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Session on integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up
of major United Nations conferences and summits

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Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Thursday, 14 May 1998, at 3 p.m.

President:

Mr. SOMAVIA

(Chile)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF MAJOR UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS (continued) (E/1998/19)

Panel discussion with presidents of executive boards

Mr. POWLES (President of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the role of the Economic and Social Council as envisaged in the Charter of the United Nations was to provide intellectual leadership in economic and social issues and coordination of all United Nations activities in that field. With regard to the funds and programmes, the Council could play a role in revitalizing the debate on the main development themes of the day. As the executive boards brought their resources to bear on crucial management and funding issues, there was a need for a forum to address the fundamental issues that underlay their work. In its guidance role, the Council could become the vehicle for high-level dialogue on broad, cross-cutting development themes and thus help to reinvigorate the development debate.

Co-ordination and cooperation within the United Nations system was being scrutinized very closely as a result of the Secretary-General's reforms. There had been welcome innovations, such as the establishment of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), which had already proved valuable as a coordinating body. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) was another key innovation for improving interaction among United Nations agencies at the field level and reducing overlap and duplication. The executive boards of UNICEF and of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had held an interesting session earlier in the year, at which delegations had been able to question field representatives directly on how implementation of UNDAF was proceeding. UNDAF not only had great potential to improve the effectiveness and relevance of United Nations operations but was also a learning process for all involved.

An important role in improving integration of the United Nations system in addressing the global agenda of conference outcomes had also been played by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and its three inter-agency task

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forces. While the task forces had already completed their work, the guidelines, reviews, best practices and other outputs that they had developed would be of continuing relevance to the funds and programmes. Consideration should be given to how the efforts of the task forces should be carried forward and whether new arrangements were needed to continue that work.

Mr. MARCH (Vice-President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA) said that the recent global conferences had had a major impact on the work of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board. In the case of UNDP, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the World Summit for Social Development and the Fourth World Conference on Women had perhaps been the most influential. In the case of UNFPA, the International Conference on Population and Development had dramatically reshaped the Fund's programme.

United Nations conferences were both an international dialogue and a process. For example, civil society had progressively earned a place in the summit process and influenced the executive boards' work and programmes. Through participation in government decision-making and United Nations conferences, civil society had more reasonable expectations of United Nations endeavours.

The funds and programmes were essential in bringing funds, policies and activities to bear in developing countries on programmes that reflected the agreements and directions emerging from United Nations conferences. The universal presence of the United Nations, particularly UNDP, enabled it, through the resident coordinator system, to represent all elements of the United Nations funds and programmes and to provide summit-related policy input into government decision-making. That extended their engagement beyond programme delivery and into areas of advocacy and consensus-building. UNDP and UNFPA were also neutral partners with a mandate to work with Governments to help deliver, monitor and follow up implementation of summit outcomes. However, the funds and programmes were only one way to do so. There was a clear complementary role for bilateral, regional and other international assistance, the collective capacities of the Governments of both developed and developing countries and the contributions of civil society.

The UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board had contributed to UNDP and UNFPA programming directions that reflected summit agreements and dialogues. The results of the International Conference on Population and Development,

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particularly family planning and maternal health, permeated all UNFPA activities, and UNDP programmes had progressively taken up poverty eradication as the overriding goal reflecting the World Summit for Social Development. The Executive Board participated in such policy adjustment and monitored its progress. The Executive Board had also taken decisions on such matters as focus of activities, streamlining of modalities for delivery, and funding issues that reflected the explicit and implicit outcomes of recent summits.

At the recent session of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board, the Board had taken a decision to have the funds and programmes provide more analytical reports to the Council in order to help the Council fulfil its coordinating role. The Board had also invited the executive heads to consult with UNDG in order to prepare a consolidated list of issues central to improved coordination of operational activities, and invited the Council to recommend back to the executive boards on ways the reports could become better inputs into the deliberations of the Council. Co-operation with UNDG as well as integrated conference follow-up were key issues that could be enhanced by that process.

The PRESIDENT invited the members of the Council to comment on the statements made by the two panellists.

Mr. GOODERHAM (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the European Union welcomed the decision of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA. It would be helpful to get the views of the panellists on what kind of advice or guidance they would like the Council to provide, at its substantive session in July, with respect to the current exchange between the executive boards of the funds and programmes and the Council.

He wished to know the extent of coordination between the executive boards and the functional commissions of the Council, particularly the functional commissions responsible for conference follow-up, and whether such coordination could be increased.

Mr. KLOVSTAD (Observer for Norway) said he wished to know whether the panellists had any ideas on ways to give guidance to the funds and programmes, at the Council's substantive session, as to how they could prepare more analytical reports that highlighted issues relevant to the Council's coordinating and guiding role and related them to conference follow-up.

Mr. FEDORTCHENKO (Russian Federation) asked why the representatives of the executive boards of other programmes, in particular the World Food

Programme (WFP), had not taken part in the current session. His delegation considered that, at the operational level, questions of coordination were, on the whole, being dealt with in a satisfactory manner, particularly through the inter-agency mechanism of ACC. The UNDAF programmes being developed should help to coordinate the programme activities of all United Nations agencies at the country level, including follow-up to major United Nations conferences. Resident coordinators had an important role to play in implementing UNDAF programmes at the country level. At the same time, the establishment of a common system of coordination in that area at the policy level, where the Council should play the key role, was significantly hindered by the absence of ongoing working ties both between the executive boards of the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies and between the funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the Council.

The practice of holding joint meetings of the executive boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF excluded the much broader group of organizations involved in implementing decisions taken at major United Nations conferences. The preparation of a consolidated and comprehensive inter-agency report was of great importance. In addition to a general description of activities to implement the decisions of international conferences, the consolidated inter-agency report should seek to identify and analyse potential problems, particularly in the area of inter-agency coordination, on which the Council would have to adopt policy decisions. The participation of ACC and inter-agency task forces or other inter-agency mechanisms in the preparation of the consolidated report would be useful. Since coordination was important for the operational activities of the United Nations as a whole, the Council should establish precise guidelines for the form and content of the consolidated report. Special attention must be given to the question of implementing the decisions of major United Nations conferences with the General Assembly's consideration of triennial policy reviews of operational activities for development.

Mr. LUNDBORG (Sweden) said that the executive boards should endeavour to prepare more analytical and substantive reports. The reports should not be consolidated because it was important to be able to determine how individual agencies were integrating their activities in implementing the results of international conferences. A consolidated report would make it impossible to identify the problems experienced by individual agencies.

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The Council should be self-critical and acknowledge that it had seldom demanded anything from, or provided guidance to, the executive boards. Prior to its substantive session in July, the Council should consider ways in which it could provide guidance to the funds and programmes in order that the executive boards could be given specific tasks on which they would have to report back to the Council.

Mr. EHRHARDT (Canada), referring to the decision of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA calling for the submission of more analytical reports to the Council, said his delegation hoped that UNICEF would associate itself with that effort. While his delegation appreciated the efforts being made at the current session to bring the funds and programmes together, it questioned whether the discussions might not have been more complete and useful if representatives from other organizations had participated. At the previous meeting, the specialized agencies had expressed their interest in greater interaction with the Council. Perhaps a panel that included the funds and programmes and some of the specialized agencies would have given the Council a more complete view of what was taking place at the country level and enable it to hold a broader discussion on country-level coordination.

Ms. POULTON (United States of America) inquired how a possible joint meeting of the executive boards of the various funds and programmes could be of use in the follow-up of major conferences.

Mr. TANASESCU (Romania) said that the executive boards had a comparative advantage in coordinating follow-up at the national level and adopting, at every session, country cooperation frameworks or country programmes. The Council had an opportunity to make an in-depth analysis of the extent of coordination at the country level.

The Council should take advantage of the presence of resident coordinators at its meetings in order to obtain information about practical aspects of their work at the country level and draw lessons that could be extended to the entire system.

His delegation noted the absence of representatives of the Executive Board of WFP and of the governing body of the Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (HIV/AIDS) (UNAIDS). Those two bodies had an important role to play in the follow-up of

major United Nations conferences, and the Council should try to ensure their participation in future sessions.

Mr. POWLES (President of the UNICEF Executive Board) said that many delegations had commented on the absence of some specialized agencies. He believed that the central role of the executive boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF with respect to the funds and programmes justified the presence of their representatives. However, the Council could decide whether other specialized agencies should participate in such meetings.

The United Kingdom representative had asked what kind of advice or guidance the Council could give to the executive boards. Perhaps there was more of a role for the Council in revitalizing the debate on some of the main development issues and putting those issues in the correct context in order to give direction to the work of the executive boards. With regard to the extent of cooperation between the funds and programmes, he referred to the recent innovative joint meeting that had discussed operations at the field level. With regard to ways in which the boards should interact with one another, it would be very easy to fall into the trap of creating new coordination meetings. It was important to bear in mind that it was the role of the Council to give direction and provide coordination.

The representative of the Russian Federation had referred to the absence of ongoing working ties between the specialized agencies and the Council, and it was necessary to give some thought to that matter. With regard to the need for a consolidated inter-agency report, he noted that any attempt to make generalizations about all the funds and programmes would not be very profitable.

He agreed with the representative of Canada that the specialized agencies should be represented at such sessions. However, before seeking the participation of other bodies, the Council should ascertain whether its sessions on such issues were working properly.

The United States representative had asked how joint meetings were useful in follow-up to the major conferences. It was the Council's role to provide direction to the individual executive boards, which had very specific roles in respect of the funds and programmes that were responsible to them.

Mr. MARCH (Vice-President of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA), responding to the United Kingdom representative, stressed the need for flexible reporting, in which the requests made of funds and programmes could be adapted

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to changing circumstances. In a more substantive vein, the Council and the Executive Board should encourage frank reporting that focused more on actual measures taken. Effective communication was the key to interaction between executive boards and other actors in conference follow-up. In that connection, he welcomed the briefing given recently by the Chairman of the Commission for Social Development to the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board. The joint organization by UNFPA and the Population Division of round tables with civil-society organizations and technical meetings in preparation for the five-year review of the International Conference on Population and Development was an example of how collaboration advanced the follow-up process.

In response to the representative of the Russian Federation, he said that consolidated reporting risked aggravating existing tensions over the number of paragraphs to allot to various regions and issues in agency reports.

Replying to the representative of Sweden, he said that joint meetings of executive boards would indeed give impetus to conference follow-up. It might be advisable to organize an inter-agency dialogue prior to the drafting of joint reports.

Panel discussion with the heads of funds and programmes

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) praised the progress achieved by the stakeholders in the conference follow-up process but stressed that a number of challenges and problems must still be addressed. The first challenge was to ensure continued horizontal integration of follow-up from a multi-conference perspective. Thus far, there had been a strong tendency for conference secretariats to focus exclusively on vertical follow-up.

Through its resident coordinator system, UNDP was working in the context of the Organization's reform to strengthen coordination of operational activities at the country level. The link between its resident representatives and the United Nations resident coordinators ensured the harmonization of conference follow-up with each country's priorities. According to preliminary data from the annual reports of resident coordinators and questionnaires on the triennial policy review of operational activities, most countries had established cross-conference thematic groups and were making an effort to mainstream cross-cutting issues.

UNDP had participated in a workshop organized by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) held in Turin in December 1997 (E/1998/19, para. 5), in order to promote horizontal, cross-cutting follow-up to conferences at the country level. A major outcome of that workshop had been the ACC guidance note for the resident coordinator system on field-level follow-up to conferences, which had been transmitted by the UNDP Administrator to resident coordinators in April 1998.

At the headquarters level, UNDP participated actively in the ACC inter-agency task forces, particularly the Task Force on Full Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods, and had been involved in two country studies. The results of the Turin workshop had been transmitted to 18 countries in order to ensure their integration in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). UNDP and the United Nations system must now disseminate and operationalize task forces' outputs, particularly through the resident coordinator system. The Council might wish to take that into account in seeking to integrate conference follow-up in the functioning of the resident coordinator system. The UNDAF process could do much to improve the coherence and coordination of follow-up activities. He noted that the Secretary-General, in his report (E/1998/19, para. 38), recommended that reports of executive boards should include information on support provided to coordinating conference follow-up. The Council and executive boards might wish to urge United Nations entities to adopt a cross-cutting, horizontal approach to the follow-up of individual conferences as well. UNDP was stressing such cross-cutting themes as the eradication of urban poverty and gender and social development in its follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II).

The second challenge was to mobilize financing for the implementation of conference action plans. In a climate characterized by the increasing indebtedness of most developing countries and declining levels of official development assistance, the Council might wish to reiterate the importance of mobilizing additional resources from all sources. Within the context of the 20/20 initiative (E/1998/19, footnote 41), UNDP, in collaboration with UNICEF, was supporting reviews of social-sector expenditure in more than 20 countries. At the global and country levels, it was participating in preparations for a conference on the 20/20 initiative scheduled for October 1998. In keeping with

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the Secretary-General's recommendation, the Council might wish to consider urging Member States to support the 20/20 initiative with a view to increasing their allocations of domestic and international resources to social services.

The third challenge was to overcome the insufficiency of relevant statistical data, which was handicapping the implementation of conference plans of action. For example, some countries had been unable to participate fully in the UNDP Poverty Strategy Initiative for lack of reliable data. He drew the Council's attention, in particular, to the recommendation of the Secretary-General (E/1998/19, para. 75 (ix)) that it should encourage the United Nations system to enhance its efforts to build national capacity for data collection and analysis.

The fourth challenge was the need for greater involvement of civil society at the country level. Although non-governmental organizations had participated actively in conferences, their involvement in the follow-up process had remained weak. UNDP was supporting countries in their efforts to draw non-governmental organizations into the follow-up activities of the World Summit for Social Development. It had also organized a Global Round Table in Warsaw, Poland, in February 1997, which had focused on partnerships among Governments, civil society and UNDP. It had prepared a policy statement on strengthening its partnerships with civil-society organizations. In addition to maintaining a systematic dialogue with civil society, as recommended by the Secretary-General in his report (para. 52), the Council might wish to encourage greater involvement by civil society at the country level in the follow-up process.

The fifth challenge was the mainstreaming of gender as a cross-cutting theme in conference follow-up. In order to accelerate progress, UNDP was working closely with the United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women within the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality, and in collaboration with the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), with a view to promoting gender mainstreaming in country-level operational activities through the resident coordinator system. Gender specialists from among the United Nations Volunteers were being assigned to 20 UNDP offices, and 10 gender advisers funded by UNDP had been assigned to UNIFEM. At least 20 per cent of UNDP core global and regional resources would be allocated to promoting gender equality and the advancement of women and to the development of indicators in that regard. The Council might wish to encourage further efforts, at both the

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intergovernmental level - particularly through its functional commissions - and the inter-agency level to promote gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting theme.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that her remarks on integrated follow-up would focus on the relationship between the normative functions of the United Nations system and the operational work of the funds and programmes; activities at the country level, including efforts to build relationships with other partners; and coordinated strategy development, including the mobilization of resources. Coordinated follow-up must not be viewed as an end in itself but rather as a means of implementing the outcomes of international conferences.

The relationship between normative and operational aspects of conference follow-up began with the responsibility of lead agencies for implementing the recommendations of conference documents. For example, in the population sector, the Population Division had conducted an independent analysis at the global and regional levels while UNFPA had done a pragmatic evaluation of initiatives at the operational level, which would form the basis for the follow-up of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. Nonetheless, the relationship between the normative and operational aspects of follow-up was not very well defined. Thus far, the thematic discussions organized by the Council had not provided much direction in that regard; it therefore had a greater and more specific role to play.

At the country level, in the context of the resident coordinator system and the United Nations country teams, conference follow-up must be tailored to the goals and programmes of the country itself. However, the United Nations system must also take a position on agreed goals in order to advance policy dialogue and that position must then be reinforced by all the partners in the field. In the context of the triennial policy review of operational activities, guidance should be sought from the Economic and Social Council as to the kinds of relationships to be discussed at the country level, e.g., the policy dialogue between Governments and the funds and programmes, or positions with regard to common advocacy. The UNDAFs should be a useful tool in that connection. Some resident coordinators and country teams were developing successful training programmes; others were not.

Among the lessons to be learned were that training programmes must be intensified and take into account the specific issues and problems of conference

follow-up. Lessons could also be learned from various field experiences. She stressed the need to provide improved training to entire country teams rather than to individuals from various organizations. An improved data system was a pressing need in many developing countries. UNDAFs and guidelines from the task forces should be utilized in helping those countries to achieve their individual development goals. The Minimum National Social Data Set of indicators developed by the Statistical Commission (E/1998/19, box 2) had formed the basis for the work of the Task Force on Basic Social Services and also for the twenty-first-century indicators, including poverty indicators, developed by the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development. Lastly, the involvement of civil society in conference follow-up must be promoted at both the country and international levels. The mobilization of resources was crucial; to that end, the various funds and programmes and the international community in general must demonstrate that resources had been used effectively thus far.

Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that too few of the goals of the World Summit for Children would be achieved by the target date of the year 2000. It was paradoxical that, despite a broad consensus on the need to reduce poverty and a global economy that was generating some \$30 trillion annually, nearly 1.5 billion people lived on less than \$1 a day. Against that backdrop, the major conferences of the 1990s had marked a turning point in the promotion of a more open political debate and greater involvement of civil society in alleviating poverty.

There were lessons to be learned from the 1996 mid-decade review of the World Summit for Children. First, there must be a firm and continuing commitment by heads of State and Government to the implementation of conference goals and plans of action. Second, the international global agenda must be implemented at all levels - national, subnational and local. The World Summit for Children had been able to influence policy-making in part because its follow-up was decentralized and involved civil society. Third, the monitoring of progress at the national level had led to the development of a global system to monitor the situation of children, which could assess trends, measure progress and identify areas requiring special action. Support and policy guidance from Headquarters had made it possible to share information and lessons

provided by that system. Fourth, the development of a process of periodic progress reports was helping to disseminate results.

The follow-up to the World Summit for Children had been greatly facilitated by the rapid ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which had introduced a periodic country reporting system and called for the development of national strategies to guarantee children's rights and indicators to monitor government action. The Convention had established a linkage between operational and normative activities and had clearly identified access to basic social services as a legal obligation.

The ACC process of developing guidelines, led by the work of the inter-agency task forces, had been crucial to developing mechanisms for follow-up at the country level. The reform of the United Nations, particularly the introduction of UNDAFs at the country level, would complement country strategy notes and add a new dimension to conference follow-up. Preparations for UNDAFs were already under way in 18 pilot countries, the most recent one being Mozambique. UNDAFs would provide an opportunity to link the issues of development and human rights, including the need for special protection of certain vulnerable groups, such as women and children. Their flexibility would help to promote human development and respect for human rights in diverse cultures.

Every effort must be made to ensure that reporting on the implementation of conference goals was rationalized, focused and avoided duplication. Reports to intergovernmental machinery, in particular, must be more rational and based on cross-cutting themes. In the reporting process, the secretariats of lead agencies associated with various conferences must ensure that information was gathered from all relevant United Nations bodies and that it was shared.

The Economic and Social Council could play a decisive role in assessing progress in the follow-up of major conferences through, inter alia, the reports submitted to it and its substantive agendas devoted to the follow-up of specific conferences. Reports should be fully integrated and provide a comprehensive assessment of the impact of follow-up at the global, regional and national levels.

Another key factor in the implementation of conference goals was the availability of adequate resource. UNICEF estimated that universal access to basic social services would require an increase in current expenditure of

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approximately 50 per cent, or \$80 billion per year. That gap could be bridged through the full implementation of the 20/20 initiative and by meeting the target of 0.7 per cent for official development assistance.

The innovative nature of conference follow-up demanded an innovative approach from the intergovernmental machinery, particularly from the Economic and Social Council. It was urgent to reflect on how the intergovernmental machinery could review system-wide framework and system-wide reports. In that connection, the Council had a unique role to play, since the treaty bodies of certain human-rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, also reported to it. It could therefore make a major contribution to the mainstreaming of cross-cutting themes, such as human rights, gender and children, and act as a bridge between the political and the normative commitments undertaken by Member States. She welcomed the fact that the reporting guidelines of treaty bodies increasingly made reference to the follow-up of major conferences.

Fully convinced of the value of such an integrated approach to conference follow-up, UNICEF had issued a handbook on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In it, the Convention was considered in conjunction with the agendas of the major conferences on an article-by-article basis. Together with UNIFEM, it had published a cross-reference guide to the human rights of women and girls outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action and related United Nations conferences and international instruments. The Council would also be an appropriate forum in which to review the costs of coordination, a subject that was often overlooked.

Ms. HEYZER (Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)) said that the work of UNIFEM in promoting gender equality had benefited from increased attention to coordination and from the principles guiding United Nations reforms. Coordination went far beyond the sharing of information. It entailed stronger links between policy and norm-setting activities and their counterpart operational activities to promote gender equality; genuine ties of partnership and synergy among United Nations agencies, utilizing the comparative advantages and constituencies of each agency to enhance gender equality; and the development of a knowledge base among the

United Nations agencies and their partners on effective strategies for promoting equality.

A major UNIFEM initiative had been the launching of campaigns on the eradication of violence against women. A Latin American campaign had been mounted in collaboration with United Nations country teams. Thus far, 19 Latin American Governments had endorsed the campaign; 1,500 radio stations in the region were carrying messages aimed at ending violence against women; and the involvement of local governments and communities was being encouraged. Outstanding examples of effective eradication of violence at the community level would be shared throughout the region in a number of exchange programmes.

A Trust Fund in Support of Action to Eliminate Violence against Women had been established with a view to promoting innovative strategies at the community level. Thus far, it had provided over \$2 million in grants to organizations in more than 45 countries and was helping to finance the implementation of some of the crucial recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on violence against women. The Fund also facilitated the exchange of experiences and had a learning component supported by the MacArthur Foundation.

The collaboration between UNIFEM and the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was yet another example of the linkage between norm-setting and operational activities. The collaboration of UNIFEM advocates from various regions had given tremendous impetus to the CEDAW reporting and follow-up process and had strengthened its impact at the country level.

UNIFEM was also helping to place 20 gender specialists in the UNDP resident coordinator system and providing 10 gender advisers to assist with the work of UNDAFs and the resident coordinators.

UNIFEM was an active participant in the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality. It was pleased that many of the recommendations it had submitted to the Turin workshop had been incorporated in the report of the Secretary-General. It was also chairing a sub-group on gender and coordination within the United Nations Development Group.

A number of challenges must still be addressed. UNICEF believed that, at the country level, the promotion of gender equality should not be viewed as the sole responsibility of gender focal points. Moreover, the various sectoral thematic groups must provide support to the thematic group on gender and gender

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issues must be viewed as a cross-cutting responsibility of the highest-level decision-makers in country offices. She was pleased that a resident coordinator would be present at a training session for 20 gender specialists scheduled for the following week. Such initiatives made a difference at the country level.

The PRESIDENT invited the members of the Council to comment on the statements made by the panellists.

Mr. GOODERHAM (United Kingdom), speaking on behalf of the European Union, welcomed the commitment of the funds and programmes to integrated conference follow-up and the panellists' emphasis on the role of civil society and gender mainstreaming. He also welcomed Ms. Sadik's remarks on the need for an effective use of resources and the importance of defining a common set of indicators in order to monitor progress.

It would be interesting to hear how the funds and programmes planned to participate in the second phase of the follow-up, namely networking and the team-manager system. He wondered whether additional guidance from the Economic and Social Council was necessary in order to facilitate the participation of executive boards. He also wished to hear about the activities of funds and programmes with a view to disseminating task-force output. He wondered whether the United Nations Development Group could play a role in that regard. He inquired about the commitment of the specialized agencies to working within the UNDAF process, to which the European Union attached great importance. He also wondered whether the World Bank's decentralization of its management structure would have an impact on collaboration between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions at the field level. Would it be regarded as an opportunity or a threat?

He inquired about the relationship between normative and operational activities at the inter-agency level and about the interaction of the operational and normative committees established by the Secretary-General within the context of the conference follow-up process.

Mr. LUNDBORG (Sweden) recalled that, at the preceding meeting, the Chairpersons of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) and of the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) had mentioned the great difficulty of obtaining resources for integrating and coordinating activities. He asked whether the panellists also felt that it was hard to give priority to integrated activities because of the additional

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resource demands they made on the funds and programmes, and whether guidance in that regard should be sought at the Executive Board level with a view to deriving the benefits of synergy. He also asked for comments on the possibility, mentioned by the Chairman of IACSD, of establishing special-purpose or thematic funds to guarantee the integrated follow-up of global conferences.

Mr. ITO (Japan) said, with respect to the Council's role in providing guidance, that it seemed that the Council merely rubber-stamped the reports it received each year from the funds and programmes. He wondered what the executive heads of the funds and programmes wanted in terms of guidance from the Council.

Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) asked the President to have the statements made at the current session compiled into a document so that the important points raised could be discussed in depth at the Council's substantive session, with a view to providing policy guidance for the future work of the funds and programmes and the functional commissions. The panellists at the current meeting had stressed the importance of resources; that important element had not been mentioned at the previous meetings. It was impractical to try to streamline the organizations' work without giving them enough resources to pursue their goals. He wondered whether ACC or the inter-agency task forces had ever tried to devise possible means of dealing with the shortage of resources. There was no reason why ACC could not establish a fourth task force to explore the problem of resources. Regarding the programme undertaken by UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), he asked how the problem of resources had been solved. It was important to determine who would fund the common strategies and programmes implemented among different organizations. UNDAF might provide an answer in that regard.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said, with respect to the follow-up of the outputs of the task forces and of the ACC recommendations, that UNFPA was committed to using the instruments developed in the programming process. Its programming guidelines referred specifically to the guidelines produced on basic social services and data-collection systems. The executive boards, in reviewing country programmes, should consider how instruments for coordinated follow-up had been taken into account.

Instead of "rubber-stamping" the reports it received from the funds and programmes, the Council should identify which issues required its attention. That meant that those reports must indicate clearly the issues of greatest concern. The convergence between the normative and operational aspects of the system could serve as a point of departure. With respect to resources for coordination, UNFPA provided the resources for many joint activities. One of the problems with the funding of activities in large groups was that the activity tended to become an end in itself.

Resource mobilization from both international and national public and private sources had been one of the cross-cutting issues considered by the task forces. With respect to relations between the normative and operational areas, UNFPA had set up a staff-level working group to identify relevant issues.

Mr. EHRHARDT (Canada) said that he welcomed the cooperation between the normative parts of the system and the funds and programmes, and asked for more details on the latter's relationship with the specialized agencies. The issue of resource mobilization was directly related to the documentation of the effective use of resources and reporting on results. He asked for specific information on how the funds and programmes planned to improve their capacity in that area. He welcomed the commitment of the funds and programmes to improving coordination at the country level. How did they intend to address the issue of the costs which such coordination entailed in terms of both financial and human resources? Lastly, he asked how the common advocacy and policy dialogue at the country level, which had been mentioned by the Executive Director of UNFPA, could be put into operation in the context of UNDAF and the resident coordinator system.

Ms. BAI Yongjie (China) said that she welcomed the enhancement of activities at the country level, which was very important for the follow-up to major conferences. She agreed with the Executive Director of UNICEF that the enhancement of coordination at the regional level should be undertaken in full consultation with the recipient Governments and countries. Most of the responsibility for implementing such follow-up lay with Governments.

She agreed with the representative of Lebanon that the mobilization of new and additional resources was very important for the implementation of integrated and coordinated follow-up activities. If the Council wished to play a role in the implementation of such follow-up, it should focus on that area. She also

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agreed that analysis and research on the efficient use of resources was equally important, in view of the need for accountability to sources of funding.

Although the Council had had some problems in playing its guiding role, she did not agree that it merely rubber-stamped the reports of the funds and programmes. The Council had discussed the issue of follow-up to major conferences every year since 1995 and had adopted a number of resolutions and agreed conclusions on the subject, which had included paragraphs on the role of the funds and programmes. The question was whether those directives were being implemented. To improve the situation, the funds and programmes should suggest areas in which the Council could provide guidance, and the Council, for its part, should ensure that its resolutions and agreed conclusions provided enough guidance to the funds and programmes. Such guidance should be effectively followed in the activities of the funds and programmes.

Mr. KLOVSTAD (Observer for Norway) said that the Council could not play its guiding role unless the reports of the funds and programmes provided specific information on coordination, along the lines of the information provided in the panellists' statements. With respect to financing, the work of the funds and programmes on the 20/20 initiative was broad-based and had made progress in recent years. The Council should discuss that initiative at its forthcoming substantive session, particularly since the subject was to be considered at the follow-up conference to be held in Viet Nam in October 1998.

Ms. HAGEN (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said, with respect to the question of how the specialized agencies could be integrated into the UNDAF process, that ILO was hampered by three factors. First, many of its technical-assistance funds were extra-budgetary, meaning that the framework within which it operated differed from that of other entities participating in UNDAF. Second, much of its assistance and strategic guidance was being channelled into its country-level development efforts that were not even oriented towards funding, particularly its normative work. Third, its constituents also differed from those of other entities, as they consisted of ministries of labour, workers and employers. Thus, its capacity to become integrated into the UNDAF exercise, as currently structured, was uneven and had not yielded satisfactory results in all areas. She hoped that ways could be found to ensure that the process worked well across the board.

Ms. DJATMIKO (Observer for Indonesia) said that she agreed with the comments made by the representatives of Lebanon and China on the subject of resources. The previous day, the Chairman of one of the Council's functional commissions had pointed to a tendency of voluntary-fund resources to shrink while trust-fund resources expanded. The issue of stabilizing funding mechanisms should be addressed not only by the commission concerned, but also in the context of ACC.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said, with respect to the question of legislative mandates, that the UNDP Executive Board had given UNDP a mandate by directing that coordinated conference follow-up should be addressed in its programme of work. The outputs of the task forces chaired by ILO and the World Bank had been distributed to all resident coordinators through the Executive Director of UNDP, while those of the task force chaired by UNFPA had been distributed directly. The specialized agencies were full members of the task forces and had contributed actively to coordinated follow-up. The Council was in a good position to promote not only vertical, but also horizontal, coordination of follow-up, since it received the reports of all the individual funds and programmes and functional commissions.

He agreed that UNDAF could become a vehicle for resource mobilization. With respect to relations with the World Bank, the United Nations Development Group and the Bank had agreed to pilot, in two countries, World Bank participation in UNDAF. With respect to the reporting of results, UNDP produced the annual Human Development Report and national human-development reports for nearly all countries. Beginning in 1998, it would also produce an annual report on poverty.

Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that most of the outputs of the task forces and ACC recommendations were circulated through the regional management teams and through the leadership training provided to new or transferred representatives. Some of those dissemination efforts were carried out jointly with other funds and programmes. Basically, the role of the United Nations Development Group was to set specific work plans and to identify actions to be undertaken and obstacles encountered.

A number of pilot projects involving the participation of specialized agencies were currently under way. At the country level, the funds and programmes were not, in practice, separate from the specialized agencies in their activities on the ground, since coherence in terms of interventions was imperative. The World Bank's participation represented an opportunity, not a threat, to UNICEF, as it played a complementary role and afforded UNICEF a chance to influence World Bank policy in favour of children. With respect to the shortage of resources, UNICEF would continue to stress the importance of development assistance. In the area of reporting on results, UNICEF effectively reported quantitative results, but was still in the process of exploring how it could better report in terms of qualitative measurements.

UNDAF was useful as a planning framework for programmes. However, it entailed additional costs in terms of time and human resources, which UNICEF had simply had to absorb; those costs could be expected to level off over time. The regular programme funding would continue to be used for the programmes. With respect to the Council's guidance, she had already suggested that the Council should provide for direct exchanges with the treaty bodies and with country teams. Moreover, the funds and programmes themselves could improve their reporting to the Council on coordination activities, including those conducted through ACC. Lastly, with respect to the relationship between normative and operational aspects, there was a need for greater coherence and communication between the two Executive Committees. Fortunately, however, a mechanism for improving such communication was being introduced.

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs) said that a joint working group had been established to address the interaction between normative work and operational activities, and the upcoming appointment of a Deputy Secretary-General would also contribute to improvement in that area. In reply to the Lebanese representative, he said that the question of resources, especially those needed to achieve country-level goals, had been part of the agenda and a constant concern of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for the past several years; moreover, the question was treated in detail in paragraphs 66 to 70 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1998/19).

Country-level presentations

Ms. TIMPSON (United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)), speaking in her capacity as Resident Coordinator, United Nations Operational Activities for Development, Philippines, introduced a presentation on the United Nations country team's experience in supporting national follow-up to global conferences in the Philippines. She said that the Philippines had actively prepared for and participated in the recent series of United Nations conferences, and had demonstrated its commitment to following up on those conferences through such actions as its adoption of national plans of action for children, Agenda 21, gender-responsive development, population management and poverty alleviation.

The Philippine Government's country strategy note of October 1995 served as the reference point for substantive contributions by inter-agency field-level theme groups on environment and sustainable development, led by UNDP; basic social services, led by UNICEF; empowerment of women, led by UNFPA; sustainable livelihoods, led by ILO; and the United Nations Joint and Co-sponsored Programme on HIV/AIDS, led by WHO.

Recent United Nations collaboration activities that had served as building blocks for UNDAF in the Philippines included a 1995 Turin team-building workshop, field-level committees and inter-agency task forces, United Nations agency participation in reviews of each other's programmes, workshops involving the Government, donors and non-governmental organizations, and post-conflict activities in Mindanao. All United Nations agencies with country representatives covering the Philippines had participated in those activities. Broad coordination with Government and civil society, within the donor community and within the United Nations system was also undertaken.

Among key recommendations arising from the experience gained in the programme, she cited the need to harmonize funding agencies, programme cycles as part of the UNDAF process, to build incentives for cooperation into the system, to maintain flexibility in programming, to involve specialized agencies in the process, and to ensure that the experience of agencies not represented at the field level were included in the collaboration framework.

Mr. HAMDAN (Lebanon) requested more information regarding collaboration with donors in post-conflict programmes in Mindanao.

Mr. GOODERHAM (United Kingdom) asked for further elaboration regarding constraints and difficulties encountered in the programme, decentralizing decision-making, and whether the resident coordinator for the Philippines intended to carry out a situation analysis of follow-up to global conferences.

Ms. DUDA (Poland) expressed interest in management and financial barriers that might have been encountered in the programme.

Mr. EHRHARDT (Canada) asked about consultations with the donor community, and whether UNDP would be interested in working with other funds and programmes in the area of harmonizing programme cycles.

The PRESIDENT noted that in his experience on the Security Council, countries receiving assistance of the type being discussed often were left to fend for themselves once the immediate crisis affecting them had passed, and he inquired as to the feasibility of instituting a two- or three-year "post-crisis" period during which a country's progress could be more closely monitored than was currently the case.

Ms. TIMPSON (United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)) said that, after an initial delay caused by disagreements within the Philippine Government itself regarding the terms of the settlement reached with the combatants in Mindanao, the concerted action taken by the United Nations system to set up needed programmes in that area had reassured the donor community and had thereby broadened the few resources available to a middle-level developing country like the Philippines.

In reply to the United Kingdom representative, she noted that the approaching election of a new Government in the Philippines presented a possible future constraint in that the personnel in that Government would have less direct knowledge of, and thus less commitment to, the implementation of United Nations conference follow-up. She also cited programme delays caused by differences among agencies in decision-making, and the current lack of basic data on which to base a situation analysis. She fully agreed with the Polish representative on the importance of eliminating management and financial barriers, especially those created by the lack of harmonization of programme cycles, as raised by the Canadian representative. The question of consultations with the donor community in the UNDAF preparation process was also closely associated with programme cycles, and a plan to set up and maintain close contact with donors during that process was being prepared.

Ms. DAVIS (Women's Environment and Development Organization) asked Ms. Timpson to outline the advantages of involving civil society and non-governmental organizations in the development process, and to list the key conditions for creation of genuine partnership among the actors.

Ms. TIMPSON (United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)) said that, while it was difficult to generalize, the situation in the Philippines was characterized by particularly vigorous dialogue between the Government and a well-educated and well-organized community of non-governmental organizations. However, the most important factor in the creation of partnership between actors in the development process was the creation of broad and genuine dialogue between Government and civil society.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), in response to the Canadian representative, said that harmonization of programme cycles had been a long-standing priority of UNDP, and that the advent and general application of UNDAF would have the effect of forcing programme harmonization. In reply to the Lebanese representative's inquiry regarding the Mindanao programme, he noted that UNDP had also provided \$1.25 million for post-conflict rehabilitation in southern Lebanon.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.