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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 41st MEETING

Chairman: Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

later: Mr. GAJENTAAN (Netherlands)

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

AGENDA ITEM 84: TRAINING AND RESEARCH: UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/42/354 and A/42/694 and Corr.1)

1. Mr. BIERMA (Netherlands) welcomed the efforts made to restructure the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) but noted that the voluntary contributions of Member States to the Institute, which were a prerequisite for its long-term viability, continued to decline. The estimated deficit would reach \$680,000 for 1987 and the cumulative deficit would exceed \$1 million. The Institute's future as a viable and autonomous organization could not therefore be assured. For that reason his delegation did not agree with the Secretary-General's proposal to continue the operations of UNITAR on a trial basis. On the contrary, it was of the opinion that, in accordance with operative paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 41/172, the Secretary-General should take steps with a view to phasing out the activities of the Institute in the most cost-effective manner possible and to submit to the General Assembly a detailed proposal on the reallocation of the appropriate and essential activities of the Institute to other entities of the United Nations system. For example, the training programme for international co-operation and multilateral diplomacy was useful and could be integrated in the activities of the United Nations Secretariat, perhaps as part of the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs. The research activities could likewise be carried out by the United Nations University, specifically by its World Institute for Development Economics Research (WIDER), and the United Nations could also take over the publication programme operated by UNITAR.

2. Mr. SITHOLE (Zimbabwe) said that the debate was an important one, for it was UNITAR's future that was at stake. Many developing countries supported the Institute, and it was somewhat surprising to note that although General Assembly resolution 41/172 had been adopted by consensus, the number of donor countries giving financial assistance to UNITAR had not increased in 1987. Instead, some donor countries had discontinued their support. Only a third of Member States supported the Institute financially.

3. His delegation was in favour of the sale of UNITAR's real estate and the creation of a reserve fund, as proposed in the Secretary-General's report (A/42/694), and it approved the continuation of UNITAR's activities on a trial basis. However, it was important to ensure that the Institute was not short of money while the building and the land were being sold.

4. Mr. UMER (Pakistan) said that UNITAR had been established in response to an undeniable requirement, namely, to train officials of Member States, particularly those from developing countries, in modern negotiating techniques, development organization, environmental matters, debt negotiations and disaster relief assistance, amongst others. That mandate remained fully valid; it had even become more urgent, for debt and the environment were pressing issues of the day. The

(Mr. Umer, Pakistan)

Institute's serious financial difficulties were very worrying, especially as the financial crisis of the United Nations itself meant that a solution was unlikely to emerge from that source. In those difficult circumstances a choice must be made between three possibilities: the termination of the Institute and transfer of its training responsibilities to other entities, which would raise the problem of independence of thought with respect to the training provided and would not necessarily solve the problem of the funding of training activities or that of the cumulative deficit. The second possibility was to continue UNITAR's work on the present basis, but that would merely delay its demise after a period of prolonged neglect. The third possibility, which appeared to be the only feasible one, was to restructure the Institute so that its deficit could be gradually reduced. That called for a bold and imaginative strategy, and donor countries would have to take an active part in the recovery exercise. A number of measures had already been taken to that end, for the cost of the meetings of the Board of Trustees and staff costs had already been reduced. But the restructuring process would have to be speeded up. His delegation therefore fully endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations with respect to restructuring (see A/42/694) and in particular the idea of selling UNITAR's real estate and using the proceeds of the sale to repay the debts to the United Nations and establish an emergency fund. If that strategy was to succeed, it would be necessary to accelerate the restructuring process and take immediate steps to sell the building and land. The donor community would have to ensure the necessary financial support. His own country actively supported UNITAR, which continued to perform an essential function for the developing countries.

5. Mr. Gaejentaan (Netherlands) took the chair.

6. Mr. ONONAIYE (Nigeria) reiterated his country's support for UNITAR's goals and for the useful role which it played, in particular with respect to training for international co-operation and multilateral diplomacy. UNITAR's work programme had been restructured as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 41/172, and it might therefore be hoped that the Institute would receive stable and predictable financing. The meagre contributions announced at the recent United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities provided little basis for optimism. The Secretary-General had put forward several proposals in his report, one of which was to sell the Institute's land and building. While that solution had the advantage of providing some medium-term resources, it was not certain to assure the Institute's long-term viability. His Government had decided to establish a reserve fund of \$1 million which would be managed by the Nigerian Mission, with the interest used to support UNITAR. It hoped that other States would follow that example and the Institute would be restored to financial health. His delegation favoured the establishment of an open-ended informal group to discuss thoroughly all issues connected with the Institute's future work, its financial arrangements and its operations.

7. Mr. GHONDA (Zaire) said that UNITAR developed and carried out many programmes of interest to Africa, which was why the twenty-third session of the Assembly of

(Mr. Ghonda, Zaire)

Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity had adopted a resolution urging that the activities of the Institute, as a distinct and autonomous entity within the United Nations system, should be continued. It was thus a source of satisfaction that, one year after the General Assembly had adopted resolution 41/172, the five recommendations contained in the restructuring plan were beginning to be implemented. While the results of the Pledging Conference for Development Activities appeared to be sounding the death knell for UNITAR, his delegation was convinced that the resources needed for the Institute's survival would be found and that UNITAR would not be a victim of the financial crisis.

8. Mr. McBARNETTE (Trinidad and Tobago) said that, despite the Institute's crisis of confidence, his country continued to provide moral and financial support to UNITAR, which remained a unique institution within the United Nations system and was still as important as it had been at the time of its creation.

9. Given the importance of the subject, it was unfortunate that the Secretary-General's report (A/42/694) had not been distributed earlier, as that would have facilitated exchanges of views and consultations between the Governments concerned. Moreover, the meagre results of the Pledging Conference raised serious questions as to the resource base on which the Institute would operate, even on a trial basis. Looking more specifically at the recommendations contained in document A/42/694, his delegation favoured retaining the Institute's training activities, which were of demonstrated usefulness, particularly to developing countries, and using the proceeds of the sale of the Institute's property to establish a reserve fund which could be used to finance training activities. However, the Secretary-General and the UNITAR Board of Trustees should ensure that the restructuring plan was fully implemented and that the Institute followed sound management practices.

10. It was pragmatism which had led his delegation to support, albeit reluctantly, the Secretary-General's recommendations in document A/42/694, since it would be unfortunate if UNITAR should cease to exist. Nevertheless, his delegation was ready to participate in the elaboration of proposals that would allow UNITAR to re-establish a sound financial base and welcomed the plan announced by the representative of Nigeria to establish a reserve fund of \$1 million.

11. Mr. MKANDANIRE (Malawi) recalled that every time the General Assembly had considered the question of UNITAR, it had adopted a resolution reaffirming the continuing relevance of the Institute's mandate. Since the Secretary-General also believed that UNITAR made an important contribution to the work of the United Nations and that every effort must be made to allow the Institute to continue its activities, his delegation was surprised to note that, despite the adoption by consensus of the plan to restructure UNITAR, some traditional donors had ceased to provide the Institute with financial support. It was even more surprising that certain countries with some of the largest numbers of nationals to have benefited from UNITAR training activities were rich developed countries that no longer contributed to the Institute's General Fund, as though they did not care about the countries that continued to find UNITAR extremely useful. His delegation therefore

(Mr. Mkandanire, Malawi)

appealed to all donor countries that were not contributing to UNITAR to reconsider their positions and take steps to solve the Institute's financial problems once and for all. He also invited all delegations to support the recommendations contained in paragraph 41 of the Secretary-General's report (A/42/694).

12. Mr. EL-ATRASH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) reaffirmed the moral and financial support which his country had unstintingly given to UNITAR activities for more than 20 years because of their great importance for the international community as a whole and for the developing countries in particular. UNITAR had done much to promote the socio-economic development of developing countries; moreover, research and training activities were the best way for the United Nations to achieve its fundamental purposes. In his report, the Secretary-General listed certain measures and proposals that should be implemented so that the Institute might continue its activities. Given the importance of UNITAR, it was imperative that all Member States, as well as the United Nations, should do everything within their power to prevent its demise. For its part, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya was prepared to make a positive contribution to any subsequent discussion on the future of UNITAR so that an acceptable solution could be found.

13. Mr. OSMAN (Somalia) noted with satisfaction that, according to the Secretary-General's report, considerable progress had already been made in implementing the plan for the restructuring of UNITAR set out in General Assembly resolution 41/172. However, the real problem was one of financing the Institute, and his delegation appealed to donor countries to do everything in their power to ensure the success of the restructuring plan. His delegation also supported the two measures which the Secretary-General had recommended to enable UNITAR to continue its activities - i.e. the sale of the Institute's property and the continuation of its operations on a trial basis - and hoped that all delegations would support them, too.

14. Mr. ARIYARATNE (Sri Lanka) noted with concern that, according to the Secretary-General's report, UNITAR resources had not increased sufficiently in real terms and that, despite the cost-saving measures which had been taken, the deficit for 1987 would total \$680,000. If UNITAR was not provided with adequate financial resources, its activities would have to be reorganized efficiently and economically, as called for in General Assembly resolution 41/172. In that connection, his delegation believed that before a decision was taken to sell the Institute's property in order to repay debts to the Organization and set up a reserve fund, other methods for solving the financial problems of UNITAR must be sought. However, if a consensus in support of that solution evolved in the Second Committee, his delegation would have no difficulty in becoming party to it. In that case, however, it would seek more detailed information about the use to which the reserve fund would be put.

15. Mr. DOO KINGUE (Executive Director of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research) noted that the results of pledging conferences did not always give an accurate picture of the actual level of contributions. Unfortunately, however, the 1987 Pledging Conference had been particularly

(Mr. Doo Kingue)

disappointing, even though the UNITAR budget had never been lower. Despite a budget in which expenses stood far below projected income, the Institute would be faced with a deficit because of the actions by the richest Member States, since their approval of the restructuring plan set out in General Assembly resolution 41/172 was not accompanied by financial support for the plan's implementation.

AGENDA ITEM 82: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued)

(a) TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

16. The CHAIRMAN announced that Burkina Faso had joined in sponsoring draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.54.

(d) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (continued)

17. The CHAIRMAN announced that Poland and Uruguay had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.21 and that Algeria had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.55.

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (continued)

18. The CHAIRMAN said that Sweden had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.24.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.