



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. SBIHI (Morocco)

CONTENTS

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

AGENDA ITEM 61: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION:

(k) ENVIRONMENT

* This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned *within one week of the date of publication* to the Chief of the Official Records Editing Section, room A-3550, 866 United Nations Plaza (Alcoa Building), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrections will be issued after the end of the session, in a separate fascicle for each Committee.

The meeting was called to order at 11.05 a.m.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK (A/C.2/35/1; A/C.2/35/L.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN observed that the Committee would be considering the outcome of the eleventh special session of the General Assembly, which had just ended. Participants in that special session had displayed a constructive attitude, and it was to be hoped that the same spirit would prevail in the Committee at the current session, particularly in view of the international economic situation and the impending transition from the second to the third Development Decades.
2. In his note on the organization of work (A/C.2/35/L.1) he had listed the items allocated to the Committee and proposed a time-table for their consideration, based largely on the new arrangements set out in General Assembly resolution 34/212 for dealing with agenda items referred to the Second Committee and for its programme of work. He drew attention to paragraph 6 of document A/C.2/35/L.1 on the status of the documentation to be submitted to the Committee. Members of the Committee should also bear in mind the recommendations on reducing the volume of documentation referred to in paragraph 9 of his note.
3. In many respects the new system of organizing the Committee's work was experimental, and he would adopt a pragmatic approach in implementing the new arrangements. In his view, the officers should be more active in monitoring the progress of the Committee's work, and he intended to hold more frequent consultations with them to that end. It was, moreover, essential that the number of resolutions adopted by the Committee should be reduced, and he hoped that the officers would help the Committee to increase its efficiency in that respect. The Committee itself should also meet informally from time to time to consider the organization of its work.

AGENDA ITEM 61: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

(k) ENVIRONMENT:

- (i) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (A/35/25)

4. Mr. TOLBA (Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme), introducing the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (A/35/25), said that in the previous decade a number of innovative concepts regarding the relationship between environment and development had emerged, and the integrated nature of that relationship had come to be generally accepted. The new International Development Strategy stressed that it was necessary to ensure an economic development process that was environmentally sustainable over the long run and that protected the ecological balance: no break-through with regard to quality of life or diversified and balanced material prosperity was possible without rational use of natural resources and a rational, dynamic relationship between man and the ecosystem. It had also become better understood that the primary requirement

(Mr. Tolba, UNEP)

was to protect the environment in every way, and as a result, the international community had increasingly taken up such issues as soil degradation, deforestation and desertification.

5. The incorporation of environmental considerations into the Strategy was gratifying, but the Strategy would be implemented against a background of critical economic difficulties and of growing environmental degradation. The two issues were linked: environmental degradation was a major cause of the unpromising economic outlook; the process of desertification was an example. Moreover, new environmental issues were emerging as a result of current energy problems and new endeavours and technologies to solve those problems. UNEP's efforts had therefore been geared to interjecting environmental considerations into the development process. The Governing Council considered that a number of significant activities, such as those relating to alternative patterns of development and life-styles and to cost-benefit analysis of environment protection measures, were helping to secure the integration of environmental considerations into national planning and into implementation of the International Development Strategy.

6. In its references to the environment, the Strategy stressed the importance of greater understanding of the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development. The Governing Council of UNEP, in decision 8/1 and the Economic and Social Council had urged the General Assembly to give favourable consideration to the recommendations made by a high-level group of experts on that question. A sample of the form that a number of elements in a programme of work on interrelationships might take had been prepared by UNEP in consultation with the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs and could be made available to the Committee as a conference room paper. For the sake of brevity, the paper omitted examples from three of the areas in which UNEP was heavily involved, namely, regional seas, desertification and tropical forests.

7. During the year considerable progress had been made in the development of the System-wide Medium-term Environment Programme (SWMTEP), owing largely to the co-operation of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination. At its summer session the Economic and Social Council had requested all organizations within the United Nations system to continue to co-operate fully with UNEP in that endeavour. The objectives for the first System-wide Medium-term Environment Programme for the period 1984-1989 were being formulated and would be submitted to the Governing Council at its ninth session.

8. The Governing Council had adopted three decisions specifically addressed to the General Assembly. Decision 8/2 called for the convening of a special session of the Governing Council in 1982 to commemorate the tenth anniversary of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, and the Economic and Social Council had invited the General Assembly to give favourable consideration to that recommendation. Subject to the agreement of the General Assembly, for the duration of the special session all States Members of the United Nations and all States members of the specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency would have the status of members of the Governing Council.

/...

(Mr. Tolba, UNEP)

9. In decision 8/19 the Governing Council recommended that the General Assembly should consider favourably, on the basis of a request by the Arab States, the financial implications to the regular budget of the introduction of Arabic as an official working language of the Council. The Council would review at the following session the relevant provision of its rules of procedure in the light of the General Assembly's decision on that recommendation. Lastly, in decision 8/1, section IV, the Council sought General Assembly approval for the joint bureaux meetings of HABITAT and UNEP to be held on an annual basis, rather than biannually as required by General Assembly resolution 32/162; the Commission on Human Settlements was in agreement with the proposed arrangement.

10. In its decision 8/1, on programme policy, the Governing Council had stressed the importance of an effective UNEP contribution to the preparations for the Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and the Conference on the Least Developed Countries. UNEP intended to present two major contributions to the former Conference, the first dealing with the environmental impact of the production and use of renewable sources of energy, and the second with the experiments carried out by UNEP, or collated with its support, on the actual use of renewable sources of energy in a number of developing countries. The Programme was looking into other possible ways of meeting the Economic and Social Council's request to it to submit specific proposals to the Conference.

11. The Governing Council attached great importance to the implementation by all Governments of the World Conservation Strategy, as a high priority requirement for sustained socio-economic development, and was exploring the most effective means of mobilizing the huge human and financial resources needed to implement the Strategy. Closely linked to that Strategy was a proposal by the Government of Zaire concerning a draft world charter for nature (A/35/141), which was to be considered by the General Assembly under item 113. The draft charter, prepared on a co-operative basis by UNEP and the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), had been introduced at the Governing Council's session by the Minister of the Environment of Zaire and had been welcomed by several delegations. It set forth certain principles for the conservation of natural ecosystems with a view to ensuring the supply of energy and nutrients, and he hoped that it would receive very favourable consideration in the Committee. Another endeavour to halt the deterioration of the environment was to be considered by the General Assembly at the current session under item 120 on the basis of document A/35/194, which contained a draft resolution submitted by the Soviet Union. The draft resolution inter alia called on UNEP to assist the Secretary-General in preparing a report on the harmful effects of the arms race on nature and soliciting the views of States on possible measures to preserve nature. UNEP was willing to co-operate in that undertaking if called upon to do so by the General Assembly.

12. Among the important programme decisions taken by the Governing Council at its eighth session was a request to the Executive Director to transmit the recommendations of the Expert Meeting on Tropical Forests, convened earlier in the year, to all member Governments and to multilateral assistance agencies and other relevant international and regional agencies. The recommendations had been

made available to Governments, which, it was hoped, would supply UNEP with the required information and comments within a period of six months. The Council had also requested the Executive Director to strive to accelerate international efforts to prepare and adopt a world soils policy and to develop a world plan of action for implementing that policy, and UNEP was working actively with that end in view.

13. Environmental law had figured prominently in the discussions of the eighth session, and the Governing Council had decided that an ad hoc meeting of senior government officials expert in environmental law would be convened in 1981 to identify priorities for action and propose programmes for dealing with them. The recommendations of the Group would form an important part of the documentation for the tenth session of the Governing Council. Topics to be discussed at the meeting of senior officials would be identified through consultations with Governments and organizations concerned within and outside the United Nations system. In document A/35/359, currently before the Committee, the Secretary-General presented the latest information compiled by the Governing Council on conventions and protocols in the field of the environment.

14. The implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification had played an important part in the Governing Council's deliberations by virtue of the remarkable number of resolutions on that topic adopted by the General Assembly at the previous session. The campaign against desertification, and support to countries suffering from it, had recently been incorporated in the objectives and policy measures of the new International Development Strategy. In 1977 the General Assembly had requested the Governing Council to report on the matter through the Economic and Social Council in 1978, and every two years thereafter. At its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions, the Assembly had also requested the Governing Council to report annually on the implementation of the Plan of Action in the Sudano-Saharan region. The Governing Council's response to those requests was contained in document A/35/411.

15. In its report to the eighth session of the Governing Council, the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had identified a number of major obstacles to the implementation of the Plan of Action. First, the Governments of countries faced with desertification problems or risks appeared unable to assign sufficiently high priority to desertification control measures and had included such measures in their development plans only to a limited degree. Secondly, there was still a need to fill gaps in knowledge, particularly with regard to integrated interdisciplinary approaches, including socio-cultural dimensions, while efforts to impart the existing body of knowledge to potential utilizers were far from sufficient. Thirdly, co-operation within the United Nations system needed to be strengthened in order to ensure the proper multidisciplinary approach to projects and to arrange for effective pooling of the efforts and resources of various agencies and bodies. Lastly, insufficient financing was seriously limiting the efforts of United Nations bodies to implement the Plan of Action, and there was an urgent need for increased assistance from external sources of financing to anti-desertification projects. The Governing Council had concurred with the ACC analysis. Moreover, it had

(Mr. Tolba, UNEP)

recognized that one of the commonest constraints on national action was the shortage of manpower with the multidisciplinary qualifications needed for planning and managing desertification projects. On behalf of UNEP, the United Nations Sahelian Office UNSO was continuing to assist the 15 developing countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region in the implementation of the Plan of Action. The activities of UNSO had included projects with the Governments of Ethiopia, the Gambia, Kenya, Mauritania, Nigeria, Somalia, Sudan and Upper Volta, and also full co-operation with the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and its member States in the formulation of the unified CILSS/UNSO plan to combat desertification.

16. In its decision 6/17 the Governing Council strongly appealed to international financial institutions, multilateral financing organizations and Governments of industrialized countries and of developing countries in a position to do so to give generous financial support to the Special Account for financing the Plan of Action established by the Secretary-General in pursuance of General Assembly resolution 33/89. The status of the Special Account as of August 1980 was that only Brazil, Chile and Mexico had so far indicated their desire to contribute, and he reiterated his appeal to members of the Committee to urge their Governments to give serious consideration to the need for generous contributions to the Special Account.

17. In its resolution 34/184, the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Governing Council of UNEP, to submit to its thirty-fifth session a report on additional measures to finance the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, based on the study to be prepared by a group of high-level specialists in international financing. The study was annexed to the Secretary-General's report in document A/35/396, and would be available within a few days. In the study the experts had identified from an inventory of proposals those which warranted serious consideration for immediate implementation or detailed feasibility studies, and had concluded that \$4.5 billion would be required annually in order to stop desertification by the year 2000. Of that sum, \$1.8 billion of external financing was needed for a number of developing countries seriously affected by or liable to desertification. Those figures should be read in conjunction with the current annual loss of production, estimated at \$26 billion, due to the reduced productivity of land affected by desertification. The group of specialists had emphasized that there was a clear and definite need to establish additional means of financing, that most developing countries seriously affected by desertification had a very limited potential for mobilizing local resources, and that foundations sponsoring international activities could be expected to provide only a small fraction of the total training and research requirements. They did not believe that desertification projects would attract funds from international capital markets, but none the less suggested possible new ways of attempting to raise funds from such sources. They had also suggested means for establishing a financial corporation, either as an independent institution or as an affiliate to such existing institutions as the World Bank, IFAD or the OPEC Fund. He hoped that the Committee would endorse the views of the group of specialists.

/...

18. The Governing Council had been invited by the General Assembly in resolution 34/185 to consider favourably the inclusion of the pilot project for the improvement and restoration of the Foutah-Djallon massif in its programme of action against desertification. Action had already been taken, and a report by the Secretary-General (A/35/368) outlined the implementation of the resolution. In resolution 34/187 the General Assembly had invited the Governing Council to examine the possibility of including Djibouti, Guinea and Guinea-Bissau in the list of countries to receive assistance through UNSO, and the Governing Council had responded favourably.

19. At its eighth session the Governing Council had for the first time addressed itself to a matter which was of the utmost importance both to UNEP and to other organizations in the United Nations system: the futility of adopting plans of action without assuring the availability of financial resources to implement them. Given the lack of sufficient financial resources to implement the existing programme, it had been very difficult, if not impossible, to carry out other plans of action recommended by the Governing Council or other legislative bodies. Such plans included the World Conservation Strategy, the Ozone Layer Plan of Action, the Climate Impact Studies Programme and the plans relating to carbon dioxide, tropical forests and soils. The Council had invited the Executive Director to study, with the assistance of Governments, how to secure financing for such plans and to submit appropriate recommendations at the ninth session.

20. In resolution 34/188 the General Assembly had stressed the need for UNEP to increase the resources available for its projects in the developing countries. At the most recent session of the Governing Council, the representative of Sweden had suggested that the Environment Fund should be augmented by additional funds for that purpose without, however, affecting the target for regular contributions to the Environment Fund. The proposal had been supported by Norway, Denmark and the Netherlands, and the Swedish delegation had raised the matter again at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council in connexion with the Governing Council's report calling for the establishment of a special window in the Fund of UNEP for developing countries to be financed from development aid funds in donor countries. Sweden had announced its readiness to contribute a substantial amount to such a window, provided other countries were also willing to do so. The Economic and Social Council had invited Governments to consider proposals whereby additional contributions to the Fund of UNEP would be used for measures dealing with serious environmental problems in developing countries. The Governing Council was requested to report on the matter to the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1981. At the recent special session of the General Assembly, the Swedish delegation had expressed the hope that the special window would soon be operational. He himself was writing to Governments to draw their attention to the Economic and Social Council resolution, and was submitting a recommendation to a number of major donors with the aim of financing, as an initial step, a limited number of specific activities in the

(Mr. Tolba, UNEP)

developing countries, through such a special window of the Fund for UNEP. The activities envisaged involved monitoring tropical forests and halting the desertification process, including soil deterioration. The framework for his approach would be the implementation of the World Conservation Strategy and the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

21. Turning to the status of the Fund of UNEP, he stressed his continuing concern at the fact that for 1980-1981 the level of pledges was still uncertain, especially since there was some delay on the part of the Fund's major donor country in paying the remaining part of its 1980 contribution. By the end of June 1980 approximately \$32 million of a total authority of \$36 million for 1980 had been committed, as had almost \$15 million of the \$33 million total for 1981. The balance available for new projects had therefore been diminishing over the years, while UNEP's capacity to initiate new activities was continually expanding; at the same time, UNEP could not withdraw as quickly as expected from a number of ongoing activities. A number of countries, including Japan, had increased their contributions by 10 per cent or more annually for the previous two or three years, and he appealed to other member countries to follow that example. Another major problem affecting the Environment Fund was the growing trend among major contributors to pay their convertible currency contributions towards the end of the year; that practice created enormous planning problems for the organization. He sincerely hoped that the General Assembly would urge Governments to alleviate the Fund's difficult situation.

22. In conclusion, he said that UNEP had succeeded in establishing itself as an effective instrument of the world community in protecting and enhancing the environment. That success should act as a strong incentive to further action to confirm commitment to the goals of the Stockholm Conference and to ensure a safe environment and a better quality of life for existing and future generations. To meet that commitment it was essential that the world's resources should be used rationally in order to apply some of the benefits accruing from them to the needs of the more than 725 million people whose income was barely adequate for subsistence and the 600 million people in developing countries who were illiterate and whose average life expectancy was 24 years less than that prevailing in the richer countries.

The meeting rose at 11.55 a.m.