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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 50th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. BURKE (Ireland)

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

AGENDA ITEM 82: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)
(A/C.2/46/L.47)

1. Mr. SOUMPHOLPHAKDY (Lao People's Democratic Republic) announced that his delegation wished to withdraw its sponsorship of draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.47.

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

(e) ENVIRONMENT (continued) (A/46/3 and 25, A/46/138-E/1991/52, A/46/156-E/1991/54, A/46/214-E/1991/77, A/46/308, 423 and 615; A/C.2/46/3, 11, 13 and 14)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued) (A/46/3 and 25, A/46/157-E/1991/55, A/46/268-E/1991/107 and Corr.1 and A/46/380-E/1991/142)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued) (A/46/3, 8 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, and A/46/262-E/1991/96)

2. Mr. GOUDIMA (Ukraine) said that the world was on the brink of an environmental catastrophe and concerted efforts were required by all States to save the future of the planet. In view of the particular role of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in that undertaking, Ukraine welcomed the significant progress made by UNEP as the catalyzing, coordinating and mobilizing organization in the United Nations system in the environmental sphere.

3. Ukraine shared the opinion of many other delegations that optimal use should be made of UNEP in promoting the success of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and that UNEP should work in close cooperation with the Preparatory Committee and the secretariat of UNCED.

4. Ukraine welcomed UNEP Governing Council decision 16/9 on the establishment on an experimental basis, of a centre for urgent environmental assistance, as the importance of such a centre had been underscored by the environmental emergencies in the Persian Gulf, the consequences of the Chernobyl accident and natural disasters elsewhere in the world. The centre could be tasked with the compilation of a register of the world's most hazardous industrial installations. Ukraine had gained useful experience from the tragic Chernobyl disaster which could benefit the Centre: technical methods of environmental monitoring had been elaborated and the numerous highly qualified experts in the country could be seconded to the centre's projects. Ukraine similarly welcomed decision 16/10 on the contribution by UNEP to international cooperation on the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. Collective efforts and appropriate national policies were required to ensure the effectiveness of those decisions. Specific measures had been

(Mr. Goudima, Ukraine)

adopted in the Ukraine to restructure and upgrade the entire environmental protection system and appropriate new legislation had been adopted in that area. Provision had been made for environment-related international instruments to which Ukraine might become party to have precedence over any domestic legislation in the same area. Public organizations, such as the environmental action group "Green World" were playing an increasingly important role in environmental monitoring.

5. Turning to agenda item 78 (f), he said that Ukraine fully supported the recommendations on increased international cooperation to combat desertification and drought contained in the Secretary-General's report in document A/46/380. Ukraine similarly commended the Commission on Human Settlements on the activities described in its report A/46/8.

6. Mr. PEREIRA (Cape Verde) said that issues relating to drought and desertification should be tackled with renewed impetus, in view of the disastrous consequences of those phenomena for affected populations and their impact on the global environment. While some progress had been made in addressing those issues, much remained to be done, and resources to combat desertification must be increased substantially. The Conference on Environment and Development would provide an opportunity for the international community to tackle desertification problems in a consistent, thorough and coordinated manner.

7. Since attaining independence, his country, which was located at the centre of the Sahelian belt and was seriously affected by recurrent drought and desertification, had mobilized to reverse the desertification process through reforestation and by increasing agricultural production and improving the water supply. While much had been achieved as a result of those efforts, particularly with respect to reforestation, much remained to be done before the results could be considered satisfactory. He expressed his delegation's appreciation for the technical and financial support it had received from various sources.

8. Mr. IMANALIEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the potential of UNEP in helping Member States solve their environmental problems was far from exhausted. A recent report on the state of the environment in the USSR had painted a disturbing picture of such problems as Chernobyl, the state of the country's seas, lakes and rivers and conditions in many industrial centres and regions. A national strategy on environmental issues was under consideration, but many of those problems were of a severity that required efforts possible only at an international level. For that reason, the USSR attached great importance to international cooperation in environmental work, such as the current USSR-UNEP project to restore the environment of the Aral region, whose destruction had direct consequences for the health, economic development and very survival of more than 30 million people. He also drew attention to recent proposals submitted to the General Assembly at its current session by the Government of Uzbekistan on further cooperative measures to address that problem.

(Mr. Imanaliev, USSR)

9. The USSR set great store by the establishment of a centre for urgent environmental assistance and has submitted a list of Soviet scientists whose expertise could be made available to the centre, for the benefit of all States. The USSR hoped that other countries with experience in dealing with the consequences of man-made environmental disasters would also take an interest in the centre. The establishment of the centre at the earliest possible date would considerably advance the objectives of General Assembly resolution 44/224 on international cooperation in dealing with environmental emergencies.

10. The USSR was convinced that effective international and national environmental programmes would only be possible on the basis of strong cooperation between Governments, public bodies and business and scientific circles and it therefore urged all States to give active support to national non-governmental organizations and business associations concerned with environmental issues.

11. In conclusion, he commended the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS (Habitat)) for its valuable work and, in particular, for its contribution to international cooperation in mitigating the consequences of the Chernobyl accident.

12. Mr. JOUNA (Niger) said that his delegation fully endorsed the views expressed by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of 77 with respect to agenda item 77. The economic problems which had plagued the developing countries, and African countries in particular, during the past decade could be ascribed in part to environmental management problems and natural disasters, including drought and desertification. Environmental degradation was particularly severe in his country, more than half of which was desert land. The serious economic difficulties of the Niger's rural economy were compounded by desertification, climate changes and water supply problems, characterized by the decreased fertility of land, crop shortfalls, barren pastures, deforestation and the decline of biological diversity.

13. His country was determined to continue its struggle to halt desert encroachment. A national desertification control plan had been worked out in accordance with regional guidelines established at meetings organized by the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel. The plan recognized the inextricable link between environmental protection and the well-being of man, as well as the need for a broad, integrated approach to natural resources management. His delegation expressed appreciation for the assistance his country had already received and looked forward to further effective support. His country would continue to participate actively in organizations concerned with environmental protection and desertification and hoped that the Conference on Environment and Development would make a definitive contribution to the world's environmental protection efforts.

14. Mr. LEV (Israel) said that efforts must be intensified to eradicate desertification and welcomed the fact that the issue would be dealt with at the Conference on Environment and Development. Advances in science and

(Mr. Lev, Israel)

technology should be utilized to convert arid zones into habitable and productive areas. His own country's continued development and well-being depended on its ability to revitalize the desert, which accounted for almost two thirds of its land area.

15. Two guidelines served as the basis for Israel's approach to the issue: firstly, it was necessary to understand the desert and the desertification process and, secondly, the process of desertification must be tackled through a general strategy to reverse the process, rather than with defensive actions. His country was prepared to share the experience and know-how it had gained through its research and development efforts in respect of arid zones and the conversion of the desert to a productive environment.

16. The process of desertification could be reversed by turning large areas which in earlier eras had been fertile regions back into fertile land, an undertaking which, if carried out wisely, would benefit man without harming nature. An international plan was needed to settle people in the desert for the purpose of stopping desertification.

17. Mr. AL-HOSNI (Oman) said that his country sought to protect the environment in accordance with scientifically sound criteria, and the Ministry for the Environment and the Council for Environmental Protection and Pollution Control were very active in that effort.

18. Oman, which had more than 115 medium and heavy industries, had adopted appropriate environmental protection and pollution control legislation. Moreover, with waters rich in marine life and a coastline of some 1,700 kilometres long, his country recognized the importance of protecting its marine environment and had adopted legislation to control the dumping of hazardous waste and toxic substances.

19. Efforts to promote environmental awareness in the schools and to encourage afforestation and proper household sanitation were further examples of his country's concern for the environment. The importance of protecting the environment from transboundary pollution had been vividly demonstrated by the air pollution generated in his country by oil fires set during the Persian Gulf war.

20. His country would send a high-level delegation to the Conference on Environment and Development and it proposed the establishment of an international body to protect the environment.

21. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), noting that agriculture was both the cause of environmental problems and their victim, said that it would be critical at the Conference and in follow-up undertakings to recognize that sustainable development required a concerted approach to the closely related issues of environment, agriculture, industry, energy and trade.

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

22. In cooperation with the Netherlands Government, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had organized a Conference on Agriculture and the Environment in April 1991 which had paved the way for international cooperation to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development. Sustainable agriculture and rural development had been defined by FAO as the management and conservation of the natural resources base, and the orientation of technological and institutional change in such a manner as to ensure the attainment and continued satisfaction of human needs for present and future generations. Such sustainable development (in the agriculture, forestry and fisheries sectors) conserved land, water and plant and animal genetic resources, and was environmentally non-degrading, technically appropriate, economically viable and socially acceptable. In identifying the features of a global common strategy and plan of action to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development, the Conference had acknowledged the vast diversity of ecological, cultural, social and economic conditions which affected agricultural practices throughout the world and had recognized that the purpose of agriculture was, first and foremost, to ensure food security for all, and to provide employment opportunities, improved living conditions and income security in rural areas.

23. At its ninety-ninth session, the Council of FAO had endorsed the recommendation by the Conference that it develop, with the support of and in close cooperation with other appropriate United Nations organizations, an international cooperative programme framework to assist in matters relating to sustainable agriculture and rural development. Strategies and proposals for action should take into account the need to promote ecologically viable agricultural practices in the industrialized world; ways to finance and share the costs of sustainable agriculture and rural development; and the need to elaborate guidelines and other tools to help countries formulate appropriate policies and plans before the investment stage. FAO was working closely with the Secretary-General of UNCED on those issues.

24. FAO considered desertification a form of land degradation. A Special Action Programme on Conservation and Rehabilitation of African lands had been launched in 1991. At the national level, the Programme called for the adoption of improved soil utilization techniques by encouraging the involvement of users, and envisaged the establishment of the required institutional structure. At the regional level, the Programme envisaged the establishment of information networks, cooperation among countries in research programmes and the establishment of subregional training services. Country-specific programmes were a key feature of the plan. Preliminary activities were already under way in five African countries and similar programmes would be introduced in the coming years in Asia and Latin America.

25. Some 184 FAO projects in 32 countries focused on various aspects of desertification. To ensure that such projects were based on a sound knowledge of the physical environment and of the scope and state of agricultural resources, FAO continued to support activities relating to data collection and

(Mr. Camara, FAO)

the evaluation of the potential and state of land, in close cooperation with UNEP, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) and the International Society of Soil Science. FAO also worked with national institutions to devise and implement more productive and durable land use methods.

26. In conclusion, he said that FAO looked forward to cooperating with government authorities, organizations in the United Nations system, donors, non-governmental organizations and rural collectives and households in the fight against desertification, with a view to ensuring sustainable agriculture and rural development.

27. Mr. ESTRADA OYUELA (Argentina) said that his Government was deeply concerned about the spread of desertification and he noted with regret the lack of progress in international efforts to combat desertification. The Consultative Group for Desertification Control had proved ineffective and appeared to be still searching for its proper function. Desertification was a universal problem, for its causes were closely linked with agricultural methods practised throughout the world.

28. Agriculture was the privileged pursuit of only one species on the planet and it was essential that it should be practised in a sustainable manner, consistent with the laws of nature and the balance of the environment. Intensive farming methods that went hand in hand with protectionist agricultural policies were not only inefficient, they had severe environmental consequences and led to desertification. The implementation of such policies in some countries and, in particular, the implementation of a common agricultural policy, prompted otherwise efficient agricultural producers in other countries to adopt non-sustainable farming methods to compensate for the commercial losses that they suffered through the application of heavy agricultural subsidies. Such subsidies burdened the taxpayer, penalized the consumer and had serious consequences for the environment, causing the disappearance of species, contamination of water and an increase in nitrogen and ammonia levels.

29. In Argentina, such practices had led to a deterioration of the soil and affected not only arid and semi-arid zones, but even areas whose agricultural potential was among the highest in the world. Competition had caused the rejection of crop rotation in favour of intensive farming methods aimed at super-production, which damaged the fragile ecosystem of the soil.

30. His delegation therefore believed that a close scientific study of the problem was required, with an analysis of its environmental impact. The Secretary-General, in cooperation with FAO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), could make recommendations to the international community on the necessary corrective measures. Such a study should take into consideration the protectionist agricultural policies of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), implemented at an approximate annual cost of \$300 billion, and the pressures which excess

(Mr. Estrada Oyuela, Argentina)

agricultural production placed on efficient producers in the developing countries to abandon traditional food crops in favour of non-sustainable cash crops, leading to the deterioration of the soil and the spread of desertification.

31. He suggested that cooperation programmes should be adopted to promote sustainable agricultural development by improving access to markets and ensuring fair prices for agricultural produce. Such programmes would be conducive to economic growth and sustainable development in producer countries, particularly in the developing countries. In view of the important link between the issue of desertification and the question of economic growth and development, Argentina urged its inclusion in Agenda 21.

32. Argentina was concerned about over-fishing. The General Assembly had adopted appropriate protection measures, particularly with regard to the Pacific, and Argentina would endeavour to ensure the implementation of those measures in the South Atlantic. It was necessary to identify the sustainability of the world's living marine resources and to study the consequences of further exploitation for their biological diversity, for the marine environment and, in the case of Argentina, for the economic and social life of the fishing communities whose livelihood depended upon them.

33. Lastly, he noted that the issue of human settlements had still not been approached by the United Nations in a fully integrated manner. In particular, it was necessary to study the problems caused by the overpopulation of urban areas in all their aspects, namely, with regard to transport, services, housing, the placement of industries and the economic growth rate necessary to generate development policies compatible with an adequate distribution of income. The issue of human settlements should be given high priority in the future work of the Organization, and Argentina was willing to contribute to that endeavour.

34. Mr. INCER BARQUERO (Nicaragua), speaking on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama and Nicaragua, said that his statement would complement earlier remarks made by the Guatemalan representative.

35. Latin America and the Caribbean had vast natural resources, varied ecosystems and great human potential, all of which were unexploited for lack of sufficient financial resources. With only 8 per cent of the world's population, the region had 23 per cent of the world's potentially arable land, 29 per cent of its farmland, 31 per cent of its usable surface waters and 46 per cent of its tropical forests.

36. However, the difficult economic situation in Latin America - aggravated by external debt, inflation, lack of investment, unfavourable terms of trade and growing international dependence - had driven its population to exploit natural resources inappropriately. In addition, a veritable environmental

(Mr. Incer Barquero, Nicaragua)

debt was owed to Latin America, whose forests had been cleared, whose soil had been eroded and rivers polluted in order to support the markets of industrialized nations.

37. With nearly 30 million inhabitants, in 500,000 square kilometres, the Central American countries, including Belize and Panama, were perhaps the most densely populated in the region and had one of the highest population growth rates in the world. The isthmus was a genuine biological bridge between North America and South America, which separated two large seas and had tremendous biological diversity. As a tropical region whose countries were economically dependent, Central America was extremely vulnerable, both ecologically and economically.

38. In Central America, there was a high incidence of poisoning from the indiscriminate use of insecticides. In fact, 75 per cent of the insecticides that were banned or restricted in the United States were still in use there. A number of foreign enterprises had also bid on the use of Central American territory for discarding or incinerating toxic, highly polluting wastes that were virtually prohibited in the industrialized countries. That had moved the Central American Presidents to issue a joint ban on the establishment of such enterprises in their territory.

39. The Central American Presidents had also established the Central American Commission on Environment and Development in order to elaborate joint measures to preserve the natural heritage of the isthmus, ensure a more rational use of its resources and promote sustainable economic and social development. The clearing of rainforests for rather unproductive farmland or pastureland and the destruction of dry forests for fuelwood and charcoal were serious problems in Central America. The removal of vegetation cover was the chief cause of water and wind erosion which, in turn, depleted the soil. Extensive deforestation had also altered the hydrological system, clogged energy-generating dams, depleted fauna and flora and reduced biodiversity. The extinction of hundreds of species annually, many of which had never been identified or analysed, was a genuine loss to mankind. It was well known that most of the foodstuffs and medicinal drugs in the world had their origin in species native to tropical forests.

40. The Central American countries had acted on the proposals of the Central American Commission on Environment and Development, adapting them to meet their own requirements. They had also concluded bilateral agreements or agreements among several neighbouring countries designating certain border areas as national parks or biological reserves. Among the parks and reserves in question were the Trifinio (Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras), La Amistad (Costa Rica and Panama), "Si-a-Paz" (system of protected areas for peace) (Nicaragua and Costa Rica) and Rio Coco-Patuca (Nicaragua and Honduras).

41. The Central American Commission on Environment and Development had also adopted a number of United Nations positions on the environment, including:
(a) land management with a view to preserving essential ecosystems for

(Mr. Incer Barquero, Nicaragua)

agriculture, forestry development, rational use of natural species, and ecotourism; (b) management and planning of sustainable exploitation of renewable mainland or marine resources without inhibiting or destroying the nature's regenerative capacity; (c) control and management in situ of hydrographic basins for proper soil, water and vegetation use with a view to preventing erosion and the drying-up or pollution of sources of drinking water and sources of water used for irrigation, navigation, fishing, recreation or generating power; (d) sound management and integral exploitation of forests, forest flora and fauna, gathered produce and fishing products, and promotion of agroforestry, forestry, aquaculture, mariculture, hunting and animal husbandry; (e) establishment of natural land, lake, river, coastal or marine reserves and frontier parks in order to ensure the conservation of ecosystems and biodiversity and prepare for ecotourism and national recreation, while at the same time safeguarding the right of indigenous groups to maintain traditional cultivation methods in such natural areas; (f) control of all aspects of pollution and environmental deterioration affecting health and biological resources; (g) launching of an ongoing environmental education campaign and training courses for technical experts and professionals in ecology and natural resources; (h) provision of support to environmental research centres conducting studies on species and natural resources in Central America; (i) promotion of ecology- and environment-related scientific and technological ideas and projects relevant to the ecological development of Central America in the twenty-first century. In September 1991, the Central American countries had adopted a Tropical Forestry Action Plan for Central America (PATFCA), which included programmes for the forest protection, reforestation and energy technology and emphasized strengthening national capacities in its first phase. Implementation of the Plan would require \$158.6 million in external resources.

42. Nicaragua had the largest surface area and the lowest population density in Central America, and was endowed with freshwater and marine fish resources and extensive freshwater lakes. Forests covered 60 per cent of its territory and 35 per cent was covered by tropical rainforest.

43. On taking office, President Chamorro had outlined her Government's policy on environment and natural resources, which she had proceeded to implement by firmly supporting the Nicaraguan Institute for Natural Resources and Environment (IRENA), establishing the National Commission on Environment and Land Management (CONAMOR) and organizing an interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral unit to elaborate a conservation strategy for sustained national development.

44. The Government had also set short-term environmental management goals and a medium- and long-term development strategy. The priority areas of the 1990-1992 programme of action included: (a) development of a national environmental conservation strategy; (b) integrated management of hydrographic basins in order to conserve water and soil and sustain agricultural production; (c) land resources management, including the establishment of an agricultural and ecological register; (d) a national campaign for

(Mr. Incer Barquero, Nicaragua)

reforestation, agroforestry and forest-derived energy; (e) establishment of protected border areas in order to ensure peace, conservation and development, and establishment of a sustainable national park system; (f) rational management of forest fauna and of coastal resources and freshwater fish stocks; (g) monitoring of environmental pollution; (h) a national environmental education campaign; (i) support to non-governmental organizations; (j) establishment of environmental research centres specializing in ecosystems, species and natural resources; and (k) training in environmental sciences and natural resources management. Nicaragua would also review and update its legislation on environmental protection.

45. Nicaragua had recently joined the world-wide "Save the Earth" campaign, sponsored jointly by the United Nations Development Programme, the International Union for Conservation of Nature and the World Wildlife Fund. On joining, it had designated a number of protected areas and two vast biological reserves covering a total of 2.7 million hectares, thus becoming the Central American country with the greatest percentage of territory set aside for conservation. Furthermore, it had established a vast natural resources reserve at Bosaguas in order to protect the virgin forest in the central and northern parts of the country, as well as the way of life of the indigenous Sumo communities. It had also declared the Cayos Miskito archipelago, a nature reserve, which would protect the indigenous Miskito communities.

46. The Central American countries would make their positions known at the Conference on Environment and Development, within the framework of the platform drawn up at the Regional Preparatory Meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean countries at Tlatelolco, in Mexico. To that end, they would participate actively in the final session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference.

47. Mr. SARDENBERG (Brazil) said that predatory behaviour and misuse of environmental resources had begun long before the twentieth century and even before the Industrial Revolution. However, the pace at which resources were being used had been accelerated in the twentieth century by nuclear weapons and other inventions that caused environmental pollution and degradation.

48. Ensuring a healthier environment would necessitate changing patterns of production and consumption imposed by the developed countries. The protection and rational utilization of biological diversity was a case in point. Biological resources and genetic material were the heritage of the countries in which they were located, but their value was determined by the services and goods they generated, particularly through the use of biotechnology. That conservationist approach had led to the concentration of profits from biological resources in the hands of those possessing the technological know-how and the wherewithal to process them. However, the economic and social situation of owner countries could be improved through a holistic approach to the use of biological resources and genetic material near the protected areas.

(Mr. Sardenberg, Brazil)

49. Traditionally, the wealthier countries had been blamed for transboundary environmental degradation and had been called on to provide compensation. By contrast, problems of a local nature in the developing countries were usually dealt with from the limited perspective of providing assistance. A new partnership should be forged on the premise that global support should be given to regional and local initiatives to protect the environment and biodiversity and they, in turn, should contribute to the solution of global problems. Adequate prices reflecting both the economic and the environmental value of biological resources, would be the best possible incentive for such a partnership. To that end, effective mechanisms must be established in order to make technology and funding available to owner countries that did not have the means to process their biological resources. The negotiation of the convention on biological diversity under the auspices of UNEP should contribute significantly to building that new partnership.

50. Aware that the new partnership would also require action at the national level, the Brazilian Government had adopted wide-ranging measures to protect the environment, with emphasis on the protection of biological diversity and forests. Brazil was cooperating with the European Community and the World Bank in the elaboration of the "Pilot Programme of the Tropical Forests in Brazil". It was Brazil's hope that the financial commitments made by the Governments which had originally proposed the programme would be honoured.

51. Addressing the situation in urban centres was another component of Brazil's environmental policy. Perhaps no issue illustrated the linkage between environment and development more forcefully than the plight of cities and regions, particularly those whose population had mushroomed as a result of industrial concentration and migratory flows. The problem was particularly acute in the developing countries, which did not have the means to combat pollution or upgrade sanitary facilities in urban centres.

52. Brazil, which had a large semi-arid area in its territory, attached particular importance to the issue of desertification and drought and hoped that the Conference on Environment and Development would adopt measures to strengthen international programmes in that area. The continued expansion of deserts, particularly in Africa, despite the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, was disturbing.

53. Mr. AKUNWAFOR (Nigeria) said that - in view of the environmental degradation resulting from patterns of production and consumption in developed countries, which must be arrested and reversed, and the inevitable though unhealthy exploitation of natural resources in developing countries - the international community must urgently address such issues as deforestation, drought, desertification, climate change, protection of the ozone layer, transboundary air and water pollution, contamination of oceans and seas and the rational use of land, water and energy.

(Mr. Akunwafor, Nigeria)

54. Developing countries were extremely vulnerable to environmental degradation, not only as a result of transboundary incidents over which they had no control, but also as a result of their own national development efforts. In particular, they were unable to deal effectively with the negative impact of development activities for lack of adequate technology. In accordance with the principle of shared responsibility, developed countries should make every effort to contribute to the sustainable development of developing countries and facilitate the transfer of environmentally sound technology to the developing countries on concessional terms. The responsibility of the developed countries for global environmental degradation had been stressed by the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on Environment and Development at its third session.

55. At the same time, tradition and inertia in the developing countries had also contributed to environmental degradation. Anxious to promote industrial development, agricultural activity and trade, developing countries had resorted to deforestation, soil erosion and desertification. Even where modern techniques had replaced traditional methods, inefficient waste disposal created enormous national and transboundary health hazards.

56. International cooperation to protect the environment would be crucial as the century drew to a close. Such cooperation must be sensitive to the national requirements of developing countries and not force them to take action that would be to their detriment. Development cooperation for environmental protection should address problems such as desertification, toxic and hazardous waste disposal, and deforestation, and should promote environmentally sound development. Thus far, development assistance had not meaningfully addressed those issues.

57. Inequalities in international economic relations and the deteriorating quality of life in many developing countries had contributed to environmental degradation. The mounting debt burden, painful structural adjustment programmes compounded by worsening terms of trade, inadequate and dwindling financial flows, chronic trade deficits and the developed countries' stubborn pursuit of protectionism had severely diminished developing countries' resources. Unless economic issues were properly addressed, it would be extremely difficult for developing countries to deal effectively with environmental degradation.

58. In order to pursue sound environmental policies and achieve their goal of sustainable development, developing countries required substantial additional resources, including access to environmentally sound technology at affordable prices. His delegation underscored the importance of coordinating positions on issues of major concern on the agenda of the Conference on Environment and Development. Any global initiative to overcome the world's grave environmental problems would require concerted international cooperation based on an equitable sharing of responsibilities that took account of the existing asymmetries between developed and developing countries.

(Mr. Akunwafor, Nigeria)

59. Nigeria had always supported the work of UNCHS (Habitat), and had recently launched a national housing policy designed to further the goal of adequate shelter for all by the year 2000. The question of human settlements should be given high priority at the Conference on Environment and Development.

60. The international community should endeavour to develop environmentally sound technologies that could be made available to all countries. In order to facilitate that task, the Conference should establish an international mechanism to implement a truly global programme of action that would not prejudice the development aspirations of developing countries.

61. Mr. GATHUNGU (Kenya) said that his delegation supported the statements made by the Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, the Executive Director of UNCHS (Habitat) and the Director of UNSO, and fully endorsed their urgent appeals to the international community for adequate financial, technical and human resources.

62. UNEP had a crucial role to play in the preparatory process leading up to the Conference on Environment and Development. The UNEP Governing Council at its sixteenth session had accomplished a great deal of work that would be of use to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference at its fourth session. The reports that the Council had requested UNEP to make available to the Preparatory Committee at its fourth session dealt with such complex issues as the protection and development of oceans and coastal areas, international environmental law, toxic chemicals, hazardous waste and desertification.

63. His delegation was encouraged that the important issue of human settlements had found its rightful place in the preparatory process for the Conference, and looked forward to the contributions that the Commission on Human Settlements would make to the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee. His delegation also commended the efforts of UNSO to assist African countries in preparing for the Conference, and hoped that the international community would provide the Office with the resources needed to assure the continued success of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

64. Mr. TOURE (Guinea-Bissau) said that Guinea-Bissau was a country of the Sudano-Sahelian region whose environment had changed dramatically in recent years as a result of the destructive effects of desertification. Desertification often had disastrous consequences for the economies of the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region, most of which were least developed countries. Aware of the opportunity afforded by the Conference on Environment and Development, the countries of the region had prepared national reports and had actively participated in the preparations for the Conference. In those two activities, they had received assistance from such subregional organizations as the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel and from the United Nations system, in particular UNSO.

(Mr. Toure, Guinea-Bissau)

65. Agenda 21, which would be adopted by the Conference, underscored the interrelatedness of all development activities in maintaining a sound environment. In that regard, the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region had taken measures to strengthen their programming and planning capacities in the area of natural resources management.

66. His delegation thanked the donor countries for assisting the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region in their efforts to overcome underdevelopment and to combat desertification, as well as all the organizations of the United Nations system, whose untiring efforts were a source of encouragement and moral support.

67. Mrs. AMARESEKARE (Sri Lanka) said that her delegation endorsed the report of the Commission on Human Settlements (A/46/8). It wished in particular to draw attention to Commission resolution 13/2 on the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, on which the Second Committee was to take a decision. The Commission's proposal to convene, "possibly in 1997, a United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II)" was both appropriate and necessary, and her delegation looked forward to the Secretary-General's report on the subject.

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

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.42 and L.48/Rev.1)

Draft resolution on emergency assistance to the Sudan and Operation Lifeline Sudan (A/C.2/46/L.48/Rev.1)

68. Mr. BATAYNEH (Jordan), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors, said that he hoped that it would be adopted without a vote.

69. Mr. AJAVON (Togo) said that his delegation had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

Draft resolution on special assistance to Yemen (A/C.2/46/L.42)

70. The CHAIRMAN announced that Suriname had become a sponsor of the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.