



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 22nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 5.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 82: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued) (A/42/3, 178, 313, 344, 352, 354, 357, 359, 381, 386, 407, 410, 411, 417, 474, 477, 549, 603, 604 and 605)

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- (i) NEW INTERNATIONAL HUMAN ORDER: MORAL ASPECTS OF DEVELOPMENT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/527)

1. Mr. BAKER (Office of the Director General for Development and International Economic Co-operation) said that one of the decisions taken by the Secretary-General to implement the recommendations of the Group of High-level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations and in particular recommendation 25 (1) relating to the Centre for Science and Technology for Development. In paragraph 30, subparagraph (e), of his progress report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/213 (A/42/234), the Secretary-General stated that "At Headquarters, the heads of the Centre for Transnational Corporations and the Centre for Science and Technology for Development will be reporting to me through the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs. With regard to the Centre for Science and Technology for Development, I will recommend that General Assembly resolution 34/218 ... be amended accordingly".

2. That recommendation would not affect the intent of that resolution concerning the nature of the Centre as an organizationally distinct entity with the functions entrusted to it. In that connection, he referred to part II, paragraphs 15 to 18, of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination on its resumed twenty-seventh session (A/42/16).

3. Mrs. SCOTT (Jamaica) congratulated the World Commission on Environment and Development on its comprehensive and balanced analysis of the environmental problems set forth in its report (A/42/427) and for the useful recommendations on which it had achieved unanimity.

(Mrs. Scott, Jamaica)

4. Before finally acknowledging, in the light of a life-threatening effects of over-exploitation of resources and rapid industrialization and the risks inherent in scientific and technological progress, that environmental and development issues were undeniably linked, the environment had been too long neglected in the pursuit of economic growth and development and the satisfaction of immediate needs. While environmental degradation affected countries to varying degrees, in the long run everyone was affected. Correcting those trends was therefore the responsibility of the whole international community which had no other choice but to co-operate and take urgent concerted action. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the recently concluded Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Co-operation was necessary, in particular to break the vicious circle created by poverty which was both the cause and the effect of environmental degradation. It was necessary not only to correct ecological imbalances but also to eradicate poverty by strengthening the economic capacity of developing countries especially by technical and financial aid. A new era of growth was needed which would facilitate the socially and economically sustainable development of those countries and enable them to meet their current needs without compromising those of future generations. Her delegation strongly endorsed the Commission's recommendations that international institutions should increase financial assistance and formulate longer-term development projects.

5. Jamaica, confronted by its share of ecological problems and recognizing that successful economic development depended on appreciation of the human and natural resources, was committed to protecting those resources and had recently compiled national data on that subject. Jamaica was also the site of the Regional Co-ordinating Unit for the Caribbean Action Plan.

6. Her delegation welcomed the proposal of the Commission on Human Settlements that the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless should be extended so as to become a global shelter strategy by the year 2000 which would enable the momentum gained during the Year to be maintained. It also welcomed the successful outcome of the ninth session of the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development, in which it had played an active role, and looked forward to the results of the review of the implementation of the Vienna Programme of Action.

7. Finally, she thanked the Secretary-General for his progress report on the preparation of the first regular update of the world survey on the role of women in development (A/42/508) and endorsed the guidelines formulated for the presentation of that review which, she hoped, would be a comprehensive response to the need to promote the integration and advancement of women in development, while taking into account the different socio-cultural societies.

8. Mr. FALL (Senegal) drew attention to some of the technical and economic implications of desertification and drought, over and above the well-known causes of those phenomena. Technically speaking, Africa was certainly the continent worst affected, in terms both of the magnitude and of the duration of the phenomenon, especially the Sahara and the Sudano-Sahelian region to which Senegal belonged. Economically speaking, the poor harvests caused by drought, together with weak

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

productive capacity and fragile national eco-systems, caused serious food shortages and famines and aggravated the economic and financial problems of the countries, especially their indebtedness.

9. Those problems called for urgent and lasting remedies and subregional, regional and continental co-operation was developing. At the subregional level, the Permanent Interstate Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) which was playing a vital role in South-South co-operation, had done a great deal over the past two years to encourage food self-sufficiency. The revival of production was, moreover, a priority. Subregional intergovernmental organizations such as the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD) and the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC), and various non-governmental organizations, also carried out programmes for combating desertification and drought. At the continental level, the Organization for African Unity (OAU) had established a Special Emergency Assistance Fund for Drought and Famine in Africa and the sessions of the Ministerial Conference for a Joint Policy to Combat Desertification (COMIDES), A/C.2/40/10 the next of which was scheduled for the end of 1987, played an essential role in mobilizing aid and strengthening co-operation.

10. All those activities could not, however, succeed without the support of the development organizations, multilateral financial institutions and other donors. The United Nations Sahelian Office (UNSO) played a unique role in that connection. While thanking the Executive Director of UNSO for the efforts being made by his office in fund-raising to finance the campaign against desertification and drought, he paid a special tribute to the group of donors who never failed in their financial and technical support for the various UNSO-executed projects which could not succeed without their assistance. With specific reference to the project concerning the use of peat for domestic purposes, his delegation encouraged UNSO to continue its efforts to restrict the extremely strong demand in the Sudano-Sahelian region for fuel wood and to seek alternative sources of energy.

11. FAO and WFP monitored the food situation of the countries of Africa as part of the Global Information and Early Warning System for food and agriculture. FAO's African agriculture recovery programme also focused on essential sectors. While welcoming the role played by those two bodies, his delegation fully supported the point of view expressed in the report of the Secretary-General (A/41/346) that food aid was only a stopgap and that measures should be taken not only to help the countries in reinforcing their agricultural production systems but also in developing those systems on an ecologically sound basis and thus in coping with future droughts.

12. His delegation welcomed the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (A/42/427). Whereas, in the developed countries, the problem of environment was primarily one of waste-disposal and pollution, in Africa in general, and in the Sudano-Sahelian region in particular, the main challenge remained desertification. UNEP, which played a leading role in implementing the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, had made great efforts to reinforce measures for controlling that scourge through committees established as part of the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation.

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

13. His Government had pledged to give priority to the fight against desertification in its development plan. With the help of bilateral and multilateral donors, Senegal was able to conduct numerous activities. In April 1985, for example, it had held a seminar that had led to the adoption of a national prevention strategy. In March 1987, it had hosted the inaugural meeting of the Committee on Deserts and Arid Lands which had given rise to several regional pilot projects currently encompassing four Senegalese villages.

14. Other multilateral development bodies and financial institutions were playing an important part in desertification and drought control. UNEP was involved in water-resource management and desertification prevention in Africa and supported the International Programme on Ecological Management of Arid and Semi-Arid Rangelands. WMO supported the African Centre of Meteorological Applications for Development. The World Bank had a special action programme on deforestation and provided financial support to the forestry sector in sub-Saharan tropical areas.

15. Faced with a grave and widespread ecological and economic crisis, the countries of COMIDES had decided to join together in the effort to solve their problems and were making sure that the project proposals submitted to donors for consideration and assistance were in line with their national development priorities.

16. Mr. MAIGA (Mali) said that the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development had had the merit of demonstrating that environmental problems could not be dissociated from development problems and that poverty was both the cause and the consequence of environmental deterioration. The report also contained practical proposals for combating life-threatening scourges which must be implemented immediately if the enormous devastation caused each year by drought and desertification, pollution and the like was to be averted.

17. In Africa, drought and desertification prevention was a matter of priority and was part of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. His delegation urged the international community to continue supporting the efforts of UNSO and of the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel.

18. Mali firmly believed in the complementarity of national development efforts and international assistance. In October 1985, faced with the deteriorating food, ecological and social situation and the inadequacy of the action taken to check drought and desertification, Mali had formulated, as part of its food self-sufficiency and water resources development policy, a national plan with a twofold purpose: to protect what still remained by resolutely attacking the causes of desertification and gradually to rescue areas in the process of desertification. The plan, whose objectives were to provide food security, to maintain and restore the plant cover and to improve the environment and living conditions of the population, was based on the following strategy: mobilizing all national energies through political, administrative and democratic organizations; and drafting legislation to achieve real accountability and total involvement on

(Mr. Maiga, Mali)

the part of the population in conserving sources. By 1995, all urban populations must replace wood for heating by other fuels.

19. His delegation stressed the importance, for desertification and drought control in Mali, of the advancement of women and the promotion of their effective integration in development, of a policy on housing consistent with the environment and the needs of the population, and of the application of science and technology to development. It was following with particular attention the implementation of the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies and of the decisions and recommendations with regard to the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless.

20. Mr. KANE (Guinea) said that, whereas in the past, humanity had mostly been faced with such imbalances in the ecological system as drought, floods and other natural scourges, the current terrible destruction of the environment was man-made. Owing to an inexplicable paradox, economic progress, which ought to be beneficial for all, had dangerously jeopardized the balance of the ecosystem. As real development meant preserving the environment, there was an obvious need for non-proliferation and, indeed, for the systematic destruction of nuclear weapons, for strict controls over the use of chemical products and for implementing international conventions, in particular with regard to protecting the ozone layer. The international community must take energetic and operational steps to restore harmony between development and environment. UNEP's role as prime mover in that context should be enlarged and its contribution to drafting world-wide action plans and strategies encouraged. Desertification affected 35 per cent of the Earth's land mass and 20 per cent of its population. Six million hectares were irrevocably lost every year in black Africa, where desertification and drought continued to wreak unprecedented havoc, leading to a sharp drop in agricultural production, an upsurge in disease and an increase in death rates. For that reason, his Government had co-sponsored a draft resolution urging increased assistance from the international community to countries stricken or threatened by drought and desertification.

21. Science and technology were responsible for the spectacular progress mankind had made in recent decades, but also for the division of the world into developed and developing countries. Science and technology must not be the prerogative of the first group; still less, must they be an instrument by which to dominate the second. The international community as a whole must enjoy the benefits of scientific and technical discoveries. That was the purpose of the transfer of technology. That transfer must not give rise to traumas and imbalances of all kinds, which often proved fatal to economic, social and cultural development, but rather should take place within the framework of active, balanced international co-operation between North and South and between the countries of the South. The United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development must therefore be strengthened so that it could participate more effectively in the elaboration of programmes of activity.

22. Mr. FAABORG-ANDERSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Member States of the European Community, said that there had been distinct progress towards the full integration of women in development and that considerable efforts had been made in

(Mr. Faaborg-Andersen, Denmark)

order to implement the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies. The Twelve Member States of the European Community fully endorsed Economic and Social Council resolution 1987/65 on that question, which had been adopted by consensus, and were particularly looking forward to receiving the addendum to the Secretary-General's report, containing a compilation of all legislative mandates governing the integration of women in economic development. Such a document would greatly facilitate the work not only of the Commission on the Status of Women, but also of Governments. Moreover, the Secretary-General's proposal to give priority to the strengthening of the role of women in the 1988-89 budget merited unconditional support. Finally, the Council's resolution 1987/86, which set forth the system-wide medium-term plan for women and development, would have to be duly taken into account in the preparation of the programme budgets for all the organizations in the United Nations system.

23. Although the major world survey on the role of women in development dated back to 1985 it was still a very useful document. However, it must be supplemented regularly so as to include relevant data, research findings and new ideas. The European Economic Community welcomed the plans to update it and particularly looked forward to the conclusions of the analysis of the impact of macro-economic policies on women's participation in development. There were some indications that the inevitable process of structural adjustment had had a disproportionate adverse effect on women, particularly on their employment, their income, their health situation and their role in the family. It would be useful if the Commission on the Status of Women, at its thirty-second session, could examine a first draft of the updated survey. Indeed, after the adoption of so many programmes and plans of action, the time had come for deeds.

24. There was an imperative need for better co-ordination of existing science and technology for development initiatives within the United Nations system. In particular, there must be no duplication between the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development and the United Nations Fund for Science and Technology for Development. The Committee should carry out its tasks in a more rational and efficient manner. The new orientation of the United Nations Centre for Science and Technology for Development towards identification of concrete activities, improvement of information systems, especially at the national level, and implementation of pilot projects on endogenous research capacities was very appropriate. The Centre obviously had a primary role to play in system-wide co-ordination and harmonization, where the risk of duplication was high. However, such co-ordination might best be handled in the first instance at the national level, where programmes could be devised with the collaboration of all organizations concerned, rather than at the Centre where bodies collaborated in theory rather than in practice.

25. Research should be stressed in the matters of drought and desertification. National research programmes must be co-ordinated and the exchange of results, facilitated, within the co-operation networks. Such networks were already to be found in FAO, UNDP, WMO and UNESCO and should be expanded. In their research policies in general, developing countries should be more selective and concentrate

(Mr. Faaborg-Andersen, Denmark)

on the new technologies - such as biotechnology and renewable energy - which seemed most promising to them.

26. Mr. KOUBAA (Tunisia), noting that development must not only have a quantitative objective, but must also aim to improve the quality of life, said that protection of the environment, far from curbing economic development, was an integral part of growth. That had been confirmed in a most timely manner, by the admirable report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (A/42/427), which also stressed that only through lasting and sustainable development could current needs be met without compromising the legacy of future generations. The report rightly underscored the importance of co-operation at the regional and interregional levels, something to which Tunisia was fully committed, for it had actively participated in the implementation of the Barcelona Plan of Action for the Protection of the Mediterranean Environment. As the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had been called on to continue playing an important role, Tunisia endorsed the proposals put forward by the Brundtland Commission to strengthen UNEP's structures. His delegation hoped that international financial institutions would continue to accord a growing interest in projects to protect the environment in developing countries, but believed that project financing and execution should not be overly linked to the environmental factor.

27. The problem of habitat was not only a matter of housing construction. It also meant improving the environment so that man would have the opportunity to work, to relax, to look after himself and, in short, to find fulfilment. To that end, every country must have an integrated strategy and access to the external technical and financial assistance necessary to implement that strategy, as national capacities were often insufficient. The celebration of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless was a good opportunity to make the international community more aware of the problem.

28. Mr. SINGH (India) said that his delegation was pleased to note that the Prime Minister of Norway, Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, had sought to reassure developing countries which feared that a new form of "conditionality", linked to the environment, might be added to the loan operations of financial institutions. Environmental problems associated with poverty and underdevelopment could not be solved without sustained economic growth; such growth required continuous and predictable flows of resources. The sacrifices to be made were all the harder to endure because the majority of people in the developing countries lived at the subsistence level. No action had been taken on the many proposals that had been made in the past to use a certain percentage of the value of global trade or foreign exchange surpluses of the developed countries for implementing environmental programmes. Those proposals would have to be reconsidered. In that connection, the developed countries should give serious thought to taking measures to provide tangible assistance. The consumption of global resources must be equitable and the use of natural resources, judicious. India had made substantial progress in the environmental field. In particular, it was making great efforts to reclaim 5 million hectares of wasteland every year and to preserve what remained of natural rain forests, which were ecosystems with

(Mr. Singh, India)

unique features. Several programmes for increasing public awareness of the environment had been launched with the help of the Parliamentary Environmental Forum, which had collaborated in the undertaking with the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the United Nations Environment Programme.

29. Concerning the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, he emphasized the need for an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to the human settlements issue in order to take into account the close linkages between shelter and such other areas as health, environment and population control.

30. There was every reason to be pleased that the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development, at its ninth session, had provided clear guidelines for improved co-ordination between the Centre for Science and Technology for Development and the United Nations Fund for Science and Technology for Development, which would contribute to the harmonization of activities of the United Nations system. Lastly, the end-of-the-decade review of the Vienna Programme of Action would also provide an opportunity for evaluating the progress achieved and introducing new activities in that area.

31. Mr. DIECKMANN (Federal Republic of Germany) recalled that at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm, the international community had recognized the danger of environmental degradation and the need for closer international co-operation in that field. The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (A/42/427) as well as the debates of the General Assembly in plenary and in the Second Committee clearly showed that both the developing and the industrialized countries were aware of the seriousness of ecological problems, which were crucial for the future of mankind. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) had played a decisive role in that connection.

32. Since pollution recognized no boundaries, international co-operation in that field should bring together countries with different political, social and economic structures. In that spirit, his country had recently concluded agreements on the exchange of information and co-operation in the field of environmental protection with the German Democratic Republic and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. In that context, all States that had not yet signed and implemented the existing conventions and protocols for the protection of the environment should do so as soon as possible, as the UNEP Governing Council had recommended in its decision 14/29.

33. Although it did not necessarily agree with every detail of the assessment and of the conclusions of the report of the World Commission, his country sincerely hoped that its publication would sharpen awareness of pressing environmental concerns worldwide.

34. The proclamation of an environment year and an environment decade should also contribute to that goal. The first special session of the UNEP Governing Council in March 1988 might be a good opportunity to take that question into account in the context of the discussions on the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme.

(Mr. Dieckmann, Federal Republic
of Germany)

The Economic and Social Council might also further discuss the proposal during its second regular session of 1998.

35. Mr. BETTENCOURT SANTOS (Cape Verde) recalled that the scourge of desertification and drought had currently reached alarming proportions in virtually the entire African continent, particularly in the Sudano-Saharan region, and might become so extensive as to make all life impossible in the affected regions. While much thought had been given to the problem since it was first brought to the attention of the international community, a viable and durable solution had yet to be found.

36. Several useful steps had been taken at the subregional, regional and international levels, such as the inclusion of a special item on drought on the agenda of the Second Committee, the establishment of a ministerial conference for a concerted policy in the countries of CILSS, of ECOWAS, of the Maghreb, in Egypt and the Sudan, and the creation of an Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development in East Africa. The United Nations system itself had established UNSO and several plans of action. Considerable assistance had also been given by a certain number of countries and organizations. A network of institutions therefore seemed to be available to deal with the problem.

37. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to achieve global co-ordination of efforts to combat environmental degradation. On the national level, restoration of the environment must have absolute priority in development plans. Education at the local level was also an indispensable factor because people played a decisive role in the daily struggle to preserve the environment.

38. In Cape Verde - its name was misleading because it had often been a victim of drought - the struggle against desertification had met with some success. Reforestation campaigns had made a difference, primarily thanks to the participation of the population, although the cost of such campaigns was very high because the land was divided into small holdings.

39. There was no longer any need to prove that the struggle against desertification and drought was a long-term enterprise. It was clear that it must be integrated into development efforts; it was also clear that international aid must be predictable and include adequate means. Imagination was therefore needed to find other sources of financing aside from the usual channels. The richer nations and international institutions must mobilize the human and material means required within an organized and planned framework. It was inconceivable that in a world so technically advanced, millions of human beings were not sure of having their daily bread. His delegation renewed its urgent appeal for international solidarity.

40. Mr. NOUGUEIRÁ BATISTA (Brazil) said that the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development had already elicited a considerable response from Governments and from the public in general. The competent authorities of his country were carefully studying the document, which rightly stressed the close link

(Mr. Nogueira Batista, Brazil)

that existed between poverty, disparities between countries and environmental degradation, as well as the responsibility the developed countries must assume to promote sustainable, environmentally beneficial development. Of course it was essential to ensure good management of natural resources and to take ecology into account in national development plans, but it was even more urgent to eliminate economic inequalities so as to break the vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation.

41. While it might indeed be desirable, as the report suggested, for international organizations to try to promote sustainable development that would take ecology into account, they should proceed with caution, so as not to introduce new forms of conditionality into multilateral assistance. Imposing additional conditions for the granting of new development loans would not contribute to environmental protection. On the contrary, it would only accentuate existing difficulties in the developing countries. The heightened awareness on the part of multilateral agencies of ecological questions - which was entirely warranted - should instead be reflected in more financial support for projects designed to preserve the environment.

42. The concept of sustainable development should not make one lose sight of the responsibilities of the developed countries. The dangers associated with acid rain, depletion of the ozone layer, the warming of the world climate and most of all, the nuclear arms race, were well known.

43. Despite their common objective - that of guiding the formulation of an adequate environment policy at the global level - the report of the World Commission and the Environmental Perspective were very different documents. The recommendations made in the report were not binding on Governments. The Environmental Perspective, on the other hand, was an intergovernmental document. Based on that distinction, Brazil supported the draft resolutions that UNEP had drawn up in respect of those two documents, where it was noted that the Environmental Perspective was a guide for national action and international co-operation aimed at achieving environmentally sound development and, specifically, a guide to the preparation of further system-wide medium-term environment programmes and the medium-term programmes of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system (A/42/25, p. 56) and also that all Governments and all bodies of the United Nations system were invited to take account of the analysis and recommendations contained in the World Commission's report (A/42/25, p. 62).

44. Brazil had developed a network of specialized environmental protection services, basically aimed at promoting an increasing awareness of the importance of the participation of local communities, in the solution of existing ecological problems and the avoidance of new imbalances. Environmental protection must be assured primarily by Governments at the national level. In Brazil, policy-setting was complicated by the fact that the federal government, provincial governments and municipalities had to share responsibility in managing different levels of development. Having made an effort at the national level, Brazil was in a position

(Mr. Nogueira Batista, Brazil)

to engage in fruitful co-operation with neighbouring States and other developing countries in respect of environmental problems. It also fully recognized the value of multilateral co-operation. In that respect, it supported the activities of UNEP and believed that it was unnecessary to create other programmes or bodies. Brazil was taking concrete initiatives; for example, it was going to organize an international course on desertification in November 1987 in the context of General Assembly resolution 41/11, which had established a zone of peace and co-operation of the South Atlantic. At the international level, it welcomed the recent adoption of the protocol on the protection of the ozone layer, which had been an important victory for multilateral co-operation.

45. Mr. LEENSTRA (Netherlands), recalling that the representative of Denmark had already set out the position of the Netherlands Government on the issues under discussion, said that he would confine himself to giving some examples of measures taken by his country to implement the various resolutions and decisions of the United Nations on the participation of women in development and the environment.

46. Since 1975, the beginning of the United Nations Decade for Women, the participation of women in development had been one of the main elements of the Netherlands development co-operation policy. A programme of action based on the recommendations contained in the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies had recently been submitted to the Netherlands Parliament. Its objective was to improve the economic, social and cultural position of women by promoting their active participation in development.

47. The development co-operation programmes of the Netherlands had various objectives. They aimed in particular to support (a) projects which involved women in the choice of technology and the maintenance of water supply and sanitation schemes; (b) women's organizations that helped women working in the urban and rural informal sector by providing them with credit; (c) the improvement, in co-operation with ILO, of the work situation of female workers through better education; (d) programmes that gave women a greater role in planning and implementing health care activities, especially health education; (e) programmes and organizations which enabled women to make responsible choices concerning family size, child spacing and methods of contraception; and (f) initiatives by women and women's groups aimed at increasing the self-confidence of women and making opinion leaders more aware of the importance of more active participation by women in development.

48. Those programmes were being implemented through bilateral and multilateral activities and by non-governmental organizations. With regard to multilateral activities, the Netherlands authorities urged delegations participating in the work of consultative groups, round tables and other bodies concerned with aid co-ordination to give specific attention to the promotion of the active participation of women in development. The Netherlands was also continuing to provide financial assistance to the multilateral organizations which were implementing women's projects such as UNIFEM, ILO, FAO and UNICEF.

(Mr. Leenstra, Netherlands)

49. With regard to the issue of environment, he noted that the suggestion made in plenary by his Government that every two years the session of the Governing Council of UNEP should be preceded by a meeting at the ministerial level to evaluate the implementation of the recommendations for national, regional and world-wide action had been received with interest by the Executive Director of UNEP and by a number of delegations. He hoped that the General Assembly would be able to make a recommendation to that effect.

50. Mr. DOLJINTSEREN (Mongolia) said that the international community was according increasing attention to environmental questions, as was demonstrated by the report of the World Commission. Despite some omissions, that document was an important contribution to the efforts which were currently being made to resolve ecological problems. In particular, his delegation was glad that it viewed ecological questions in relation to peace, security and disarmament. It was clear that the possibility of a nuclear conflict was the most formidable threat to the environment.

51. Over the past year, the United Nations Environment Programme had taken important decisions, notably with regard to the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the protection of the ozone layer and combating desertification. It had also denounced the damage caused to the environment by the policy of apartheid pursued by South Africa and by Israeli practices in the Palestinian territories and other occupied Arab territories. Particular attention should be paid to the system-wide medium-term environment programme for the period 1991-1995. In that respect, his delegation believed that it would be desirable to include in that programme measures to alleviate the pernicious effects of the arms race on the environment.

52. Mongolia wished to associate itself with the appeal made by the Executive Director of UNEP to all Governments and all peoples to participate in solving serious ecological problems. It hoped that the General Assembly would make a useful contribution in that respect at the current session and that in the near future it would be possible to draw up a universal convention on the protection of the environment.

53. The question of human settlements was of particular importance in the context of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. Millions of people were being deprived of the essential right to housing. The proclamation of the International Year had given new impetus to efforts in that field. His delegation noted the useful activities which had been undertaken by the Commission on Human Settlements.

54. For the first time, the problem of drought and desertification was being treated as a separate item on the Second Committee's agenda, thus clearly illustrating the extent of the international community's concern about the consequences of natural disasters, particularly in Africa. No effort should be spared to find a solution to the problem. His country hoped that the General Assembly would adopt a resolution capable of mobilizing world public opinion still further in support of the campaign against desertification.

(Mr. Doljintseren, Mongolia)

55. Mongolia recognized the importance of co-operation in the field of science and technology for development. The Intergovernmental Committee had taken a number of positive decisions at its ninth session, particularly with regard to the activities of the Centre for Science and Technology for Development, the application of science and technology to combat natural disasters, and new and emerging technologies. The Advance Technology Alert System (ATAS) was a valuable instrument for spreading word about the most recent technology in the developing countries. And the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development was still relevant; measures to promote its implementation should be explored more actively. The Programme should also be backed by a new strategy to take into account the latest scientific and technological advances.

56. Mr. PAOLILLO (Uruguay) said that his country attached great importance to the environment since it was enclosed between two large poles of industrial development and thus exposed to grave ecological hazards. Furthermore, the abundant resources in Uruguay's watercourses and the oceans adjacent to its territory were being ruthlessly exploited and polluted by fishing fleets which converged on the South Atlantic from other regions.

57. The world community had indeed a long and painful experience of man-made ecological disasters; but it was also aware of all that could be done in the sphere of environmental protection through timely and effective international co-operation. The Antarctic Treaty, which had entered into force in 1961, was an excellent example of such co-operation. Although the will to co-operate was essential, the formulation of aims and guidelines was of equal importance. In that regard, the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development made a striking contribution in that it defined exactly the causes and effects of environmental problems and proposed solutions to guide the action of Governments and intergovernmental institutions. The report also had the merit of stressing the need to promote the development of the less developed countries whilst providing protection for the environment. But that aim could not be achieved without steps to restructure international economic relations. The idea that poverty and lack of resources to satisfy peoples' basic needs were the chief cause of environmental deterioration in the developing countries must be finally taken up and used as a basis for action.

58. The notion of viable and lasting development, to enable the current generation's needs to be met without thereby compromising the capacity of future generations to meet their own needs, should be the corner-stone of international co-operation for development. Uruguay approved in essence the recommendations contained in the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond. But it was concerned lest making ecological concerns a factor in the drawing up of multilateral financial institutions' policies and programmes might become a further element of conditionality and create a further obstacle for developing countries seeking technical and financial resources.

59. Although UNEP played a highly important catalytic and co-ordinating role in environmental questions, it should nevertheless be stressed that Governments needed

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to intensify domestic action in seeking solutions to serious ecological problems, in collaboration with the competent non-governmental organizations. His country, for its part, was aware of its responsibility in the struggle for life and was prepared to assume it in full.

60. Mr. LIBURD (Guyana) said that the increasing and effective participation of women in the development process ought to broaden the development effort through better utilization of all human resources. Action at the national level in order to maximize the contribution of women in all spheres of development was essential to achieving that aim. Such action would undoubtedly be aided by the findings of the world survey on the role of women in development in so far as it identified weaknesses in national and international strategies as well as the means to remedy them. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Secretary-General was to update the survey.

61. His country placed great importance to science and technology as essential development tools as a means to promote the economic and social well-being of peoples. For that reason it had decided to create a technological capacity relevant to its needs and to co-operate with the international community in that sphere, since it felt that such global cooperation was essential to the strengthening of its own capacity for scientific and technological innovation. Therefore, his delegation welcomed the many decisions taken by the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development at its ninth session.

62. The International Year of Shelter for the Homeless was drawing to a close, but the need for continued concern about the issue was self-evident. The problem of the homeless and refugees had at times touched the world's conscience and aroused compassion, but that alone would not solve an endemic problem. The link between homelessness and the multifaceted issue of environmental degradation had been clearly defined in the two reports before the Committee. The need to address those two mutually supportive evils was urgent if an increase in the numbers of homeless was to be avoided, since the number of persons inadequately housed or not housed at all had already reached the alarming figure of 1 billion. The social cost of that blot on mankind's progress was astronomical: human resources were not being utilized, and material resources had to be diverted to combat crime and endemic disease generated by inhuman conditions, all of which threatened overall economic growth. The world community must not delude itself that certain population sectors could continue to enjoy security insulated from the negative social effects brought about by homelessness and the resulting debasement of the human spirit.

63. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), had continued to play a vital role in activities to increase awareness of the problem and in establishing programmes of action in that field. It had been among the foremost in proposing the use of local skills and materials and the modifying of unnecessarily stringent regulations which hampered the approach to practical solutions for housing problems. However, one of the biggest problems faced by the Centre was the disproportionate and rising cost of the requisite infrastructure, which was

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virtually the same for the housing of low-income and high-income groups alike. The public and private sectors must attack the problem jointly. To that end, the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) played a catalytic role and deserved encouragement.

64. His Delegation congratulated the World Commission on Environment and Development for its courageous examination of the environmental and development problems confronting the world. The Commission had focused attention not only on the problem of desertification but also on the economic conditions which created poverty and hence the need to denude forest cover for survival; not only on the depletion of the ozone layer but also on the economic reasons causing its destruction; not only on the massive accumulated debt burden but also on the imbalance in the current economic order that was generating net resource outflows from many developing countries. The Brundtland report had shown that the practice of allocating total responsibility to the poor for the degradation of their environment was improper; that responsibility had to be shared by all countries.

65. The reports on environmental issues had defined guidelines for future action. Thus, the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which was a document of compromise, provided information and guidelines regarding the measures to be taken at the national and international levels in the continued struggle to save the planet.

66. Concern had been expressed on the issue of environmental conditionality for resource flows. Such concern was legitimate but would only be valid if there was deliberate distortion of the intent behind the recommendations of the World Commission and the Environmental Perspective study. The developing countries were not insensitive to the pressures which sometimes dictated short-term development solutions at the expense of the environment. In the conflict between environmental degradation and survival it might be asked what viable options existed. Thanks to the efforts of UNEP and other agencies, the developed world had come to appreciate the strength of those pressures and the interdependence of the inhabitants of the Earth. UNEP had identified objectives in the Environmental Perspective, and States must take up the challenge.

67. To that end, his delegation drew the attention of the Commission and the General Assembly to three proposals. First, the General Assembly should consider the possibility of establishing internationally agreed machinery to monitor the conduct of States in the ecological field and provide countries with the means of preserving the integrity of their environment. Second, the international community should find ways of ensuring that the cost of maintaining the world ecological balance did not fall on the developing countries that were required to preserve their natural resources at the expense of their own development. Third, the General Assembly should maintain a continuous monitoring role through UNEP to ensure that advances in technology and science did not threaten the biosphere.

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68. Such a list was not exhaustive and additional concerns could be addressed, such as the need to increase the flow of capital towards developing countries and to establish firm international controls on the future development and location of nuclear energy facilities, the establishment of an equitable commodity pricing system, the continuation of the disarmament process, the recycling of the proceeds of that process into development activities, and the alleviation of the debt burden. His delegation hoped that the General Assembly would take the initiative in promoting international co-operation for the protection of the environment and, to that end would, in the words of the Executive Director of UNEP, practise the "politics of fusion" and eschew the "politics of fission".

69. M. MOHSIN (Nepal) commended the excellent report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. In the report the Commission had provided a balanced description of both the alarming environmental situation and of the vast natural wealth with which humanity had been endowed. The broad support of so many States for such an instructive and original document made it possible to hope that the international community would act with greater determination to overcome current crises and assure a healthy future for generations to come.

70. The progress realized in the fields of health and education, particularly in the developing countries, had not really succeeded in improving the productivity and creativity of human resources, thus highlighting the inadequacy of the growth models which had been adopted. Furthermore, the creation of a modern industrial sector in essentially agrarian societies had had very sinister consequences for the environment and had produced economic and social upheavals in the developing countries, a situation aggravated by an inequitable economic system.

71. Nepal was aware of those problems and had been one of the first countries to support the world strategy for conservation drafted by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources. Furthermore, the creation of the fund for the protection of nature under the auspices of King Mahendra was testimony to the efforts made on the national level in that field. It must however be emphasized that developing countries would not succeed in guaranteeing a decent existence for their populations without a massive injection of external resources. In addition, restructuring of the world economic order was an urgent task. The speed, effectiveness and breadth of the efforts to be deployed to combat poverty, to re-establish the balance of world ecosystems and to guarantee security in the world were crucial questions which would determine the future of mankind. His delegation greatly hoped that, thanks to the advice given by the World Commission on Environment and Development, it would be possible to find appropriate answers to those questions.

72. Mr. EL ATRASH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that many regions of the world continued to be threatened by serious problems which endangered their economic and political stability. The situation was certainly serious but recent progress achieved at the international level to design a solution for the problems of the world economy were encouraging. The developed and developing countries had adopted, at the seventh session of UNCTAD, a series of principles capable of

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...serving as a basis for the establishment of the new international economic order, which would stimulate prosperity in all the regions of the world.

73. His Government was convinced that world economic recovery was dependent on the lessening of the economic and ecological difficulties of the developing countries. The widening deficit in their payments balances and the ever growing burden of their external debt, which absorbed a substantial share of their export earnings, nullified every effort on their part to overcome poverty, hunger, desertification and drought.

74. In that connection, it was vital to place the fruits of scientific and technical research at the service of development. Scientific inventions were the common heritage of mankind; they should not be the monopoly of a small group of countries. It was therefore imperative to prepare a long-term strategy to promote the technological development of the developing countries.

75. The report on the evaluation of desertification in the world published in 1984 by the United Nations Development Programme had indicated that arid and semi-arid zones were no longer the only ones threatened by desert encroachment. To make matters worse, strong population growth had occurred in the threatened regions, so that the problem threatened to become insoluble. It was therefore high time that the international community and all interested international organizations should give serious attention to the problem. Otherwise the food crisis would only become more serious and famines more and more frequent. The struggle against desertification should therefore become one of the principal priorities of development programmes. Efforts to that end must be adequately supported by the international community and the specialized agencies.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.