the household. Moreover, recent experience had shown that it was mostly women and children who sought refuge from environmentally degraded areas. Improvement of the environment and of human settlements for women was ultimately linked to improving the overall status of women and their participation in social and economic development, including education, access to health services and management, and decision-making roles in all policy sectors.

20. In conclusion, she said that the Conference should undertake a review of incentives and penalties with a view to changing the economic behaviour of individuals and corporations, and should also address non-economic factors such as the cultural, social and ethical values motivating human behaviour. The fundamental changes which had to be wrought would affect every sector of industry, and the movement towards more environmentally sound and sustainable economic behaviour would change lifestyles the world over.

21. Mrs. MASRAINAH (Brunei Darussalam) stressed the importance of achieving a proper balance between environmental protection and economic priorities. The Conference should give special attention to the development needs of the developing countries which, in ensuring that environmental concerns were made part of their development plans, had also to respond to the needs of their people in terms of economic growth. The developing countries needed access to financial resources, technical assistance and technology to assist them in their efforts towards both economic development and environmental protection. Developed countries had to play their part in that process, and responsibilities had to be equitably shared.

22. It was to be hoped that the gathering of world leaders at the Conference would result in the necessary consensus and political commitment, thus

(Mrs. Masrainah, Brunei Darussalam)

enabling the world community to address any conflict of interests and concerns that might arise between the developed and the developing world. A balanced perspective was of the essence, as was the recognition of the sovereign right of any nation to utilize its resources for the benefit of its people.

23. Mr. EFTYCHIOU (Cyprus) said that, despite the recommendations adopted in 1972 at the first United Nations Conference on the Environment, and the great expectations created then, the global environmental situation had deteriorated. The question now was whether the absolute necessity of concerted action to safeguard the future of mankind had been recognized or whether, in another 20 years' time, there would have to be yet another international gathering to see what had gone wrong.

24. The evolution of the situation since 1972 showed what could happen in a world of unregulated exploitation of the environment. Although the industrialized countries and even some developing countries had prospered, the vast majority of the world's population had remained in absolute poverty. The disproportionate distribution of the world's wealth mirrored patterns of consumption and pollution that far exceeded the capacity of nature to cope with them. At the same time, poverty and the absence of sustainable development in the third world had degraded human and natural resources while constantly eroding environmental assets.

25. Whether environmental degradation was due to overindulgence or to efforts simply to survive, the result was the same, and the price for ignoring it would be paid by rich and poor alike. The poor, who had less to lose, must be made, through practical measures, to understand that they too had a stake in the future and could look forward to development and prosperity. That was the most important message that could emerge from the 1992 Conference. The Conference should be the culmination of a determined effort to solve the problem of a deteriorating world environment by tackling its root causes and initiating measures that would promote sustainable development for all.

26. To achieve those objectives, it was important for all the parties involved to be brought together to cooperate in offering their respective expertise and resources to achieve the common goal. It was also important to recognize, identify and evaluate all the issues involved and to set the right priorities. In his delegation's view, those priorities were: reviving growth, in particular in the developing world; merging environmental and economic concerns at all levels of decision-making; finding less energy-intensive patterns of growth; meeting the essential needs of the developing world's expanding population while working to stabilize it at a sustainable level; devising alternative means of production and consumption; reorienting technologies to meet the new challenges and, of course, making those technologies accessible to all. Those broad headings covered numerous specific problems that would also have to be tackled during and after the Conference. In connection with the revival of growth, for example, such problems as foreign debt and trade barriers could not be ignored. A wide range of environmental problems would also have to be addressed.

(Mr. Eftychiou, Cyprus)

27. There was increasing awareness in Cyprus that sustainable development was the only correct approach to improving the quality of life without degrading the environment. Special efforts were being made to avoid the mistakes of the past and new legislation had been introduced. Sustainable development had become the central concept of the country's 1989-1993 development plan. The plan implied managing the natural environment in a way that ensured the conservation of the country's ecosystems and natural resources by implementing technically sound, economically viable and socially acceptable programmes. Measures to achieve those policy objectives included environmental planning, pollution control, wildlife management, monitoring of the environment, strengthening of institutions, creation of environmental awareness, introduction of new legislation, and participation in international and regional environmental programmes. At the same time, the plan devoted special attention to policy in specific sectors such as agriculture, tourism, mining, energy and rural development.

28. Cyprus also participated actively in various environmental programmes related to the Mediterranean and had acted as host to the 1990 conference which had adopted the so-called Nicosia Charter on cooperation concerning the environment in the Mediterranean basin. Cyprus had established excellent links with the United Nations and specialized agencies in connection with environmental problems and their assistance was sought whenever the need arose. In the context of the Mediterranean Action Plan, Cyprus participated actively in the Priority Actions Programme and a number of others.

29. Ms. KOFLER (Austria) said that the time allotted to preparations for the Conference was slowly running out while many issues of major importance remained unresolved. The recent informal consultations on an Earth Charter, on institutional questions and on financial resources and transfer of technology had heightened the sense of urgency.

30. In regard to the Earth Charter, her delegation believed that any charter or declaration adopted by the Conference should be fairly brief, should build upon accepted principles in the fields of environment and development and should be forward-looking. It would possess the moral authority inherent in an important decision of a major United Nations conference and it should inspire and guide policy decisions at the national, regional and global level for years to come. The challenge would be to draft a document that would be for environmentally sustainable development what the Universal Declaration was for human rights. Environment and development should be truly wedded in that document, which should be an integrated statement of principles that could serve as a guide in achieving environmentally sustainable development on a global scale.

31. As far as institutions were concerned, however, there was currently nowhere in the United Nations system where development and environment could be integrated. Functions related to development came within the mandates of many United Nations bodies, as did functions related to the environment. It



(Ms. Kofler, Austria)

would, of course, be desirable to establish as many connections as possible between the two fields, thus enhancing system-wide coordination. There should also be a forum in which to monitor implementation of the decisions taken in Rio, and creative ways should be found of involving non-governmental organizations and the business community as well as Governments.

32. The fourth session of the Preparatory Committee might provide a partial answer to the challenge of creating adequate institutional arrangements. The ongoing work on reforming the subsidiary machinery of the Economic and Social Council, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 45/264, could be another step in the right direction. Ultimately, however, environmentally sustainable development should be seen as the guiding principle of all United Nations policy decisions and operational activities in the economic, social and related fields. Thus, responsibility for environmentally sustainable development could well be assigned to a reformed and strengthened Economic and Social Council.

33. A third area of interest to her delegation was the prevention and settlement of disputes. Austria had submitted, on behalf also of Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Italy, Poland and Yugoslavia, two proposals on the prevention and settlement of disputes concerning the environment (A/CONF.151/PC/L.29 and A/CONF.151/PC/WG.III/L.1). In accordance with decision 3/28 of the Preparatory Committee, one or two sessions of Working Group III would be devoted to questions of the prevention and settlement of disputes in the environmental sphere, as laid down in General Assembly resolution 44/228. Austria was reviewing the comments and proposals made on those texts so far and would welcome any further reaction from delegations.

34. Mr. METE (Albania) said that the forthcoming Conference would offer a unique opportunity to discuss strategies for environmental protection and set the guidelines for international cooperation on development.

35. The degradation of the environment in many regions of the world, including the Mediterranean region, had become a very serious threat, frequently resulting in irreversible damage to life-sustaining ecosystems. UNEP should move urgently to address those problems and to consider the legislation and investment required to meet the challenge to both industrialized and developing countries. The time had come for concerted efforts by all countries, with the help of UNEP, the World Bank and other international financial institutions.

36. As a Mediterranean country, Albania had become a party to the Barcelona Convention. It had received technical help under the Mediterranean Action Plan, and had itself trained many specialists in environmental protection. In the context of multiregional cooperation, cooperation among Mediterranean countries could serve as a testing ground for new ideas and solutions. Albania, together with other States of the Adriatic region and the European Community, had recently signed a declaration on the ecological protection of

(Mr. Mete, Albania)

the Adriatic Sea. Albania had also welcomed the Nicosia Charter on environmental cooperation between the Mediterranean region and the European Community, as well as other European conventions on environmental impact assessment, transboundary air pollution and protection of international waterways. It intended to seek the cooperation of the World Bank and other international institutions in order to carry out some of its priority national programmes for protection of the environment.

37. Albania's natural assets, including its rich flora and fauna and its coastline, were increasingly vulnerable to ecological degradation. The Government was aware of the gravity of the problem and had taken measures to use natural resources economically and to protect the environment, but it had not yet introduced all the necessary legislation. Environmental pollution was growing worse because of obsolete technology still in use in industry. Albania faced serious economic difficulties during the transition to a market economy at a time when the establishment of the rule of law was still incomplete. Not having sufficient financial resources to protect its environment, it regarded multilateral cooperation as the most effective way of dealing with the problem.

38. The discussion in the General Assembly of the arrangements for and aims of the Conference would enhance international cooperation in working out and implementing a real and lasting programme for protecting the environment and achieving sustainable development.

39. Mr. MATRI (Pakistan) said that a successful and balanced outcome of the Conference was critical for the future of the planet. He hoped it would mark the inception of an era of international cooperation and progress in which the needs and aspirations of all mankind would be fulfilled in an equitable, environmentally sound and sustainable manner.

40. The link between environment and development in the title of the Conference emphasized the need for an integrated approach. The narrowly defined agenda stressed by some of the industrialized countries reflected a somewhat shortsighted view. Environment must be studied in the larger context of the economic crisis facing the developing countries. A serious North-South dialogue was necessary in order to consider how to share the burden of adjustment equitably. The world environment suffered not only from underdevelopment but also from over-exploitation by the rich, and concessions from the South required commitments from the North as well. The depth of those commitments was not clear and there were few indications that they were regarded as having priority. The entire stress on environmental protection in most industrialized countries was directed towards a domestic constituency and there was no real effort to resolve the problem on a global scale. The developed countries must accept their responsibilities, both in seeking to enforce corrective policies and in assisting developing countries to participate in a global effort. The introduction of environmental protection was bound to widen the gap between developed and developing countries; extra

(Mr. Matri, Pakistan)

resources, as well as the transfer of environmentally sound technologies on concessional terms, were essential.

41. In Pakistan, the main environmental problems were desertification, waterlogging and salinity, soil degradation and waterborne diseases. The Government had developed a national conservation strategy to bring about environmentally sound and sustainable development, striking a balance between nature and industry, between human and natural resources. The strategy also covered research, legislation and coordinated environmental management at all levels.

42. Mr. OSSIO (Bolivia) said that his delegation wished to salute the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General of the Conference, who had played a fundamental role in the entire preparatory process. The three sessions of the Preparatory Committee had helped identify, analyse and better understand the items on the Conference agenda. The agenda had moreover been enhanced by the inclusion of items relating to human settlements, energy and the role of special groups, such as women and children and indigenous populations.

43. The Preparatory Committee's decision 3/2, on the structure and organization of Agenda 21, was fundamental. By virtue of its scope, objectives and comprehensive programme of action, the implementation of which would extend into the next century, Agenda 21 was expected to be the most important document of the Conference. It had therefore to be based on the inseparable link between the environment and development. According to decision 3/2, Agenda 21 should take into consideration ways of providing new and additional financial resources and action-oriented proposals related to the transfer of environmentally sound technology.

44. The Preparatory Committee had decided to continue negotiations on the transfer of technology on the basis of the Vice-Chairman's text annexed to decision 3/10. Although the text contained a series of brackets, it represented progress. In his view, it was time for countries to show greater flexibility and move away from false semantic issues, which were perhaps a means of avoiding compromise. Access of developing countries to environmentally sound technology was an indispensable complement to environmental protection and sustainable development.

45. The Preparatory Committee had thus far not paid adequate attention to the series of proposals concerning institutions. Decision 3/29 had merely requested the Secretary-General of the Conference to prepare an updated compilation of institutional proposals. Admittedly, that was perhaps the best way to proceed, in view of the sensitive nature of the issue and without knowing the scope of future agreements: appropriate institutional mechanisms could not be properly defined until the actions necessary to achieve the aims of the Conference had been identified. Nevertheless, there would clearly be a need for certain institutional mechanisms to ensure implementation and follow-up of the agreements concluded at the Conference. Those mechanisms

(Mr. Ossio, Bolivia)

should correspond to the importance and objectives of the agreements concerned as well as to the gravity, magnitude and complexity of the problems confronting the international community.

46. The success of the Conference would therefore depend on the outcome of the negotiations on three issues of fundamental importance to the developing countries: financial resources, transfer of technology, and institutions. Finding the appropriate solutions required a new direction in international cooperation: global agreements on sustainable development would be viable only if they included solutions to the priority problems of the developing countries.

47. Mr. GATHUNGU (Kenya) said that General Assembly resolution 44/228 remained a landmark in the history of mankind and had received enthusiastic support world wide; it was unique in seeking to reconcile human activities with environmental considerations. None the less, it was discouraging that the developing countries had had to expend so much energy and time to convince the developed countries that human activities were at the core of environmental degradation and must be dealt with from that perspective. He hoped that the developed countries would rally and assume their share of the responsibility, committing themselves to measures needed to restore the environment.

48. Human activities harmed the environment in two fundamental ways. The first was the waste of resources resulting from the ceaseless pursuit of affluence in the North, which could be ended by adopting consumption and production patterns which reduced waste, increased well-being, and limited the siphoning of resources from developing countries. The second was the waste resulting from the ever-increasing poverty and the consequent unproductive activities in developing countries; that problem could be mitigated by increasing productivity, which implied additional resources and technology, and retaining more capital for investment. At the same time, a host of factors, including international trade conditions, falling commodity prices, external indebtedness and demographic pressures, continued to hinder the developing countries from making progress in the fields of environment and development.

49. His country still maintained that it would be best to address the legal and institutional issues relating to environment and development after the objectives in that area had been defined and the role of the United Nations had been determined.

50. An individual's well-being was largely determined by his shelter. The planet had enough space to provide adequate shelter for all without destroying the environment; moreover, building housing contributed to development. His delegation was therefore pleased that the subject of human settlements was under consideration by the Preparatory Committee.

(Mr. Gathungu, Kenya)

51. The issue of women and the environment would also be considered at the Preparatory Committee's fourth session. He noted that discussion on that issue had thus far been limited to the situation of women at the national level. Yet at the international level, women faced some of the same problems as men, for example, trade barriers, protectionist policies and high prices for imports, and other problems which were unique to women, such as limited access to higher education abroad. Developed countries wishing to promote the advancement of women in developing countries should make proposals for action at the international level, with a view to considering them at the fourth session.

52. The Preparatory Committee faced the enormous challenge of completing its work in time for the Conference. Much remained to be done in the areas of the Earth Charter, Agenda 21 and sectoral and cross-sectoral issues, particularly as they affected developing countries. His delegation was concerned that participation of those countries in the Committee's fourth session and in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee concerned with drafting a framework convention on climate change, could be jeopardized by lack of funds; it therefore supported the appeals for contributions launched by the Secretary-General of the Conference.

53. Mr. BALE (Congo) said that preparations for the Conference were at the stage where the airing of regional perspectives must give way to a search for ways to harmonize the various positions. None the less, it was generally acknowledged that the industrialized countries, which had been the principal beneficiaries of technology, were responsible for the instability and risks facing the world and had a moral duty to respond to those challenges. Moreover, protection of the global environment was inconceivable without a more equitable distribution of wealth. In that connection, his delegation firmly endorsed the statement by Ghana on behalf of the Group of 77.

54. Environmental issues had to be approached through regional and international cooperation. His country wished to reiterate its commitment to that cooperation, made even more tangible by its recent election to the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). His Government had moreover promulgated a law which stressed the link between environment and development. Environmental matters would henceforth be incorporated into national education programmes, in particular with respect to sensitizing rural populations to ecological concerns. Under current legislation and administrative regulations, Congolese enterprises were responsible for the assessment of and reparations for any damage arising from their activities, according to the universal principle of "the polluter pays".

55. Forestry, a major source of revenue for his country, was governed by the forestry code, which regulated logging, while protecting the environment. The development strategy in that sector was based on greater production; increased cultivation of rapid-growth species; and artificial forestation, in which the Congo had extensive experience. It was participating in a regional project

(Mr. Bale, Congo)

for the conservation and rational utilization of forests in Central Africa, financed by the European Development Fund and, in that connection, he wished to thank the European Community for its support. In addition, UNDP and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) were carrying out in the Congo pilot operations on management of the forest ecosystem.

56. Action to combat environmental degradation should be part of the international community's efforts to revitalize economic growth and promote development. The Conference must therefore agree on a global strategy which took into account not only global problems but also environmental protection and economic growth at the regional and local levels.

57. Mr. GALGAU (Romania) said that a new awareness of the fragility of the world's ecosystem had gradually led to a sense of common responsibility for preserving the environment. Eastern European countries, which had played an inconspicuous role in the past had become vocal supporters of national and international measures to improve the environment. Ecological concern among citizens had expanded from the Western countries to become an international phenomenon. Greater attention was also being paid to the link between environment and development.

58. Preparations for the Conference had thus far been quite productive. Important progress had been made, particularly during the third session of the Preparatory Committee, on the main items of the Conference agenda and on the basic elements of an Earth Charter and of Agenda 21. He wished in that regard to pay tribute to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and the Secretary-General of the Conference for having developed a comprehensive "package" for the Conference.

59. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the statements made by the European Community, the Nordic countries and other industrialized countries, in which they had clearly acknowledged the need for a substantial increase in their support for efforts to achieve sustainable development being undertaken by developing countries and economies in transition. That implied not only new and additional financial resources but also new forms of assistance for environmental management and increased access to new and environmentally sound technology. Serious and imaginative consideration of those questions during the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee could have a decisive impact on the outcome of the Conference.

60. Significant advances had been made towards a framework convention on climate change in the past year and his delegation hoped that the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee would mark further progress in agreeing on an integrated draft text that could be adopted at the Conference. It therefore fully supported the idea of holding one or two more working sessions of the Committee, as well as the call for increased financial contributions to allow all delegations, including those of developing countries, to participate in the final stage of negotiations. Those

(Mr. Galgau, Romania)

negotiations should not be hampered by lingering scientific uncertainties about the feasible rate of burning fossil fuels or the widespread misconception that combating climate change would be costly and inconvenient. An inspiring example in that regard was provided by the unanimous agreement just reached at Geneva by European and North American countries to cut or freeze their emissions of volatile organic compounds.

61. The need to protect the ecological balance of the planet was perhaps one of the most urgent global development challenges. From that viewpoint, the Conference should be seen as a bridge between global environmental concerns, the many different initiatives already undertaken to face them and concerted action by the whole international community to promote new and environmentally sound economic development.

62. Furthermore, since every investment decision had potential transboundary environmental effects, it was moreover essential to involve not only public and governmental institutions but above all the business community in constructively defining environmental problems and developing solutions. The international community had to reassess its values and reinforce its ethical commitments to earth's gifts if the current threats of ecological degradation were to be diminished and eventually removed.

63. Mr. ISAKSSON (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that the emphasis on the linkage between environment and development made the 1992 Conference very different from the 1972 Stockholm Conference. UNESCO's deep commitment to the forthcoming Conference, based on the concept of environmentally sound and sustainable development as defined in General Assembly resolution 44/228, had been strongly endorsed at the recent twenty-sixth session of its General Conference, which had adopted a Declaration on the role of the UNESCO in relation to the 1992 Conference. Noting that UNESCO was uniquely placed to promote intersectoral and interdisciplinary work, the General Conference in its Declaration had stressed the key role of environmental and developmental education and information, as well as the importance of international scientific cooperation including natural, basic, engineering and social and human sciences, national and regional scientific capacity-building, and technology transfer, in particular in developing countries. The Declaration ended with an appeal that UNESCO should play a major role in the implementation of components of Agenda 21 concerning education, science, technology and culture in relation to environment and development.

64. In the preparation for the 1992 Conference, UNESCO had contributed to the work of a number of working groups, and would participate in the preparatory conference on water and environment to be held in Dublin, Ireland in January 1992. As the Director-General of UNESCO had indicated, the Rio Conference and Agenda 21 were a challenge and an opportunity for the organizations of the United Nations system to demonstrate their capacity to work together as a real system. UNESCO was ready to reinforce further its

(Mr. Isaksson, UNESCO)

work with Governments, other United Nations organizations, the relevant non-governmental organizations and the international scientific community in order to make the Conference and its follow-up fully successful.

65. Regarding the protection of global climate, UNESCO and its Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) were concerned in particular with three main topics: the major role of oceans in governing the world climate system and climate change; the role of the global water cycle in climate and the impact of climate change on freshwater resources; and training, education and public awareness related to those specific topics and to the climate in general. The first two topics were areas in which UNESCO had contributed significantly to the World Climate Programme and, in partnership with other international bodies and programmes, it was also studying the land-atmosphere interface and the impact of climate change on terrestrial ecosystems, past climate changes in relation to geological processes and the energy/climate link.

66. Many of the most severe potential impacts of climate change were transmitted through the ocean and UNESCO, mainly through the programmes of IOC, was helping to elucidate those questions. Scientific assessments also pointed to the urgent need for a global ocean observing system to make reliable climate-change predictions. An agreement to support and jointly develop the system had been signed by IOC, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) in October 1991. Plans for the system were well advanced and he urged that it should be given due attention.

67. Another scientific area of interest to UNESCO was the hydrological cycle. Its International Hydrological Programme had undertaken to study many of the little-known aspects of hydrology and water resources for sustainable development in a changing environment. UNESCO was also carrying out research on the effects of global warming on plant and animal life, on ecosystems and agro-ecosystems in its Intergovernmental Programme on Man and the Biosphere.

68. Climate change was a world-wide problem with important regional and national implications, and a solution needed to be found through globally concerted action, including special intellectual efforts in the three areas of UNESCO's competence: science and technology, education, and information, particularly information for decision makers.

69. Following the Second World Climate Conference in October 1990, the co-sponsors had continued to work together within the framework of the World Climate Programme, involving the essential parts of society to create a joint and strong commitment. It was now very necessary to involve all nations much more in that work.



70. Mr. MOZHUKHOV (Belarus), speaking on agenda item 78, said that the Republic of Belarus had a special interest in preparations for the Conference as its Parliament had declared the whole country an environmental disaster area in view of the tragic scale of the transboundary radiological effects of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. It would continue to participate actively in the work of all multilateral and bilateral international mechanisms and structures dealing with the issues of environment and development not only for those reasons, however. It held a position predicated on international solidarity and the joint responsibility of the entire world community for the future of planet Earth, and it shared the view that preserving environmental quality and making rational use of natural resources, under conditions of growing interdependence in the economic and other fields and of unprecedented changes in international life, responded to the current and long-term interests of all countries.

71. Each country nevertheless had to make a realistic assessment not only of others' contribution to the destruction of the environment but also of its own contribution to protecting the environment at the national and international levels. Natural systems would take centuries to recover from the damage already inflicted and it was to be hoped that the world had not gone beyond the point where such damage would become irreversible. Further progress, the continued survival of mankind and the securing of fundamental rights and decent living conditions were unthinkable without environmental safety.

72. As indicated in the report of the Economic and Social Council (A/46/3, para. 36), the Chernobyl disaster had shown the global scale of environmental repercussions, calling for concerted international action and cooperation. In that context, the Rio Conference should constitute a landmark not only in public awareness-raising but in the harmonization of common approaches to strategies for environmental protection and economic cooperation among all States, and should result in the adoption of binding agreements.

73. His delegation hoped that the reports of the second and third sessions of the Preparatory Committee would be endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-sixth session. Nevertheless, it appreciated the concern of some delegations that many fundamental issues still had to be resolved and trusted that a spirit of cooperation, political will and a high level of representation of Member States at the fourth session would bring progress in the negotiations on drafting specific agreements and conventions.

74. The adoption of the Earth Charter and Agenda 21 and the signing of conventions on climate change and biological diversity, and possibly also on forests, would justify the preparatory efforts. The Conference should devote particular attention to the problems of the developing countries, transfer of technology, financial resources, cross-sectoral issues and the relationships between particular problems. Agenda 21 should duly reflect the linkage between sustainable development and energy safety and might also include the question of preventing radiation-related global environmental degradation, a

(Mr. Mozhukhov, Belarus)

sensitive issue not only for Belarus, Ukraine and Russia but no doubt also for Japan and a number of other States.

75. Belarus had prepared a national report and was defining its position with regard to the Conference agenda. During the difficult period of transition, his country's authorities were nevertheless taking further national measures to ensure the environmental safety of the Belarusian people and to deal with the extremely complex problems resulting from the Chernobyl disaster.

76. The bitter lessons of Chernobyl had confirmed his country in the view that the main responsibility for environmentally sound and sustainable development and the prevention of all local and transboundary ecological disasters must lie with States themselves. However, it was essential to recognize joint responsibility, to promote concerted international action and to adopt binding international environmental agreements, notably in the sphere of responsibility for transboundary environmental harm.

77. While reserving the right to elaborate on his position at a later stage, he wished to assure all delegations that his country would contribute constructively to the success of the Conference.

78. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee had concluded its general discussion of items 78 and 79.

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

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.42)

79. The CHAIRMAN said that Algeria and Oman had joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.42.

The meeting rose at 8.35 p.m.