



Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

E/1998/SR.29
23 June 1999

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1998

Humanitarian affairs segment

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 15 July 1998, at 3 p.m.

President:

Mr. SYCHOU
(Vice-President)

(Belarus)

CONTENTS

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of this document to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)
(A/53/139-E/1998/67, A/53/172-E/1998/86)

Dialogue with Executive and Deputy Executive Heads of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA)

First panel

Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the need for the Fund's assistance generally became apparent in circumstances that were daunting, as when infrastructure was shattered or non-existent, there were urgent health concerns or child soldiers had to be demobilized. Rehabilitating child soldiers and other children physically and mentally scarred by armed conflicts not only addressed their most urgent humanitarian needs, it also looked to their long-term survival, protection and development.

UNICEF tried to meet the needs of very young children and adolescents also, often using education to promote conflict resolution. It took into account the situation of women and girls in relation to health, education, sexual violence and exploitation, never forgetting that the vast majority of displaced persons were women and children.

She expressed grave concern that televised images of children in armed conflicts, child abductees, land-mine victims and victims of rape and sexual exploitation were inuring the world to the horrible reality of their plight. She appealed to the international community to fulfil its obligation to hold to account those who committed atrocities on the bodies and minds of women and children: the international community must never falter in providing effective assistance and relief.

The Fund had responded to the complexity of humanitarian crises and the magnitude of the human needs by adopting a mix of strategies that combined provision of essential supplies and services with advocacy, capacity-building and measures to address the special needs of the very young, women, girls, adolescents and the displaced.

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) was a forum for the inter-agency cooperation that was needed almost as much as money for putting humanitarian principles into practice; the Secretary-General's reform programme had galvanized the system in that respect, and the International Committee of the Red Cross was involved.

The Fund was working with other agencies to cope with the effects of anti-personnel mines and to enlist support for the earliest possible ratification of the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines. In addition, because of the almost universal support for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, it had been able to develop specific activities to help protect the most vulnerable children, including those caught up in armed conflicts. Thus, the Fund was developing a rights-based approach to programming that gave the needs of children and women a context in human rights and humanitarian law.

Mr. OTUNNU (Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children in Armed Conflict) said that warfare had become largely an assault on civilian populations with women and children suffering disproportionately. Children were being abducted, pressed into service as soldiers in the hostilities and armed with increasingly available weapons that were light enough for them to use. Landmines, to which children were particularly vulnerable, were more and more widespread.

Because he shared the previous speaker's fear that the world was becoming inured to abominations in time of conflict, he believed that it must become taboo in the international political and social climate to target and brutalize women, children and the elderly. Delegations must commit themselves to throwing their economic, political and diplomatic weight behind closing the huge and growing gap between the lofty principles enunciated in the international human rights instruments and their non-observance in practice. Specific actions must be taken to protect civilians in general and children in particular in time of war, including measures to ensure access to them, provide safe zones, prevent their recruitment into the military and curb the flow of light weapons and landmines. He had tried to elaborate initiatives along those lines during recent visits to the Sudan and Sri Lanka.

Whenever the human rights instruments that had been developed to protect women, children and civilians in time of war were ignored, it meant that the

/...

local value systems that would have protected innocents were being swept away. Re-establishing ethical values in societies in order to protect children and inculcate humanitarian principles begins with international support for reviving social institutions and networks such as families, extended families, schools and places of worship, and was best handled at the community level.

Post-conflict peace-building was needed because, for children who had lived through the horrors, a war was not over just because the fighting had stopped. The new kind of warfare left behind it a crisis of the young, with a huge proportion of the population - women and children, young people and former soldiers - in limbo, disconnected from the social fabric of schools and families, homeless and on the street. They needed healing and rehabilitation, and all those on the international scene who were involved in post-conflict peace-building must be made aware that their reintegration into the community was one of the best ways of ensuring the recovery of the whole country.

To prevent the suffering, conflicts must not only be ended, they must be prevented from recurring: the international community should stand ready to assist because a return to the status quo ante would guarantee a recrudescence of hostilities. In many countries, there were glaring imbalances in political power and development resources, with the great bulk of the population excluded and without hope. Governments must therefore throw their economic, political and diplomatic weight behind redressing the injustices that had led to conflict in the first place.

Mr. McNAMARA (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that the biggest challenges and the worst dilemmas UNHCR had experienced in recent years had been in the protection of civilians in time of war, including civilian humanitarian personnel. The ground rules for humanitarian action - in environments that were becoming increasingly lawless - must keep protection in mind because humanitarian action must be founded in international legality, whether international humanitarian law, human rights law or refugee law; the basic principles existed, as almost all States had signed all the relevant instruments. However, pious rhetoric must give way to real political support from States for bridging the gap between international law and the reality on the ground.

States must respect their responsibilities under the rule of international law because the consequences of failure were tragic: women and children made up

/...

a majority of refugees, and met with abuse, sexual violence and forced recruitment when the rule of law was flouted. He expressed particular regret about the situation of Rwandan refugees in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: UNHCR had been forced to suspend its operations on their behalf because minimum conditions were not being met. Even more regrettable was the apparent lack of international concern that there had been no change in almost a year.

In cases when Government support for the well-established principles of humanitarian law was half-hearted, refugee camps had been sited too close to borders and armed elements and criminals had not been handed over to justice. Observing the principles would not only have helped the humanitarian action, it would have benefited regional stability, regional security and vital national interests.

Serious limits were imposed on the international community's ability to protect internally displaced persons when States failed to support the broader principles for protection of civilians: cooperation between all relevant agencies was crucial to mounting an effective international response.

Humanitarian workers were also under threat in the lawless environments in which they often worked. UNHCR advocated including attacks against humanitarian workers in the jurisdiction of the proposed international criminal court, and was therefore dismayed that at the time of speaking it seemed possible that not even the forced displacement of civilian populations would be included in that jurisdiction.

For repatriation of refugees to be sustainable, development agencies had to ensure that returnees' long-term needs could be met, while reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts must be part of a broader effort to build peace by promoting reconciliation and safeguarding human rights. Like humanitarian relief, development activities must form part of a comprehensive approach linked also to action in the political, legal and judicial fields to ensure that the peace was sustainable: the rule of law was an essential element for a functional society.

Ms. JUNOD (International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)), said that in some conflicts there was an unwillingness to enforce humanitarian law, as in the case of ethnic cleansing, where humanitarian and political objectives clash head-on. Although actions must be tailored to circumstances, there could be no question of fudging observance of basic humanitarian rules for a political

/...

pay-off: when a basic premise, such as the forcible displacement of populations, was unacceptable, to tolerate it at all put the entire edifice of international humanitarian law at risk. The same applied where there was no authority to enforce humanitarian law, as in States that had disintegrated.

While no overnight miracles could be expected, humanitarian law must be publicized, starting with the armed forces and others who should be actively complying with it. Its rudiments, principles and values should be taught from an early age, together with human rights teaching, because the law should also be known by those it was designed to protect. No one could expect international humanitarian law to be applied during armed conflicts unless sound legislative and other preparations had been made in peacetime.

No law was complete without penalties for breaking it, and applying such penalties in practice was a weakness of international humanitarian law. Nationally, States must pass their own legislation, but internationally, a permanent international criminal court was needed, along with the political will to use it.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that although UNFPA was not one of the front-line agencies dealing with humanitarian and disaster relief assistance, it nevertheless expected the rights it promoted to be addressed in the relief and support provided to internally displaced persons and refugees. Following the 1994 International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), UNFPA had worked to promote and protect the often-neglected reproductive and health rights of refugees and internally displaced persons, the majority of whom were women and children faced with specific problems such as sexual violence and exploitation at a time of disintegrating social structures. She cited the large numbers of documented cases of rape reported by international organizations and pointed out that actual figures were believed to be much higher.

In an effort to address those issues, UNFPA participated as an observer in the IASC on humanitarian assistance, worked closely with other United Nations agencies and international organizations and had participated in missions aimed at assessing needs in emergency situations and ensuring access for an already vulnerable population to reproductive health services.

In 1995 the inter-agency working group on reproductive health in refugee situations had recommended the preparation, in accordance with UNFPA principles,

/...

of a series of comprehensive reproductive health services kits, which had been delivered for the first time to the victims of a devastating earthquake in Afghanistan in May. The inter-agency field manual for reproductive health in refugee situations would be revised with partners and issued by the end of the year to take into account experience gained on the ground.

She stressed that both men's and women's rights must be promoted so that they could take advantage of the assistance available to them and pointed out that service providers must be fully aware of the actions and assistance which they could provide. She mentioned the special value of post-coital contraception, which should be made available to women to prevent unwanted pregnancy. It was the duty and responsibility of the United Nations community to ensure that individuals in crisis situations had choices and received services of a quality equivalent to that of those that would normally be available.

In November of 1998, UNFPA would convene a technical meeting on reproductive health services in emergency situations with a view to studying country experiences, identifying constraints and formulating future actions to provide sustained and systematic assistance in crisis situations. The meeting would also seek ways to help countries implement more effective programmes that addressed the specific needs of refugees and internally displaced populations.

Given the continuing need for humanitarian assistance in all parts of the world and the disturbing trends affecting that assistance, the United Nations must strengthen its capacity and coordination in the delivery of humanitarian aid, whether for populations affected by conflict, environmental degradation or natural disaster. Work must also continue to forge a stronger link between humanitarian and development assistance in order to prepare more sustainable programmes to address emergency issues.

Mrs. STAMATOPOULOU (Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that her Office welcomed the Executive Committee on Humanitarian Affairs' determination to streamline all activities as interrelated components of an overall response to people and countries in need. The diversity of mandates and activities should not prevent the international community from consolidating its efforts.

She pointed out that the Secretary-General had said that the next century must be the age of prevention of human rights violations by addressing the root

/...

causes of the conflicts which underlay most humanitarian disasters. Tragedies such as those in Rwanda or the former Yugoslavia could never be adequately redressed and the international community must develop effective programmes for sustainable development, education, democracy and human rights to forestall future human outrages. All actors involved must be guided by the basic principle of the Declaration on the Right to Development, which held that the human person was the central subject of development.

Humanitarian assistance and human rights programmes should work together towards their common goals of helping to reduce tensions resulting from acute needs with regard to food, health care, etc. and resolving existing problems within a human rights environment. Their shared store of knowledge should strengthen the early-warning capacity of the United Nations, ensure better and more people-oriented identification of needs for humanitarian and other assistance and enable the human rights programme to be more responsive to country developments. Her Office recognized the need to organize and analyse information at its disposal more systematically in order to better respond to the needs of its partners.

Increased cooperation between humanitarian and human rights programmes would facilitate the development of assistance projects and contribute to the fair distribution of humanitarian assistance and the prevention of conflict. The development of participatory strategies would enhance the processes leading to self-reliance for societies and groups.

She stressed the need for adequate staff training in both human rights and humanitarian issues and her Office had provided and was preparing training materials for United Nations development partners.

Stressing the growing problem of internal displacement, she said that it had also provided support to the Special Representative and was developing a project for the promotion and protection of the human rights of internally displaced persons as part of its technical cooperation programme in capacity-building. Some of the activities envisaged were: translation and reproduction of legal norms relating to internally displaced persons; promotion and distribution of the guiding principles on internal displacement prepared by the Special Representative in the six official languages and, as appropriate, in local languages; education and training activities at the national/regional levels; and support for the treaty bodies and mechanisms which focused on

/...

internally displaced persons. She said that the international community must endeavour to prevent the development of situations which generated waves of internal displacement. Given the enormous scale of the problem, she stressed the need for the cooperation of all agencies and programmes involved, including humanitarian and human rights programmes, and for the unwavering support of all Member States.

Mr. WRABETZ (Observer for Austria) associated himself with the concerns expressed regarding the shocking violations of the human rights of civilians, especially women and children, in situations of conflict. He agreed that a rights-based approach could serve to prevent possible sources of conflict and wondered whether the panellists could elaborate on the implementation of such an approach in their work in the field.

Mr. KAMITANI (Japan) said that IASC had begun to develop common strategies to protect the rights of women and children and wondered whether IASC or the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) had begun to develop strategies to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel. He noted UNHCR's efforts to bridge the gap between relief and development and said that a more comprehensive programme was needed to resolve problems in post-conflict situations. He wondered, however, how agencies dealt with the problem of the legitimacy of Governments during situations of conflict.

Ms. BELLAMY (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), in response to the question from the representative of Austria, said that rights-based programming was in its early stages but pointed out that the Convention on the Rights of the Child required that efforts be made to assist even the most marginalized or the most difficult to reach. There must be a system-wide response in order to continue the development process even in times of crisis, for example, by attempting to maintain at least some elements of an educational and health system, no matter how rudimentary.

Finally, she stressed the need to build from experience and cited the importance of developing an assistance strategy founded on a principled, rights-based approach, as in the case of Afghanistan.

Mr. OTUNNU (Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict) emphasized the necessity for Member States to ensure follow-up in the field and to use their influence when dealing with Governments and insurgents in areas of conflict. He stressed that although there was a tendency to believe that the

/...

parties to a conflict could not be influenced by the international community, they were compelled to have dealings with the outside world so that some influence to give greater attention to women's and children's rights might filter through.

He expressed the hope that the international community would make violations of women's and children's rights a taboo and welcomed the recent Security Council debate on the plight of children affected by war as a ground-breaking signal of increased concern in that area. The needs and rights of children should be a central and ongoing concern for the Security Council when implementing peacekeeping or peace-building programmes or imposing sanctions.

Mr. VIEIRA de MELLO (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator), in response to the question from the representative of Japan, said that no overall strategy concerning the rights of women and children in situations of conflict had been elaborated. However, the United Nations system endeavoured to protect those rights at the country level, in Afghanistan, for example, and IASC was also working towards that end. With regard to the question of the security of humanitarian workers, he said that the Secretary-General was preparing a report for the General Assembly in cooperation with the human rights bodies and IASC.

Second panel

Mr. SPETH (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme, (UNDP)) pointed out that UNDP's involvement in virtually every country in or emerging from conflict had made it acutely aware of that "Phoenix" phenomenon and it believed, along with its partners, that even in the midst of crisis residual development must be sustained and new initiatives launched in order to guarantee a basis for durable recovery.

In early 1995 an emergency response division had been created to build bridges between relief and development activities, and over 160 new programmes were under way to lay the groundwork for demobilization, de-mining, the return of displaced communities and the restoration of basic institutions to support the rule of law and sustain a just and democratic society. Many of those programmes had become multi-donor and multi-agency endeavours, and, with Italy's initial support, a trust fund for sustainable social development, peace and support to countries in special situations had been established to focus on rehabilitation and development, often in direct support of local reconciliation

/...

mechanisms. UNDP had also played a leading role in expanding the consolidated appeal process (CAP) to include the early stages of rehabilitation and recovery where links to relief could be realized. Despite attempts to link relief and development more closely, donor response had been disappointing.

Work was continuing for the purpose of improving coordination with the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the humanitarian agencies. New agreements on drug cooperation with key humanitarian actors had been reached, joint relief development units were being piloted in the Great Lakes region of Africa and new UNDP headquarters guidelines had been introduced to permit closer relationships with non-governmental organizations and to make them partners in the implementation of UNDP-funded programmes. UNDP's role in facilitating the merger of the humanitarian coordinator and resident coordinator system had represented a considerable gain in efficiency and led to better coordination between relief and development work, as recent experience in Afghanistan, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia and elsewhere attested.

A number of lessons had been learned: as part of a new approach to ongoing crises, development must be preventive and curative; a strategic and comprehensive approach must be taken when dealing with complex situations; aid must become faster and more effective; relief delivery must strengthen rather than diminish societal coping mechanisms; healing must start with social accommodation and confidence-building; regional economic relations must be restored and potential exploited; and programmes must prioritize capacity-building in order to restore national capacity in government and civil society. In addition, the resident/humanitarian coordinator system must be strengthened and all donors made partners in collaborative undertakings.

A higher proportion of resources must be allocated and programmed up front, and both development and humanitarian resources must be programmed together in order to achieve coordination and realize synergies by using integrated country assistance strategies supported by expanded CAPs.

The international community must show leadership, vision and commitment in order to guarantee stability during the post-conflict transition. He therefore made the following suggestions: a new Marshall-type plan, a "Phoenix" plan, must be developed by donors for the many societies emerging from years of internal conflict; a special global facility dedicated specifically to pre-crisis preventive development must be created; UNDP's disaster management

/...

programme in conjunction with other partners and the private sector should develop programmes for disaster reduction in developing countries and for investing in prevention as insurance against disaster; finally, all partners must cooperate to develop strategic approaches to create a solid and sustainable basis for recovery in the growing number of countries emerging from situations of conflict.

Ms. BERTINI (World Food Programme (WFP)), said that the agencies which provided special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance were required, first of all, to decide on which inputs were necessary and appropriate and to defend the principles set out in the Charter of the United Nations. The involvement of communities and women in particular in the decision-making process was of critical importance, as well as the practical necessity of working with whatever authority held power.

Every effort should be made to ensure that the right staff were in the right place at the right time. A staff member experienced in the field of development assistance, for example, might not be the best person to manage a disaster relief operation. Given the recent alarming trend in which the personal safety of relief agency personnel was specifically threatened, urgent measures must be taken to protect them.

Lastly, an appropriate mechanism should be established to ensure coordination between agencies of the United Nations system, non-governmental organizations, host Governments and bilateral donors, especially in view of the declining levels of official development assistance. Funding levels must be more predictable and must take into account the need for rehabilitation, infrastructure-building and long-term development.

Mr. PURCELL (International Organization for Migration (IOM)) said that his organization's objective had always been to facilitate the quick return of refugees and displaced persons. That solution, however, was not always the most appropriate one, particularly in ethnically divided areas like Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was therefore necessary to devise other strategies and to develop mechanisms that linked the return of displaced persons to programmes for their reintegration. An improved mechanism was also needed to link the return of combatants to the process of demobilization and disarmament. Lastly, increased efforts must be made to close the considerable gap that existed between humanitarian needs and available resources.

Mr. MALLOCH (World Bank), reporting on the contributions of the World Bank to post-conflict reconstruction as part of an integrated approach to humanitarian assistance, said that poverty and conflict were inextricably linked, since unequal access to productive resources such as land, capital, skills and basic services, especially health and education, could inflame other social and ethnic tensions. Many observers had suggested, for example, that the violence in Angola had been fuelled in part by competition for control of oil and diamonds. There was therefore an evident link between effective development strategies and peace-building.

Approximately 17 per cent of total Bank lending went to post-conflict countries and the percentage of funding from the International Development Association (IDA) was even higher. The Bank had played an important role in coordinating the contributions of donors and agencies and was steadily developing a valuable reserve of best practices and experience. Emphasis was also being placed on the preventative value of development operations and relevant country assistance strategies had included analyses of the causes and consequences of violence,

Any economic and social development strategy in a post-conflict situation must reflect the dynamics that had given rise to the original conflict. The Bank had therefore established a Framework for World Bank Involvement in Post-Conflict Reconstruction, which included an innovative instrument known as a watching brief, designed to provide a deeper understanding of ongoing developments in the country. A Post-Conflict Unit had also been established to respond quickly and effectively to the needs of Bank reconstruction operations. The Unit, which was currently supporting country teams in nearly 20 countries, provided a focal point for the increasing number of external partnerships in the reconstruction field.

Mr. BASSANI (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that protracted emergencies were increasingly common and it was often difficult to draw a line between emergency and post-conflict phases. The volatility, uncertainty and complex geopolitical context that often characterized a fragile peace process made external agencies reluctant to undertake development work in the absence of a legitimate national authority and of security in the country as a whole.

Conflict situations often led to a breakdown in health infrastructure and to the undermining of the local health service capacity, since the parallel

/...

health services established by relief agencies competed for the services of the most effective health workers.

In recognition of the link between relief and development, WHO placed special emphasis on recovery and long-term development. Given the complex and protracted nature of modern conflicts, it was clear that the problems faced during the post-conflict transition were also partly attributable to the poorly conceived responses by relief and development agencies to emergencies. Development-oriented approaches during emergencies could therefore have a positive impact on both short- and long-term health needs. To that end, WHO had developed a project to increase its internal technical capacity and to establish a basis for providing technical advice to regions, countries and other agencies and organizations. It had also organized a meeting the previous June to identify a set of principles that would guide the response of humanitarian organizations to complex emergencies.

Mr. HJORT (Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)) said that the establishment of IASC provided an opportunity for relevant United Nations agencies and non-United Nations organizations to work together in the preparation and delivery of humanitarian assistance. The studies of humanitarian issues commissioned by IASC provided a firm basis for the decisions which had already been taken, including those concerning the coordinating role of the host country authorities and the linkages between relief, recovery, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. The progress achieved thus far, however, would mean nothing if agreed programmes of action could not be implemented owing to the lack of financial resources. The proposed review of the funding of humanitarian programmes was therefore of the utmost importance and funding for recovery and rehabilitation should be included in that review.

Ms. JOHNSON (Observer for Norway) said that it would be helpful if the members of the panel could address the issue of coordination between United Nations agencies and the international financial institutions, since relief operations could not be separated from long-term development in post-conflict areas.

Mr. COLELLA (Italy) said that the issue of children in armed conflict should be an important component of post-conflict reconstruction programmes and asked whether coordination was also taking place in that field.

Mr. DON NANJIRA (World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) referred to the issue of coordination and said that Member States had legislated on procedures for complex emergencies in resolution 36/225. However, the current situation was worse as there was less money and more agencies and it would be interesting to know whether coordination had become more difficult and what experiences could be shared. Complex emergencies consumed most of the available resources because they required immediate attention, but he wished to know if long-term disaster management was an important issue for all the agencies and what measures were being taken to strike a better balance between the allocation of resources.

He asked how agencies were addressing the social problems associated with advances in science and technology and the negative aspects of development, such as drugs and disease.

Ms. SIXOU (France) requested further information on how the transition from relief aid to humanitarian assistance to development was being handled in the framework of the United Nations system as they were each managed by different departments; she asked whether coordination was provided by the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs or if there had been discussions under the authority of the Deputy Secretary-General.

Mr. Dae-jong YOO (Republic of Korea) said that progress in coordination efforts depended on how well humanitarian coordinators implemented plans designed by Headquarters in the field, in collaboration with the other agencies. He asked whether the Inter-Agency Standing Committee had any plans to grant greater flexibility and responsibility to field coordinators as they had a better understanding of the local environment.

Mr. WRABETZ (Observer for Austria) said that it would be useful to have further details about how far coordination between the international financial institutions and other agencies in the field had proceeded, especially with regard to the transition from relief to development. Additional information on the use of consolidated appeals and country programmes to address transitional situations would also be useful.

Mr. SPETH (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) in reply to the representative of Norway, said that the United Nations coordination platform involved not only the resident coordinator system but, increasingly, other tools including a common assistance strategy among United Nations agencies at the

/...

country level, which provided the basis for engaging international financial institutions and bilateral donors. There was a need for improved dialogue on reconstruction assistance, especially with the World Bank. He was pleased that the Bank was looking at debt relief in crisis countries.

UNDP had worked on psychological counselling and reintegration of very young soldiers and he agreed that those issues must be coordinated in future programmes.

More needed to be done on the issue of natural disasters and UNDP was strengthening its programme in that area. The El Niño disaster suggested that major action must be taken, in particular, in the prevention of climate change.

Mr. LONDOÑO (Colombia) wished to know more about the framework of the World Bank's programme in Colombia and whether it was considered part of the Bank's post-conflict initiative.

Mr. PURCELL (International Organization for Migration (IOM)), referring to coordination among major agencies, said that, in Guatemala, IOM had experimented with an integrated assistance strategy involving 12 countries. Recently, there has been a development of consolidated appeals with substantial participation by many agencies and a willingness to prioritize requests. Much more progress could be made in that area; moreover, it was important for the agencies to be sensitive to donors' requests to carry out adequate project analysis and evaluation.

Mr. BROWN (World Bank) said that the Bank's Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) was prepared at the request of the Government. The Government of Colombia had asked the Bank to focus on violence as one issue of economic development. The Bank's expertise on violence amelioration was concentrated in the post-conflict unit, but that did not mean that Colombia was considered a post-conflict country.

With regard to the representative of Norway's question on coordination he replied that declining overseas development assistance (ODA) and the increasing difficulty of dealing with complex post-conflict situations had created new coordination problems for all the agencies. In determining when relief should cease and development begin, the overriding principle must be the client/country requirements; moreover, each country was able to select from among the different coordination mechanisms available.

However, whatever the process selected, it was critical that there should be a full sharing of information between the development agencies and the international financial institutions and a common approach. The Bank was working in different ways with the various components of the United Nations system. In countries which have not yet emerged from conflict, the Bank routinely worked through the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with which they had an excellent relationship.

Ms. BERTINI (World Food Programme (WFP)) mentioned WFP's experiences working with the World Bank in Somalia and South Africa. Discussions were under way for projects in three other countries.

With regard to the query by the Italian representative on coordination on children's issues she said that WFP and UNICEF had collaborated on the assessment of children's needs and established indicators for nutritional requirements. WFP also had an agreement with UNHCR for provision of food for all refugee populations, including children.

Mr. VIEIRA de MELLO (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator) said that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, as a facilitator, would attempt to improve communication between humanitarian agencies and the World Bank, especially in the field. He was in favour of country-specific consultations. Sierra Leone provided a good example of where humanitarian agencies, the peacekeeping operation, development agencies and the Bank could unite to solve issues such as demobilization, which were crucial to the consolidation of peace.

The representative of France had asked whether the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) were looking at interaction between development and humanitarian aid. The two committees were collaborating, but he believed that it was in the field that those matters could best be resolved by creating mechanisms that circumvented the hiatus between humanitarian and development aid.

He informed the representative of Korea that field coordinators for humanitarian aid now enjoy much greater flexibility and responsibility.

Third panel

Mr. MIYET (Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations) said that de-mining was one of the activities that his Department carried out in close coordination with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. A certain

number of joint actions had been undertaken and there had also been an evaluation of actions needed in Burundi, Latin America and Africa.

With regard to coordination between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Secretary-General's reform, which had created Executive Committees in both sectors, allowed for an in-depth discussion of common interests. In New York, with the formation of specific task forces for each peacekeeping operation all the humanitarian partners and other agencies were enabled to participate at the planning and implementation stages. The office in New York reviewed all facets of the problem with other agencies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with the relevant United Nations departments and with the United Nations Office at Vienna. In the field, the Secretary General's reforms which, in the case of peacekeeping operations, made the Special Representative coordinator of all operations would help to avoid past difficulties. It allowed for all participants, civil and military, to have better communication and facilitated integration especially when the Special Representative's deputy was also the Resident Coordinator and the Humanitarian Coordinator. The challenge was to ensure that both elements of the chain, peacekeeping and peace-building were integrated, and to anticipate events. If countries that were negotiating a peace agreement believed that the United Nations Secretariat and the Security Council were willing to establish a global peacekeeping operation, it improved the possibility of arriving at an agreement. Once peacekeeping operations existed and good relations had been established, the United Nations had a sustainable influence in the process of peace consolidation.

Decision-making in crisis countries should take into account all sectors, not just peacekeeping; if expenditures were authorized only for military operations, the recovery process was delayed and the military might find themselves deployed for longer than necessary in a chaotic political situation.

The response to the issue of the security of humanitarian personnel had not been very positive to date. There were unsuccessful cases of the military trying to carry out humanitarian tasks and jeopardizing their effectiveness as a deterrent force and other examples of humanitarians tempted to try and ensure their own security and thereby jeopardizing their neutrality. Lastly, his

department, in collaboration with UNHCR was trying to find a solution to the issue of the separation of combatants and refugees.

Ms. WALSTROM (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) said that the main focus of the humanitarian response community in recent years had been on high-profile disasters, but it should not be forgotten that humanitarianism was about providing service to all those caught up in a disaster, including the 65.8 million flood victims and 59.3 million victims of drought-induced famine in an average year. In the past two years, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent societies had seen a major change in the type of situation where they had been called on to assist, with flood and drought accounting for nearly half of the 22 million primarily urban dwellers they had aided.

Most recent developments in humanitarian assistance techniques had naturally focused on complex emergencies, while response to floods and cyclones, for example, had remained much the same for the past 20 years. More creativity and energy must be directed to the devastating crises triggered by natural events, which often robbed the most vulnerable people of their livelihoods.

The links between natural disasters and major global and economic crises were becoming frighteningly apparent. The Federation's efforts to elicit assistance for thousands of people affected by El Niño in Latin America and Africa were insignificant compared to the true economic and financial impact. Drought was once again threatening the Sahel, but new research had quantified for the first time the effect of conflict in the region on food production, showing that it averaged 12 per cent less in years of conflict than in peaceful years. If Africa had been peaceful through the 1990s, it could have added up to 5 per cent annual per capita food production. The traditional response to drought had been to supply food aid, but in countries undergoing structural adjustment, Governments had become increasingly reluctant to allow free food distribution, which they saw as running counter to market-driven economies. There was also concern about the actual quantity of food aid available subsequent to removal of subsidies and market protection for grain production. The underlying message was that natural disasters must be treated with the same degree of political and economic realism as war and economic collapse. Humanitarian assistance could address only the most acute short-term effects of

such events; their true consequences must be dealt with through long-term economic measures.

In the view of the Federation coordination was built on a commitment to a common set of values and operational principles. The best examples of coordination could be seen where national and local authorities participated actively in setting the operational agenda. In times of scarce resources, coordination also aided efficiency and effectiveness. The Sphere Project was an example of an interagency response starting from the assumption that people had basic rights and that aid agencies had a role to play in helping people enjoy those rights.

Local organizations played a critical role in disaster response and especially in disaster preparedness. Local knowledge, manpower and systems were indispensable to the effective functioning of any international relief effort. The Bangladesh Cyclone Response System was a classic example: satellite data was used to determine when to issue cyclone warnings; they went out over radio to a network of volunteers in local areas, who went house to house with hand-held megaphones, providing the last and vital link in the chain. Without local involvement, the rest of the high-tech system would be pointless. Focusing on local response capacity also served as a reminder that the humanitarian impulse was not the exclusive property of humanitarian agencies and that their job was to promote that spirit in all sectors of society.

Mr. MOODY (InterAction) said that his organization, one of the three non-governmental organization consortia represented on IASC, found the reform initiatives led by the Secretary-General to be consistent with its own recommendations and especially supported the selection of Mr. De Mello as Emergency Relief Coordinator.

He was concerned that international sanctions frequently had the heaviest impact on those with no responsibility for the offensive international behaviour which had triggered them, while those actually culpable were insulated from that impact by their privileged position within their societies. He urged Member States to examine much more closely the humanitarian consequences of sanctions prior to imposition.

Humanitarian workers were increasingly the targets of deliberate violence, yet they must remain in harm's way to do their job. While aid agencies sought

ways to protect themselves better, Member States must also do everything within their power to deter violence against humanitarian workers in crisis situations.

The most significant initiative in the area of improving standards of service delivery was the Sphere Project, which established minimum standards for the provision of basic services to disaster victims. Through that project, organizations around the world would take a significant step forward in accountability for their performance, not only to donors but to the people they served.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that the perceived gap between relief and development could be addressed by giving greater consideration to linkages between humanitarian assistance and planning for recovery after a conflict or natural disaster. She also proposed the comprehensive approach of a "culture of peace" found in General Assembly resolution 52/13. UNESCO used that approach in all its work, and considered it a holistic approach to the relief/rehabilitation/development nexus, which allowed flexibility of response. The relief-to-development continuum must not be treated as a linear process but as a dynamic set of interactions which, given the character of complex emergencies, must also embrace peace-building, protection of human rights, re-establishment of legitimate political authority and the strengthening of civil society. UNESCO activities placed emphasis on educational assistance, actions supportive of the culture of a community, and communication, both in transmission of vital messages regarding health, hygiene and nutrition and in access to information from independent media. Its Programme for Education for Emergencies (PEER) had been extended to include an operational capacity for the promotion of the culture of peace.

Mr. McCLELLAN (Executive Secretary, Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response) said that his organization was an alliance of eight agencies active in the area of humanitarian response. While its members might not speak with a common voice, their common experience had led to the conviction that an adequate response to those who suffered from calamity and violence required shared analysis and a coherent strategy.

Past coordination efforts within the United Nations system had usually been disappointing, yet some operations stood out as examples of effectiveness. In Angola, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General in

/...

Angola had provided political access while encouraging independent action. The implementation of the Secretary-General's reforms in the humanitarian sector were encouraging, particularly the support given by the Emergency Relief Coordinator.

Since it had been relieved of its operational burdens, the Office of the Humanitarian Assistance Coordinator would be in a better position to serve as an interface between the political and humanitarian worlds, a need painfully experienced during the Great Lakes crisis. In order to do the job well, all major players in a relief operation must be included in the planning and negotiations. Thus, it concerned him when other bodies within the United Nations system with more restricted membership made humanitarian policy decisions which directly affected work in the field.

On the issue of coordination, he supported the development of the strategic framework as an important tool for identifying, analysing and prioritizing all the necessary conditions for shared analysis and coherent strategy. He stressed the importance of a humanitarian charter outlining the basic rights of those affected by calamity and violence. Those who suffered had rights to assistance and protection which must be recognized. The next step would be to develop ways to measure compliance with those standards as scarce resources were allocated.

Mr. RAHMATALLA (Observer for Sudan), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Uganda had not observed the Council's rules of procedure when he had circulated a paper on the subject of the roots of the conflict in the Sudan at the previous meeting. The Sudanese delegation did not wish to address the content of the paper, which it considered insignificant, but to question the motives of the representative of Uganda in circulating it. It would have been more constructive to address the challenges facing the international community on the vital issue of humanitarian assistance instead of discussing conflict in the Sudan, when in fact Uganda had played a major role in escalating that conflict through its open support for the only rebel faction remaining outside the peace process.

The meeting rose at 6.50 p.m.