

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 46th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. BURKE

(Ireland)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 78: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/46/48 (Supplement No. 48, Vols. 1 and 2), A/46/86-S/22226, A/46/264, A/46/293, A/46/308, A/46/315, A/46/336, A/46/344, A/46/423, A/46/501/Rev.1, A/46/520, A/46/598; A/C.2/46/4)

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

1. Mr. LEE (World Health Organization) said that the World Health Organization (WHO) had participated actively in the preparatory process of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in order to identify health issues in the context of the environment and development. It had also attended all the sessions of the Preparatory Committee and had prepared background documents for the working groups on substantive issues such as toxic chemicals, water and hazardous wastes. WHO had also seconded a senior staff member to the secretariat of the Conference for two years. The major input into the preparatory process of the Conference had been provided through the work of the WHO Commission on Health and Environment and its panels on energy, industry, urbanization and food and agriculture. The Commission, chaired by Mrs. Simone Veil of France, had held its last meeting in July 1991, and its report, together with the reports of the individual panels, would be available in March 1992. The Commission had undertaken a comprehensive review of the relationship between health, the environment and development and had looked into the causes of ill health and made many recommendations for future action and research in the many interfaces of environment and development with human health.

2. He was pleased to say that the Commission's recommendations were very much in line with the proposals contained in Agenda 21. One of the most important conclusions of the WHO Commission on Health and Environment was that, despite the high priority that people gave to health, health had been largely ignored in the debate about environment and development. As a result, policies, programmes and projects that could have improved health had not been given adequate attention. Those concerns must be dealt with by Agenda 21. Second, the Commission had given the highest priority to meeting basic health needs related to the environment. It had highlighted the plight of millions of people who died or became ill each year because of correctable developmental insufficiencies and environmental degradation. In such areas, social and economic development was of the utmost priority. Third, the Commission had also noted that to achieve health for all, high priority should be given to reducing population growth rates, overconsumption and waste generation. Fourth, the Commission and its panels had reviewed existing knowledge on the relationship between health and the environment. It had concluded that, although much had been learned over past years, much more research was required. The Commission had stated that "good science" must

(Mr. Lee, WHO)

take a more central role in the decision-making process. Lastly, the Commission had referred to the need for much greater initiatives on the part of the health sector in assisting all government sectors dealing with development policy and planning so as to ensure that human health was made to benefit from development and from protection of the environment. Those priorities identified by the Commission were fully reflected in Agenda 21.

3. When deciding on the action programmes contained in Agenda 21 at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee, there would have to be strong emphasis on health in the context of environment and development. Health must also have a prominent place in the Earth Charter. There must be a recognition that human health was the driving force in promoting a healthy environment and that the two together constituted an essential aim of development. Development that sought economic gain at the cost of health could not be tolerated. Similarly, development that degraded the environment to the point where ill health was created could not be accepted.

4. Mr. AL-HUMAIDI (Qatar), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, said that, in resolution 44/228, the General Assembly had decided to convene the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development with the highest possible level of participation in order to elaborate strategies and measures to halt and reverse the effects of environmental degradation in the context of increased national and international efforts to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development in all countries.

5. The States members of the Gulf Cooperation Council were awaiting the Conference with great interest, especially in view of the ecological disaster which had occurred in the Gulf region as a result of the recent war, in which 700 oil wells had been set alight and over 3 million barrels of petroleum had been discharged into the sea. He expressed appreciation to the countries which had provided economic or other assistance to alleviate the effects of that disaster. He also hoped that the international community would continue to assist in the rehabilitation of the Gulf region.

6. The Gulf countries expressed support for the Conference with a view to securing sustainable and ecologically sound economic development. Although the task was immense, few conferences of the United Nations had attracted such a high level of attention and concern. As a result of the far-reaching changes in the relations between East and West and other major shifts throughout the world in recent years, the Conference would be held in an atmosphere of cooperation. The Conference was a forum equal in value to the United Nations as such, since the attainment of many of the objectives of the United Nations depended on the success of the Conference. The Conference was a unique opportunity to concentrate world efforts in stopping the deterioration of the environment and securing sustainable development.

(Mr. Al-Humaidi, Qatar)

7. In resolution 44/228, the General Assembly had reaffirmed that States had the sovereign right to exploit their own resources but that they must do so in a rational manner. It had also expressed concern about the unsustainable pattern of production and consumption in industrialized countries. The industrialized countries had major responsibility for the degradation of the environment, and their participation in the Conference must take that into account. The developing countries should participate at the Conference on an equal footing in all negotiations and at the time of decision-making.

8. It was to be hoped that the General Assembly would support the reports prepared by the Preparatory Committee and that the participants at the fourth session of that Committee would undertake to do everything possible to reach consensus. The Preparatory Committee still had many tasks to carry out but, in view of the political and technical complexity of most of the items which it had taken up, the work it had carried out so far represented significant progress in achieving a consensus on the most important issues referred to in General Assembly resolution 44/228. The success of the Conference would depend on the willingness of the international community to assist the least favoured countries in overcoming the problems that they encountered, since those problems were in turn one of the causes of environmental degradation. Agenda 21 and the Earth Charter were documents of enormous importance, and it was therefore to be hoped that the Conference would approve them. The Conference was a unique opportunity to solve the problem of securing an optimal balance between the environment and development. It was the responsibility of the international community to spare no effort for the success of the Conference.

9. Mr. PEÑALOSA (Colombia) said that, ever since the General Assembly adopted its resolution 44/228, the Group of 77 had sought to achieve a balance between environment and development with respect to the issues that would be addressed by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. However, his delegation was very concerned at the way in which negotiations had proceeded during the preparations for the Conference. On the one hand, the industrialized countries had made every effort to focus the debates on environmental issues and had almost always refused to consider development issues. On the other hand, not all countries had participated actively in the work of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, and many of the countries that had participated had been interested primarily in environmental issues. His delegation feared that the Conference would place too much emphasis on environmental issues and would not give sufficient attention to development issues, which could be a new source of frustration for the developing countries.

10. His delegation hoped that, at its next session, the Preparatory Committee would make greater progress than it had at its preceding sessions, and that a consensus would be reached on the basic issues to be included in the agenda as outlined in General Assembly resolution 44/228. It was not likely that what was not accomplished at that session of the Preparatory Committee, would be

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

achieved during the short span of the Conference. It was therefore advisable that high-level political representatives capable of taking important decisions should attend the forthcoming session of the Preparatory Committee.

11. It was not realistic to think that sustainable development could be achieved without the transfer of large amounts of resources to the developing countries. Such resources should be not only financial but also technological. In that regard, his delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's statement regarding specific proposals that had been made on the transfer of technology. Colombia also welcomed the meeting that would be held in Tokyo in 1992. However, it was not realistic to imagine that the developing countries would be able to achieve sustainable growth solely on the basis of external resources. Major efforts would have to be made at the national level in order to modify policies, institutions and programmes in such a way as to enable Governments to implement the provisions of Agenda 21. Colombia was convinced that the developing countries would take very seriously the commitments included in Agenda 21, provided that the developed countries also did so. For that reason, his delegation was pleased that the suggestions for altering the structure of the work for the Preparatory Committee in March 1992 had been accepted. At that time, the Preparatory Committee meeting in plenary session would, from the first day until the last, concentrate on negotiations, without hearing statements or general presentations. The Preparatory Committee would have to reach consensus on institutional arrangements at the international level to facilitate the implementation by all countries of the commitments on international technical cooperation, which would be included in Agenda 21.

12. His delegation welcomed the work that had been accomplished on the draft conventions on climate change and biological diversity. It was not advisable to pressure the bodies involved in preparing those conventions to finish their work before June 1992. While that would be a very positive achievement, Colombia considered that those conventions could also be finalized after the Conference.

13. His delegation made a special appeal to all countries members of the Group of 77 to participate very actively at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee in March 1992 and to ensure that the composition of delegations reflected the importance of the debates that would be held at that meeting. Colombia also called upon all countries with the financial capacity to do so to make financial contributions with a view to facilitating the participation of all developing countries not only at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee but at the Conference itself. The heads of State or Government that would attend the Conference should be sure that it would be possible to adopt basic agreements. It would be hard for heads of State or Government to go to Rio de Janeiro without knowing for certain what would be agreed at the Conference. It was therefore essential to reach basic agreements at the meeting of the Preparatory Committee.

14. Mr. MOORE (United States of America) said that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development offered a much-needed opportunity to forge a comprehensive strategy for environmentally sound development. In the opinion of his delegation, the principal goal of the Conference was to facilitate international cooperation through more effective programmes to protect the environment in a manner that was fully integrated with economic and development strategies. That was the essence of the concept of sustainable development, elaborated by the Brundtland Commission in its report entitled Our Common Future.

15. The successful implementation of that strategy would rest upon a foundation of broad public participation in decision-making. It would also be necessary to apply market-based mechanisms to improve economic productivity, since market-oriented systems provided the best way to obtain rapid adoption of environmentally sound technologies in a cost-effective manner.

16. The United States had been favourably impressed by the dedication and efforts of all participants at the second and third sessions of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference. However, the task that remained to be accomplished at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee was formidable, and his delegation was strongly in favour of extending the duration of the final session to five weeks.

17. The United States remained firmly committed to the negotiation of a convention on tropical forests, since a convention on that subject was urgently needed. His delegation hoped that the Conference would reach agreement on principles for a global consensus on the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests, since such principles would serve as a basis for negotiations on a global convention on forests that would provide a framework for nationally based actions. The United States welcomed the progress that had been made at the third session of the Preparatory Committee and was pleased that agreement had already been reached on the importance of global stewardship, sustainable management, education and training, integration of policies, research and inventory, and the use of market mechanisms.

18. The Conference would provide a unique opportunity for continued cooperation and consultation on oceans. Significant progress had been made in the Preparatory Committee, and there had been demonstrated willingness to find common ground for the development of principles to guide activities in that area over the next 20 years. His delegation looked forward to continued progress at the Conference on marine pollution, especially in the development of a strategy to address land-based sources of marine pollution, on integrated coastal zone management, living marine resources, and ocean data and monitoring.

19. Technological cooperation would be one of the most important matters before the Conference, since new and efficient technologies would be needed to sustain the world's economy, protect the environment and alleviate poverty and human suffering. For that, sound economic policy would be needed based on

(Mr. Moore, United States)

efficient market systems, together with an understanding by each country of its resources, capacities and needs, clarified by an assessment of the individual country's technology, a sound decision-making process and information arrangements that would make it possible to find out what was available and on what terms. The United States had put forward a comprehensive proposal along those lines during the third session of the Preparatory Committee and was gratified by the positive responses that had been received from developed and developing countries.

20. The United States had also put forward proposals aimed at strengthening the institutional structure of, and cooperation among, United Nations agencies concerned with environment and development. There should be an effective inter-agency coordinating mechanism for all elements of the United Nations system in that field. Organizations associated with the United Nations system, especially the international financial mechanisms and institutions, such as the World Bank and other multilateral development banks, should be involved in that effort, as should relevant non-governmental, voluntary and private sector organizations. The relevant agencies or organizations in the United Nations system should be strengthened or reformed, and regional or national programmes should be promoted.

21. The United Nations institutional reform should be carried out through optimal use of existing institutions and organizations and should rely on current or planned United Nations financial resources.

22. The United States also attached importance to the issue of climate change and the protection of the global climate for present and future generations. It had therefore joined in the consensus on General Assembly resolution 45/212 which had established a single intergovernmental negotiating process for the preparation of a framework convention on climate change, a process in which the United States Government was participating fully. However, the Second Committee was not an appropriate forum in which to address the substance of the ongoing negotiations in the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. The United States welcomed the progress made by the Negotiating Committee at its first three sessions and believed that the objective of completing the negotiations before the Conference, so that the framework convention could be opened for signature during it, was achievable.

23. Mr. KUKAN (Czechoslovakia), speaking on behalf of Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, said that those countries were taking an active part in the preparation of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which they believed could mark the end of a contradictory stage in the evolution of mankind, categorized by a remarkable development of the world economy on the one hand and a reckless plundering of natural resources and destruction of the environment on the other. In the 1990s, it would be necessary to promote growth according to the principles of sustainable development. Adapting the concept of sustainable development to international and national programmes, however, was more difficult than it had seemed in 1989 when the General Assembly had discussed the mandate of the Conference.

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

24. The fourth session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference would be crucial, since consensus had yet to be reached on a great number of issues, in particular the problems of financial resources, transfer of technology for sustainable development, the nature and substance of the Earth Charter and institutional questions. It was to be hoped that an agreement would be reached in time.

25. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland hoped that, as a result of the Conference, a series of regional and world activities would be initiated in the fields of technology transfer, protection against harmful and toxic wastes and implementation of effective programmes to reduce pollutants, the restoration of natural values, particularly in degraded areas, the development of protected areas, at the regional and transboundary level also, the development of an effective international environmental law, including procedures for the settlement of disputes in the field of environmental protection, and an international system for improving the environment in areas particularly degraded as a result of transboundary pollution.

26. In the former Soviet bloc countries, one of the negative consequences of four decades of rigid political systems with centrally planned economies had been the careless exploitation of natural resources. The task of creating a market economy, a transition which had never been attempted before in the history of mankind, was overwhelming. With the fundamental changes that had taken place in those countries, environmental issues had been given more political and social importance and public awareness had greatly increased despite the fact that it was the public that carried the burden of the transition. Nevertheless, a helpful international setting was one of the essential conditions for successfully eliminating the legacy of the last four decades, when virtually no attention had been paid to environmental issues. In short, a distinction should be made between the two principal barriers to achieving sustainable development in those countries: the first was technological and economic and the second was the overall political and social situation.

27. Despite the multiple environmental problems in Central and Eastern Europe, those countries were building their endeavours on cooperation, not on aid. They were not asking the industrialized countries to forget their commitments to the developing countries or to divert financial resources away from them. They supported any idea that could improve international cooperation in the field of environment and development and therefore supported the statement made by the Netherlands delegation during the general discussion.

28. The political changes in Central Europe and the transition from a centrally planned to a market economy had created the necessary circumstances for the environment to regain its proper importance among national priorities. However, the countries of Central Europe were facing serious difficulties in transforming current technologies into environmentally sound

(Mr. Kukan, Czechoslovakia)

ones, because of the lack of know-how and of specialized environmental management consulting firms and because of the lack of investment resources. International cooperation could greatly facilitate that task. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland would favour the introduction of an international system for facilitating technology transfer by eliminating restrictions on and barriers to international trade, and by the establishment of a system for financing transfers through loans on concessionary terms.

29. Substantial results could not be achieved through simple transfer alone. What was needed was real technological cooperation, based on bilateral and multilateral agreements to facilitate capacity and institution-building through joint ventures, joint programmes and training courses.

30. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland believed that regional cooperation in that field was essential. Their experience at the Dobris Conference on "Environment for Europe" had made them optimistic about environmental protection, for it was one of the few areas where it was possible to arrive at conclusions acceptable to all. Ministers participating in the Conference on Ecologically Sustainable Industrial Development, held in Copenhagen in October 1991, had noted with concern the environmental problems of the Central and Eastern European countries. They had also rightly noted that technology transfer was one of the keys to the adaptation and absorption of pollution prevention techniques. At a Conference of Prime Ministers of the Baltic countries, held in Ronneby, significant political impetus had been given to cooperation and protection of the Baltic Sea. Furthermore, the year 1990 had witnessed the establishment in Budapest of the Regional Environmental Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, which was a fine example of international cooperation in that field. Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland were prepared to contribute to the successful preparations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.

31. Mr. ARRIA (Venezuela) said that, since only three months remained before the final session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, there was no time to lose, especially since whatever was not negotiated on that occasion would be very difficult to achieve at the Conference. The preparatory process must be accelerated.

32. The developing countries accepted the concept of sustainable development and believed that putting it into practice would require resources, the transfer of technology and favourable conditions for their use. However, less headway was being made in that area than on topics that were of interest to the developing countries, such as climate change. Sustained development meant not only that immediate needs must be fulfilled without prejudice to future needs, but also that the needs of the North must be satisfied without compromising the short-term and long-term needs of the South.

(Mr. Arria, Venezuela)

33. Referring to the central theme of the Conference - development policy with an environmental component - he said that the Conference was not a forum for scientists and researchers, but rather a forum for discussing the central theme - the quality of life on the planet, and of its people. The composition of delegations would be an indication of each country's attitude. If they were composed only of environmental and scientific experts, the discussions would proceed along those lines rather than focusing on development.

34. The document submitted by the Permanent Representative of Sweden on behalf of the Nordic countries was an extremely interesting contribution, which reflected the traditional sensitivity of those countries and their special feeling of solidarity with mankind. The South Commission, for its part, in the document entitled "Towards a Common Strategy for the South in the UNCED Negotiations and Beyond", highlighted the need for a full-scale public information campaign in order to present the South's position on the theme of environmental development in its true light, and thereby counteract the negative image being propagated about the South in that regard.

35. International society at large, with a keen awareness and an extraordinary sense of responsibility, was in the preparations for the Conference cooperating through non-governmental organizations. Many of its contributions would no doubt be incorporated in a number of resolutions. The same could be said of indigenous populations, women and youth.

36. Conditions for technology transfer from North to South having become a topic of discussion, the developed world should not forget the technological debt it had incurred towards the third world countries over the centuries. The poverty in which a large percentage of mankind still lived was clearly a constant cause of environmental degradation. The wealthy countries, too, perpetuated the process of environmental degradation, although, in their case, it was not for lack of options, but rather because of excesses in their lifestyle. Lately, much was being said about the enormous commitments of those countries towards Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union and their feeling that they were less wealthy, or poorer, than before. Unfortunately, the countries of the South not only felt much poorer than before, but they really were much poorer. It should be realized that the countries of the South were not "free riders", as they had demonstrated by opening up their markets, submitting to fiscal discipline and respecting the environment. Naturally, the more powerful countries, which had done - and were doing - so much damage to the environment should not expect to participate free of charge in an effort by all of mankind: their financial contribution should be much greater than that of the countries of the South.

37. Although a great deal was expected from the Conference, it could not be expected to be the answer to the planet's problems. The Conference should prescribe ways and means of implementing the United Nations resolution on environment and development, which was the frame of reference and the framework for action.

(Mr. Arria, Venezuela)

38. Venezuela had the good fortune to possess natural resources in great quantities and geographic wealth and diversity, which it was intent on preserving. It therefore looked forward in particular to the commitments that would stem from the Earth Charter and Agenda 21. That was extremely fertile ground for a show of solidarity and cooperation. All countries shared the blame for creating the problem and they were all responsible for solving it.

39. Mr. LEV (Israel) said that threats to the environment made no distinction between nations and continents. It was not possible for each separate country, or even regions, to combat the adverse effects of human activities on the environment in isolation. A global perspective must be adopted, one from which problems could be identified and appropriate solutions found. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would have to tackle complicated and interrelated issues. Israel shared the feeling of the international community that the more interdependent environmental issues became, the more complex the topics would be. Consequently, initiatives to resolve those issues should be more ambitious and broader in scope.

40. A group of more than 100 Israeli companies were engaged in extensive research in order to develop sophisticated, innovative and export-oriented technologies. Those technologies dealt with the reduction of noise from jet planes; measures to control pollution from chemical gases and biological pollutants; the removal and purification of industrial waste from water-desalination plants; the identification of poisonous substances in water; more effective removal of oil spills in the sea; and the conversion of crop sprays into harmless substances.

41. It was Israel's intention to help implement the set of ideas and goals to be outlined at the Conference. His delegation trusted that the Conference would represent a milestone in efforts to resolve complicated environmental issues.

42. Mr. VAN LIEROP (Vanuatu), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Alliance of Small Island States, said that the Alliance was a coalition of small island and low-lying coastal States at comparable levels of economic development, which were all equally vulnerable to the adverse consequences of climate change, particularly potential sea-level rise. The 36 members of the Alliance were cooperating as participants in the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for a Framework Convention on Climate Change. The group included countries from the Atlantic, Indian and Pacific Oceans and the Caribbean, Mediterranean and South China Seas. The member States of the Alliance were developing countries and members of the Group of 77.

43. The members of the Alliance were those countries most vulnerable to the threat of sea-level rise and could literally be considered "front-line" States on the issue of global warming and other related environmental topics. They welcomed the interest shown by developed countries and developing countries alike in the physical and cultural survival of small island and low-lying coastal States.

(Mr. Van Lierop, Vanuatu)

44. Although the countries of the Alliance would probably be the first to be affected by global warming, the danger was common to all human beings. No country was large enough or wealthy enough to escape the adverse consequences of climate change. Since the most disturbing type of climate change was that caused by human activities, he was gratified to note the universal participation in the negotiation processes and the mobilization of world opinion on such problems.

45. The Conference to be held in Brazil in June 1992 should be seen as the beginning of a new stage in an ongoing process rather than as the end of that process. He urged all those who could do so to respond positively by making contributions to ensure the participation of all developing countries in the parallel negotiating processes. The representation of developing countries should be substantive rather than symbolic. Since the negotiations would be very complex, one-member delegations would not be able to participate effectively. He welcomed the plan to convene consecutive meetings of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference at United Nations Headquarters, which would allow developing countries to participate more fully in the process. He supported the parallel negotiation processes and hoped that they would be provided with adequate resources. The countries of the Alliance would continue to work diligently in both negotiating processes.

46. Mr. KABIR (Bangladesh) said that the time that remained for the completion of all preparations for the Rio Summit - barely six months - was critically important. The Preparatory Committee's adoption of Agenda 21 at its latest session in Geneva was therefore a significant achievement.

47. However, at its next meeting, which would take place in New York, the Preparatory Committee must continue its work on the Earth Charter. The pace of the negotiations would have to be accelerated if agreement was to be reached on concrete action plans for sectoral and global issues. Bangladesh felt that all the recommendations sent to Rio should fully integrate the environmental and developmental concerns of developing countries. The need to achieve such integration was the central component of General Assembly resolution 44/228. However, it would remain an elusive goal unless due importance was given to such cross-sectoral issues as the need for additional financial resources, the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to developing countries and crucial institutional concerns. Progress on those issues had been extremely slow. He trusted that the question of resources would receive high priority in negotiations in the coming months. In that regard, he recalled that, in its decision 3/4, the Preparatory Committee had requested the Secretary-General of the Conference to provide concrete proposals based on cost evaluations for the implementation of each programme area of Agenda 21.

48. It was necessary to go beyond the achievements of the last session of the Preparatory Committee and to work seriously to reach final agreement on all critical aspects of the important question of resources.

(Mr. Kabir, Bangladesh)

49. Bangladesh also shared the concern of other delegations at the slow progress of the Preparatory Committee's work on institutional issues. The Preparatory Committee had been unable to reconcile important differences of opinion on the issue, and the pace of negotiations should therefore be accelerated. He shared the Secretary-General's view that the Preparatory Committee's recommendations should take into account not only the international dimension of the issue but also the regional, subregional, national and local dimensions. Moreover, institutional improvements should be made through strengthened multilateral cooperation. Such improvements should promote a genuine partnership among Governments and peoples. Countries should therefore refrain from imposing unilateral conditions and should adopt measures to meet the critical needs of all, particularly those whose needs were most acute. Bangladesh was participating actively in the negotiations to finalize the framework convention on climate change, and was equally interested in the early finalization of the convention on biological diversity. He hoped that those conventions would be open for signature during the Rio Summit. He also hoped that agreement would be reached on a supplementary set of principles for future negotiations and on the necessary additional protocols.

50. The success of those exercises and of the Rio Conference itself would depend on the full participation of developing countries in the process. He was therefore concerned about the lack of resources, especially to meet the costs of participation of representatives from developing countries.

51. The 1992 Earth Summit would provide a unique opportunity to launch a programme of action in the area of environment and development. It would also allow delegations to draw up fundamental guidelines that would be effective well into the twenty-first century. The end of the cold war had given the world a chance to address those challenges through greater interaction and strengthened cooperation among nations. The real test of the Rio Summit would be whether it could forge a partnership that would secure the common future of humanity.

52. Mr. GUERRERO (Philippines) recalled that, at one time, the Philippines had formed part of the Asian continent, but that the melting of the ice of centuries had left the land fragmented into 7,000 islands. The moral of that story was that the deluge could happen again. Indeed, natural disasters had struck many places, desertification was increasing and the planet was being despoiled and degraded by man's greed or need.

53. The Secretary-General, in his 1990 report on the work of the Organization, had said that mankind must either protect nature and survive or destroy nature and perish. Studies had confirmed that ominous warning, and environmentalists had pointed out what was abundantly clear: that there would be rapid extinction of life, including man's, unless all men cooperated.

(Mr. Guerrero, Philippines)

54. In the Committee, sovereign States had expressed their willingness to cooperate to finalize the negotiations on biological diversity and climate change and to prepare for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The Philippines believed it was necessary to be aware, from the outset, of a common international objective: to ensure, for current and future generations, a quality of life which improved instead of deteriorating. It was therefore necessary to agree on a few basic principles: first, that man enjoyed primacy in the hierarchy of creation and that nature was in his service. Thus, the need for man to protect and preserve nature did not mean that nature was more important than man. Second, every man had an inalienable right to life, and thus a right to a life-enhancing, rather than life-destroying, natural environment. Third, every man deserved an improved quality of life, for which the environment was important because it was a means of fulfilling that aspiration. Fourth, all generations had a right to development, which meant that current needs must be met without sacrificing the satisfaction of future needs. Fifth, every State had the right to use its natural resources for the welfare of its people and a responsibility to protect the environment, not only for its own people, but also for all others, though that did not mean it must surrender its national heritage to a global public domain. Lastly, all peoples must cooperate in protecting the environment, but not at the expense of development, particularly that of the developing countries. Many of those principles were included, either implicitly or explicitly, in General Assembly resolutions 44/227 and 44/228.

55. The objective must be to elaborate an agenda for the control of environmental deterioration and the repair of the damage inflicted on nature, and also for ensuring development for current and future generations. Such an agenda should underscore the pressing need for an international economic climate which sustained the economic growth and development of developing countries; the cause-and-effect relationship between environmental concerns and other problems faced by developing countries, such as poverty, external debt, negative resource flows, severe structural adjustment measures, subsidies and protectionism, inadequate access to markets and deteriorating terms of trade; the critical need for funding for development, which should preclude the imposition of new forms of conditionality on the basis of environmental concerns; and the significant role of the transfer of technology on concessional and preferential terms.

56. Developing countries faced severe constraints that prevented them from achieving sustainable and environmentally sound development; poverty contributed to environmental degradation, and was in turn exacerbated by it. They could not solve their problems through economic and social programmes because a large portion of their already meagre resources was needed to service debt obligations. The Philippines, for example, had to allocate about 45 per cent of the national budget to debt servicing, while attempting at the same time to meet the basic needs of more than 60 million people. Achieving the goal of protecting and safeguarding the environment without inhibiting

(Mr. Guerrero, Philippines)

economic growth required a programme which was comprehensive, addressing the entire range of critical issues concerning the relationship between the environment and development; universal, involving all countries, developed or developing, continental or insular, land-locked or coastal, in addition to private enterprises and non-governmental organizations; equitable, recognizing the special responsibility incumbent on those causing the greatest environmental degradation through their production and consumption patterns; flexible, providing for appropriate adjustments in response to new knowledge and changing circumstances; and prudent, providing balanced representation for the settlement of disputes.

57. The declarations or instruments adopted by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development should permit mankind to rectify past errors and make a covenant with nature, which 'is not only an exhilarating political experience but also a categorical moral imperative for survival.

58. Ms. WILLBERG (New Zealand) said she wished to refer to two particular aspects of the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. First, New Zealand shared the belief that the General Assembly should not be involved in substantive debate on those issues currently being considered within the framework of Conference preparations, since that would unnecessarily duplicate efforts and lead to confusion. None the less, it was important to acknowledge the indissoluble bond among the various environmental issues and the need for each country to develop a corresponding political perspective in order to invoke the political will necessary for the success of the Conference. To help nurture that political will, the General Assembly could and should call upon the leaders of every Member State to confirm their commitment to the Rio Conference. Second, the objective of sustainable development and environmental accountability could not be attained by using mercantile approaches to international negotiations. A larger vision was needed; trust and equity in the negotiating process were indispensable.

59. Negotiations relating to environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable development differed from other negotiations because every country, developed or developing, wanted or needed something. Every country had a different priority and degree of interest with regard to each separate issue. Thus, all the participants had to recognize that disparity of interests and prepare their negotiating positions accordingly. While the Preparatory Committee had already completed three sessions, it was still not certain that the necessary political will existed to address the various questions: much of the debate was going on in other forums, such as the GATT negotiations on trade liberalization and the debt relief negotiations at the International Monetary Fund and the Paris Club. An overall political perspective at both the national and multilateral levels was therefore a vital part of the Conference preparations. In that connection, it was extremely important that the Preparatory Committee's fourth session, including documentation and administrative tasks, should be well-organized.

(Ms. Willberg, New Zealand)

60. There was no doubt that providing additional resources and granting favourable access to technologies were central to sustainable development and environmental responsibility. The estimated cost of Agenda 21 activities would give a clear picture of the financial needs of the undertaking. Of equal importance was the global policy under which environmental improvement and sustainable development would be pursued; in that regard, the primary responsibility rested with the major economic actors, namely the Group of Seven. It might be asked whether the members of that group were willing to decide at the Uruguay Round negotiations on a trade system based on comparative advantage, adopt a more expedient and comprehensive approach to debt relief in the context of the Paris Club and the Blotton Woods institutions, and accept global targets or national objectives aimed at reducing the inequitable consumption of global resources and creation of environmental hazards.

61. There was a danger that the Preparatory Committee session and the Conference itself might become so preoccupied with the question of providing additional resources that they would turn into pledging conferences, losing sight of the critical issue of determining international policy. Some might not be concerned by the lack of emphasis on liberalizing trade, increasing debt relief and reducing national energy consumption; however, such a trend would be self-defeating for the Conference. Accordingly, it was important to weigh the clear need for additional resources against the compelling need to restructure international cooperation so that a comprehensive and balanced programme for the Conference could be formulated.

62. Her delegation felt that the broadest possible participation of non-governmental organizations, including indigenous groups, at the next Preparatory Committee session and at the Conference was essential for a satisfactory outcome. The importance of the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, established to prepare a framework convention on climate change, could not be overemphasized; she hoped that a text would be ready for signature by the time of the Conference. While it must be recognized that the Committee's work was made more difficult by the diversity of national interests, the international community had to be able to resolve a situation which could fundamentally alter the Earth's climate and exacerbate many current difficulties. Island countries of the Pacific, for example, would have enormous adjustments to make if the hypotheses proposed by the international scientific community were confirmed; in the worst case, some of those countries would no longer be habitable. New Zealand believed that the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee, in December, must produce an integrated draft text with firm commitments to targets and timetables for dealing with greenhouse gas emissions and to the need for effective concerted action with regard to financial assistance and technological cooperation. The General Assembly could and should urge the Committee to act accordingly; the aim of any draft resolution on climate change considered by the Second Committee should be to bring about an early conclusion of a framework convention on the matter.

63. Mr. SUTRESNA (Indonesia) said that the Preparatory Committee's third session had been characterized by success in some areas; however, progress in other matters, especially those of vital interest to the developing countries, was far from satisfactory. Although 55 decisions had been adopted, much remained to be done in relation to the Earth Charter, Agenda 21 and institutional arrangements. There was also a sense of frustration because the developed countries had laid greater stress on matters reflecting their own interests, such as environmental protection, and had paid less attention to issues of interest to developing countries, such as development. During the third session, the developed countries had been hesitant to discuss proposals by the developing countries concerning new and additional financial resources and the transfer of environmentally sound technology. Indonesia was convinced that unless participants reached genuine agreement on all those issues, based on the provisions of General Assembly resolution 44/228, the success of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development would be in jeopardy. True international cooperation was needed to resolve the issues under Agenda 21 successfully.

64. The central concept that environmental protection should not be undertaken at the expense of development should be strictly respected. Accordingly, natural resources in the developing countries could not be considered as the property of all while developed countries persisted in maintaining unsustainable consumption patterns. Moreover, the South should not shoulder the entire burden of protecting the environment; the responsibility should be shared on an equitable basis. Of particular importance to Indonesia was the issue of tropical forests, which in its case represented substantial natural wealth. His country recognized the need for preserving the biological diversity of flora and fauna and for conserving the ecological sinks or biomass needed to absorb such gases as carbon dioxide. Nevertheless, as a developing country with a sizeable population, Indonesia's primary objective was to accelerate development. Thus those competing demands had to be dealt with so that both development programmes and ecological systems could be maintained. His country had taken major steps towards achieving that dynamic balance; however, its success would depend in good measure on international cooperation. In that context, the developing countries were faced with a major contradiction. Seeing how the developing countries had totally depleted their forests, destroying them for the purposes of development, developing countries wondered why they had to forgo the benefits of exploiting their own forest resources. Were they supposed to subsidize the developed countries for their past mistakes. To ensure sustainable management of tropical forests and preservation of biological diversity for the benefit of all, North and South had to share the responsibility and cooperate. Those considerations should be kept in mind at the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee.

65. Indonesia attached great importance to the successful conclusion of the work of the Preparatory Committee in order to secure a balanced outcome of UNCED 1992. It would participate in those negotiations with an open mind and flexibility without, however, neglecting its vital concerns and interests.

(Mr. Sutresna, Indonesia)

Environment problems could not be isolated from the general framework of development and must be viewed as an integral part of it. The international community must, therefore, seriously address the development requirements of the developing countries. In that respect, Indonesia was pleased with the joint German-Indonesian statement on cooperation on environmental protection (A/46/308) in which both countries agreed to strengthen cooperation in pursuit of sustainable development.

66. The UNCED negotiation process should not become a new source of North-South confrontation. Rather, it should be a forum where all countries established a programme for resolving equitably the questions of environment and development. It was important to ensure that the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 were based on the principles embodied in General Assembly resolution 44/228 and other relevant resolutions. Likewise, the Conference must also reflect the outcome of meetings of developing countries, such as the Beijing Ministerial Declaration on Environment and Development. All countries should attach great importance to the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee. His delegation welcomed the initiatives by some delegations to hold informal meetings to exchange views on some issues in order to facilitate negotiations at the session.

67. Mr. ANDRADE (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Panama, said that attendance by Central American countries at the sessions of the Preparatory Committee had been limited due not to lack of interest, but to budgetary restrictions imposed by their economic situation. They were, however, concerned by the lack of results obtained. The environment was an issue of fundamental importance to the survival of the Earth, and greater political will on the part of all Member States was essential in order to achieve the goals established.

68. Since 80 per cent of the world's population lived in developing countries, it was essential to formulate appropriate strategies for economic growth and social development under conditions of equality, security, well-being and independence. It was unacceptable that UNCED should impose obligatory unilateral measures required by the industrialized countries, which, to some extent, had achieved their development at the expense of global environmental degradation. It would also be unacceptable if commitments made at the Conference had to be respected only by the developing countries, while the developed nations refrained from supporting the overall development process.

69. The Central American countries were aware of the need to preserve the environment and had the political will to do so, as had been demonstrated by the fact that, at their summit meetings, the Presidents of those countries had pledged to protect the environment. Each country in the subregion had established a national commission which was cooperating closely with the Central American Commission on the Environment. Both national and subregional strategies and the Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America

(Mr. Andrade, Guatemala)

provided environmental protection and improvement measures. The Central American countries had participated actively in the meeting held in Mexico which had adopted the Tlatelolco Declaration containing the Latin American and Caribbean Strategy for Environment and Development. Those countries had begun debt for nature programmes, whose advantages or limitations would have to be evaluated to determine their appropriateness. A programme called "the Mayan Road" had also been elaborated in cooperation with UNESCO, designed to protect the environment and promote ecology-conscious tourism. All those programmes would require sufficient resources to promote progress in that vital area.

70. Central America was part of one of the world's tropical regions, whose forests, extremely rich in biological diversity, helped ensure survival on the Earth. However, that service went unnoticed when it came time for payment of external debt. There was no acknowledgement of the debt owed by the developed countries to all less-developed countries which, because of their forest areas, generated the oxygen necessary to human survival, a service which should be compensated in a just and equitable manner.

71. Adequate environmental protection required international cooperation and solidarity, and Guatemala supported the position of the Chairman of the Group of 77. It was intolerable that 20 per cent of the world's population should live in luxury while the rest of the world barely survived. On the other hand, no attempt should be made to replace indigenous cultures; rather, they should be given access to education to raise awareness of the need to protect the environment and access to a standard of living allowing dignity. Promotion of education for women and children was essential, and women must also have access to decision-making in their societies, since they bore the major responsibility for the quality of family life. He wondered how it would be possible to convince rural people to stop cutting trees or clearing fields if they could not be guaranteed an adequate income to allow them to survive and raise their standard of living.

72. Agenda 21 was of critical importance because the strategy for the next century must be broad and include development guidelines, mechanisms, modalities and priorities as well as assigning responsibility, including financial, and the need for transfer of environmentally sound technology. Guatemala was concerned, however, that such technology would be inadequate, limited or inaccessible because of its cost.

73. With regard to human resource development, in order to improve national capacity in environmental and ecosystem protection, indigenous populations must become educated and trained to utilize their natural resources rationally and responsibly. So-called shared responsibility among developed and developing countries for environmental protection must still be defined. The responsibility of developing countries lay in avoiding repetition of the mistakes of the industrialized countries, which owed their wealth in good measure to indiscriminate exploitation of the environment. The developed countries should allow free access to their markets, eliminate protectionists

(Mr. Andrade, Guatemala)

measures and pay fair prices for the products of developing countries. They were not asking for handouts, but demanding what rightfully was their due.

74. The importance of promoting and stimulating cooperation among developing countries to arrive at their own solutions to their problems must also be emphasized. Those countries must assume historical responsibility for their future and invest their resources in rational and productive ways to benefit their people.

75. In Central America, political independence had been affected in recent years by civil wars, which had plunged them into deepening poverty. Due to structural adjustment programmes, social sacrifices had been enormous, with budget reductions in education, health, social service and environmental sanitation. Currently, Latin America and the Caribbean were threatened by a new cholera outbreak, and the entire world was being attacked by a series of epidemics. Economic indicators had declined to the levels they had been at 20 years earlier. The challenge of integral development must be faced, and the natural heritage protected and preserved, without sacrificing the human being.

76. Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile) said that some of the issues being addressed at the current session traditionally gave rise to confrontation. However, environmental problems were an exception because they demonstrated more than any other area the interdependence of the contemporary world and the need for common efforts to achieve adequate solutions. Air and water contamination, climate change, ecosystem imbalance and natural resource depletion were a global threat, highlighting the common interests of the international community.

77. It was undeniable that the world was experiencing environmental degradation, and that, unless swift and effective action was taken, the future looked bleak. The growing interest in the issue was a positive and encouraging sign. Nevertheless, for developing countries the situation had special characteristics.

78. Chile welcomed and supported the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In order to make the Conference a success, the international community would have to reach agreement on many issues. A particularly important issue was that of additional financing, which would be needed for implementing the decisions of the Conference. Moreover, the issue of the dimensions of development should be further strengthened. The work of the Preparatory Committee on both those issues left much to be desired, and his delegation hoped that the Preparatory Committee would adopt clear criteria at its next session.

79. Chile had participated actively in the preparatory process, to which it attached great importance. That process should be a harbinger of the new international order that should be established for the benefit of all. The

(Mr. Gonzalez, Chile)

environment was an area of common interest in which it could be demonstrated that, with new concepts and renewed political will, the well-being of all people could be improved. The Conference should therefore take measures that would make development and the preservation of the environment compatible, since both development and a sound environment were essential for the survival of the planet.

80. Environmental degradation should not prevent developing countries from exploiting their natural resources and maintaining their industries. Poorly transplanted technologies and the plundering of marine and land resources had awakened an environmental awareness that could perpetuate the current state of underdevelopment. The exploitation of developing countries' resources had been of no direct benefit to their peoples. It was therefore not fair to impose arbitrary limits on the developing countries. Those who had the capacity should develop appropriate technologies to preserve the environment and promote the transfer of those technologies on the basis of international cooperation.

81. It was essential to reach agreement on integrated policies on commodities, in particular policies aimed at increasing prices. Worsening terms of trade had led to the indiscriminate exploitation of those resources in order to maintain purchasing power through increased production. While environmental problems were of concern to all countries, it was necessary to identify measures that could be applied by each individual country according to its level of industrialization. Moreover, greater efforts should be made to solve the most pressing problems.

82. Although the concept of sustainable development was relatively new, it was becoming more important every day. It was necessary to continue to refine that concept and adopt agreements that would facilitate its implementation. Environmental agreements must be balanced by the international community's commitments to support overall development. All those activities would require considerable resources, and Chile commended the Secretary-General's efforts and the progress that had been made in that area. Thanks to the spirit of harmony that characterized the new international political climate, agreements could be reached that would allow countries to attain higher levels of development without further damaging the ecosystem.

83. Mr. CAMILLERI (Malta) said that the preparatory process for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development had reached its final and most important stage. The international community should define a set of principles and a long-term programme of action that would make it possible to halt and reverse environmental degradation and, at the same time, promote the development of the developing countries.

84. The Chairman of the Group of 77 had already mentioned the basic principles that should guide the developing countries in the negotiations leading up to the 1992 Conference. The signing of a framework convention on

(Mr. Camilleri, Malta)

climate change would be one of the principal results of the Conference. Three years ago, his delegation had brought that issue to the attention of the General Assembly. Two years later, the Assembly had agreed on the need to prepare a framework convention, as well as the necessary legal instruments to address the threat that climate change posed to the world's prosperity and development. In his report on the work of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (A/46/602), the Secretary-General outlined the specific requirements that must be met in order for that important process to be completed on time. Malta hoped that, in the resolution that it would adopt on that issue, the Assembly would take the necessary steps to ensure that the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee received the resources it required to complete its work.

85. Climate change did not respect geographical or national frontiers. Small island States were particularly apprehensive about the threat that climate change and its effect on oceans, including the prospect of a sea-level rise in the next few decades, posed to their existence. For that reason, they attached particular importance to the inclusion in the Convention of adequate provisions on the role of oceans in climate change, in particular the need to protect oceans from becoming sewers and the need for adequate management of marine resources.

86. In July 1991, an international meeting of scientific and technical experts on climate change and oceans had been held in Malta. The meeting had considered measures that States should take to mitigate the adverse effects of climate change, and had recommended that the framework convention on climate change should call upon States to cooperate in order to promote studies and encourage the exchange of information on the role of oceans in climate change. The role of scientific research in making precise projections had been raised in most of the debates on climate change and on the protection of the environment as a whole. His delegation supported the approach based on the principle of prevention. Although projections were not completely accurate, they were an indication of disturbing trends. Malta considered that the technology needed to halt the clearly identified negative trends, was already available.

87. The issue of technology raised the even more important question of responsibility. The principle of equitable but differentiated responsibility was self-evident, as was the right of all peoples to development. In the past, development had often been achieved at disastrous costs to the environment. That had made it possible to make technological advances that could be of use to countries just beginning their development process, and could help them avoid the errors of the past. Countries that had reached a high level of development had a twofold responsibility: to provide other countries with the technology they possessed and to adapt their patterns of consumption and production to current realities and technologies.

88. A number of speakers had graphically described the alternatives offered to humanity by horizontal competition among societies, which favoured the

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legitimate satisfaction of basic needs over wasteful patterns of consumption. However, in addition to horizontal competition among societies, there was also vertical competition between generations; that case illustrated the sharp contrast between the still rich planet of the current generation and the desert that might be bequeathed to the next generation. In the light of that prospect, Malta had proposed that the Earth Charter should include a provision stating that each generation had the responsibility of guaranteeing that, in all national or international forums at which a decision might be taken that could affect the interest of future generations, an officially designated person should act as "guardian". That had also prompted the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Malta to propose, at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly, that the Trusteeship Council, in addition to its function under the Charter of the United Nations, should act as a depositary of mankind's common heritage, which included the environment, the protection of extraterritorial zones, marine resources, the seabed and the rights of future generations.

89. Mr. MAMFOUMBI (Gabon), speaking on behalf of the Group of African States, requested an extension of the deadline for the submission of drafts under agenda item 12. Three draft resolutions would be submitted under that item; they dealt with the Europe-Africa permanent link through the Strait of Gibraltar, the Second Industrial Development Decade for Africa (1991-2000) and the Second Transport and Communications Decade in Africa. Those items had been dealt with, respectively, in Economic and Social Council resolutions 1991/74, 1991/81 and 1991/83.

90. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.