

25th meeting

Wednesday, 7 July 1993, at 3.25 p.m.

President: Mr. Juan SOMAVÍA (Chile)

E/1993/SR.25

AGENDA ITEM 3

Operational activities for development (*continued*)

1. Ms. DOWSETT (Observer for New Zealand) said that the Secretary-General and some delegations had expressed disappointment at the General Assembly's recent decision to defer action on a reform package to strengthen the Organization's economic and social sectors. The negotiated package represented a number of finely-balanced compromises and her delegation shared the Secretary-General's hope that the reform process could be resumed during the next few months. The United Nations system must have regenerative capacity if it was to remain relevant and command the support it needed from Member States.

2. The Council's operational activities segment provided a valuable opportunity for Governments and agencies to examine the United Nations development system's response to the membership's changing requirements. The outcome of the current segment would provide an indication of the Council's capacity to assume a more prominent role in coordinating and directing the Organization's development system. In that connection, the purpose of General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 47/199, and of the Council's work, was to assist Governments to direct their development processes.

3. The current efforts should also be understood in the broader context of new tasks and challenges. Discussions, at the current session, on the World Summit for Social Development and on coordination for assistance and preventive action against malaria and diarrhoeal diseases had underscored the United Nations development system's central role. Focusing on improved capacity at the field level and maintaining responsiveness to changing requirements were two key factors.

4. The Secretary-General's report (E/1993/73) provided a good starting point for the debate. There were already signs that the system was pursuing with some vigour the implementation of Assembly resolution 47/199, building on work resulting from resolution 44/211; her delegation looked forward to reports that were more outcome-oriented; in particular, it welcomed the preparation of an overall work programme (*ibid.*, annex I),

whose benchmarks might require some adjustment to reflect the various purposes.

5. Her delegation welcomed the opportunity for an informal dialogue, during which certain important elements could be discussed. One was the requirement that the Council should consider whether the United Nations development system was taking effective coordinated action on national execution and programme approaches. The Secretary-General's report focused on agreements reached in CCPOQ on common interpretations of the programme approach and national execution. She hoped it would be possible to discuss practical issues and experience gained in that regard. Her delegation would also welcome further elaboration of the follow-up to the country strategy note (*ibid.*, annex II); the relationship between a recipient Government's existing development strategies and the United Nations system's response should be reflected better in country strategy guidelines. It would also be interested in further discussion on how to implement the elements of General Assembly resolution 44/211, which dealt with strengthening the resident coordinator system.

6. Mrs. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that the United Nations system's operational activities for development were one of the most visible elements overseen by the Council. With visibility came scrutiny. Calls for greater efficiency and effectiveness had long been heard, and there had been some progress in regard to general principles, but clearly there was growing impatience for more tangible results. It was hoped that implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 would enable results to be better measured, at least at the procedural level. At recent meetings of governing bodies of various organizations, her delegation had stressed its interest in the resolution's timely implementation, particularly in regard to the early formulation of country strategy notes and United Nations field committees.

7. The Secretary-General's report (E/1991/73) outlined a work programme for the implementation of resolution 47/199. Although, at the Council level the plan must be rather general, it would have been helpful to have had a better indication of the extent of the results sought rather than general statements of intent. Her delegation also wondered whether the Secretary-General would ask individual resident coordinators to prepare workplans at the

country level. In view of the resolution's country focus, such plans could provide a more pragmatic contribution. Action at the country level could serve to hasten what otherwise appeared to be a somewhat leisurely approach.

8. It would be helpful to learn about the number of countries interested in developing a country strategy note and about plans for the new field committee structure. If the model was to work, it must be pursued seriously. Field committees should meet regularly and frequently, and should serve as a peer-group review process for all substantive new development policies, programmes, strategies and evaluations initiated in the country concerned. The process was a step up from the current type of in-country coordination mechanism; but little indication had yet been received about how many resident coordinators had begun to take it.

9. It had been clear, from discussion with resident representatives from various regions at the Governing Council of UNDP, that implementation of resolution 47/199 would depend to a great extent on the competence of those in charge. Recruitment of competent resident coordinators would be the key factor. As pointed out in the Secretary-General's report, management ability and the fostering of teamwork must be particular qualities looked for in the choice of resident coordinators. The latter must be able to represent the United Nations as a whole, in order to ensure coordination and profit from each body's comparative advantage, so as to make the optimum use of limited resources and reflect differing national priorities. Her delegation would watch the selection process with interest to see how transparent the process became and the extent to which the pool of persons eligible for appointment as resident coordinators was broadened.

10. Canada looked forward to supporting the Secretary-General's efforts to outline an agenda for development, an instrument that should help greatly in providing a basis for coordinating the system's development activities. The effort came at a time when the development system was being reviewed in a climate of reform. It was important that changes, such as the planned move of the UNDP Office of Project Services to the Secretariat, should lead to greater effectiveness. It was equally important that senior managers should see their agencies as part of a larger United Nations team, and strive to remove duplication where it existed. It was essential to have a clear sense of the comparative advantages of the various organizations and specialized agencies, and to streamline wherever possible, making hard choices when necessary.

11. Canada had recently undertaken a government reorganization, in which, *inter alia*, the number of cabinet ministers had been reduced from 35 to 25. The resulting reduction in bureaucracy would lead to a better focus on government service, surely an aspiration that the United Nations development system should share, the better to serve the world's poor.

12. The Secretary-General had an opportunity to study carefully, through the agenda for development, the role of technical cooperation, as well as to review, advance and adjust, where required, the restructuring that had already taken place. Her delegation looked forward to working with him in that critical task.

13. Mr. WANG Xinggen (China) said that, despite the profound changes in the international situation, the developing countries still had no opportunity for economic recovery. The obstacles in the way of development continued to exist and the gap between the rich North and the poor South to increase. The international community should strive to establish a fair and reasonable new international economic order, take steps to eliminate those obstacles and promote economic and social development in the developing countries.

14. At the same time, the agencies of the United Nations system for operational activities must respond positively, in order to provide more effective assistance to the developing countries in accordance with their needs and in conformity with the fundamental principle of the consensus adopted by the General Assembly in 1970,¹ and also to do their part in promoting international cooperation, removing the obstacles to development and promoting economic growth in the developing countries.

15. His delegation attached great importance to General Assembly resolution 47/199, and hoped that it would be effectively implemented. Without a sustained and stable increase in their resources, however, the agencies of the development system would be unable to make significant achievements. The mobilization of more resources for operational activities for development was a major challenge. His delegation had noted the Nordic countries' proposal for reform of funding modalities, and called upon the contributing countries to demonstrate their goodwill and increase their contributions, in accordance with the relevant General Assembly resolutions, in order to meet the needs of operational activities for development. He stressed that such contributions constituted an international obligation upon the countries concerned, not charity. Any attempt to attach conditions to contributions and assistance would be counter to the principles of the General Assembly resolutions and would be unacceptable.

16. Resolution 47/199 stressed that country strategy notes should be formulated by interested recipient Governments and that the agencies of the United Nations development system should provide assistance in their formulation at the request of the countries concerned. The purpose of the notes was to ensure that the assistance provided was more effectively incorporated into the development process of the recipient country. It should be borne in mind, however, that other Governments should not demand changes in the development strategies of the

¹ General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV), annex.

recipient countries on the pretext of assistance and cooperation. Similarly, the United Nations should not use the formulation of the note as a pretext for requesting changes in the development strategies of recipient countries. The notes should serve only as a reference for the consideration of specific country programmes by agency governing bodies. Any attempt to widen their meaning and their scope of application would be unacceptable.

17. The importance of national execution as a means of strengthening the capacity of the recipient countries was reaffirmed in resolution 47/199. Since the specific conditions and existing capabilities of the various recipient countries differed, the decision on whether or not to adopt national execution should be left to the Governments concerned. It was hoped that the agencies of the system would take positive steps to remove any obstacles to increased national execution. The agencies needed to strengthen their coordination, simplify and unify their procedures, improve the training of project management personnel from recipient countries, and adopt specific measures to encourage national execution and enable it to be implemented smoothly. It should be emphasized that national execution should be genuinely executed by the recipient countries and not by the agencies or their field offices.

18. Over the years, there had been repeated calls in General Assembly resolutions for the decentralization of operational activities for development. In resolution 47/199, it had been decided that, in order to enhance the coherence of programming and resource utilization, programme development and component approval, authority should be further decentralized to the field offices. A number of agencies had taken steps to decentralize some authority from headquarters, but the extent of decentralization was not yet satisfactory, particularly in regard to project approval authority. Agency headquarters still retained project approval authority for a considerable number of projects, thus slowing down the speed of programme implementation. Since field offices had a clearer picture of the recipient country than headquarters, they should have a greater say in the approval of individual projects.

19. General Assembly resolution 47/199 laid a foundation for the continuous improvement of United Nations operational activities for development. His delegation hoped the relevant agencies of the United Nations system would deepen their understanding of the process and improve their coordination in order to implement the resolution to the full.

20. Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that his delegation looked forward to discussing the current topic in greater detail in informal session, in which the participation of resident coordinators would be highly desirable. Switzerland continued to value the role of the United Nations system in international cooperation for development. The Secretary-General's report (E/1993/73) formed a very good basis on which the Council

could begin to review the system and give it the required guidance to speed up the implementation of Assembly resolution 47/199. It was essential, in that regard, to strengthen the monitoring and guidance bodies, particularly the Operational Activities Branch of the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and the secretariat of CCPOQ. The success of the exercise would depend to a large extent on the outcome of the restructuring efforts to make intergovernmental mechanisms more efficient, and the financing of the system's operational activities more stable and predictable.

21. Broader issues deserving particular attention were the resident coordinator system, the country strategy note, the programme approach and national execution. The resident coordinator system must become an effective inter-agency system of collaboration at the country level, in order to ensure common, jointly financed approaches to country-specific development issues as well as better utilization of the system's substantive resources. The resident coordinator's foremost task should be inter-agency coordination. New approaches and incentives should be considered, such as the establishment of an inter-agency support unit and a small financing facility for common coordination activities, the harmonization of programming rules and procedures, and better monitoring and support, at headquarters level, of the resident coordinator function, possibly by setting up a focal point within UNDP. Stressing the importance of joint training, he welcomed the continued efforts of the International Training Centre of the ILO at Turin for United Nations system development staff. His delegation looked forward to the Secretary-General's report, to the Assembly at its forty-eighth session, on experience with interim United Nations offices in the Baltic States and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

22. His delegation fully supported the concept of the country strategy note, as defined in annex II of the report and recommended a pragmatic and progressive approach, based on specific joint efforts in selected areas. He hoped the seminar planned for late 1993 would stimulate further action.

23. With regard to the programme approach, his delegation welcomed the agreement on a common interpretation. Part B of annex II of the report, relating to a common United Nations framework, should be fully applied. The Consultative Committee on Programmes and Operational Questions should develop an appropriate methodology for evaluating activities based on a programme approach.

24. With regard to national execution, the agreed text on a common framework left many questions not fully answered, such as the respective roles, responsibilities and accountability of the various partners. It was important that recipient Governments should themselves make concerted efforts to strengthen their institutional capacities. His delegation strongly recommended that the United Nations system should focus more on national capacity-building for overall development management.

The recent UNDP publication *Rethinking Technical Cooperation: Reforms for Capacity Building in Africa*² contained interesting proposals and recommendations in that regard. The system should begin to evaluate experience in national execution, particularly with regard to impact and sustainability. Detailed and conclusive information on the subject should be contained in the next progress report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199.

25. Mr. TREMEAUD (International Labour Office) said that the Secretary-General's report (E/1993/73) on the system's operational activities for development provided a good summary of the reforms under way, which reflected a new concept of the role of the system's development activities, in tackling the complex problems that characterized an increasingly interdependent world.

26. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 44/211, the governing body of ILO had carried out a detailed examination resulting in a global proposal entitled "active partnership policy".³ The proposal had been endorsed by the International Labour Conference in June 1993. The overall objective of the policy was to improve the organization's technical and analytical capacity, to identify the problems, propose solutions for the elaboration of policies and to provide more effective assistance for the achievement of national development objectives.

27. The International Labour Conference had adopted a resolution which set the organization three major priorities in the technical cooperation field: to support democratization in member States by creating or strengthening effective mechanisms for the representation of the social partners; to fight against poverty, in particular by creating jobs and developing human resources; and to promote social protection.

28. Technical cooperation remained one of the primary means of action available to ILO to achieve its objectives but it must be undertaken together with other forms of action. It was essential that the various forms of action should be mutually strengthened in order to achieve a synergy.

29. ILO had carried out a series of bold measures which would make a positive contribution to the task of reforming the system's operational activities. However, it was concerned about the obstacles to the achievement of the objectives sought by the Governing Council of UNDP with regard to national execution and new arrangements relating to support costs.

30. By introducing Technical Support Services (TSS-1), the Governing Council of UNDP was seeking to en-

courage the five specialized agencies to improve their technical services in regard to sectoral studies and advice in programme and policy formulation. Although limited, the resources allocated to technical support services could play an effective role by complementing the analytical work financed under the agencies' regular budgets. The initial results of the application of the TSS-1 work programme for 1992-1993 had been generally positive. It was important that the objectives of those activities should be clearly defined in the national context and that UNDP and the Government concerned should demonstrate that commitment by allocating the necessary resources.

31. In view of the reduced resources available to UNDP for its own programmes at the national level, it was also necessary to place TSS-1 activities in the context of an integrated response of the United Nations system, as had been clearly stressed by the General Assembly in resolution 44/211.

32. The technical support of agencies at the project level was another important question. While expressing its support for an accelerated shift to national execution, the Governing Council of UNDP had recalled the multi-lateral nature of the technical cooperation it financed. This presupposed active participation by the specialized agencies in the preparation of projects within the TSS-2 framework and technical control of and support for nationally executed projects, as well as a contribution by the agencies in the execution of the programmes and projects through what was normally termed administrative and operational services.

33. However, those objectives were far from being achieved. The traditional gulf between agency-executed projects without substantial participation by national authorities and projects executed by the latter without the participation of the agencies continued to exist. The result was that the United Nations system was placing less and less of its technical resources and knowledge at the service of Member States in UNDP-financed technical cooperation projects.

34. Those concerns were clearly expressed in the recent decisions of the Governing Council of UNDP on national execution and support costs, and it was to be hoped that the situation would soon be corrected.

35. Mr. ZAHARAN (Observer for Egypt), commenting on the recent session of the Governing Council of UNDP, said that his delegation was deeply concerned at the considerable reduction in the allocation of resources to African countries at a time when the entire international community recognized the gravity of the situation in Africa. At the OAU Assembly of Heads of State and Government, held in Cairo in June 1993, the African countries had expressed surprise at the fact that UNDP was continuing to reduce its budget at a time when the requirements of the African countries were increasing. No one could question the need to give priority to assistance to the African countries in their efforts to develop

² United Nations Development Programme, 1993, New York (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.91.III.B.4).

³ International Labour Office, International Labour Conference, 80th session, report VI: *The Role of the ILO in Technical Cooperation*, chapter IV.

their economies and raise the level of living of their peoples. UNDP must make an effective contribution to that end with a view to implementing the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s. UNDP must also make a positive contribution to the International Conference on African Development, to be held in Tokyo in October 1993.

36. With regard to proposed changes in the structure of UNDP, including the proposal to reduce the level of directors of regional bureaux from Assistant-Secretary-General to D.2 as recommended by the Secretary-General, some had supported the change on the grounds that it came within the framework of the reform requested by the Secretary-General. The Egyptian delegation reaffirmed its reservations concerning the matter and considered, together with other Arab States, that due regard should be given to ensuring equality between the various regional bureaux. He urged the Administrator to review the situation in the documentation to be submitted to the special Governing Council session in 1994.

37. His delegation was concerned that UNDP should preserve its neutrality and ensure that the financial assistance it provided to Member States was not tied to any conditions. That was the only way to increase the confidence of developing and developed countries in the Programme.

38. He drew attention to the need for UNDP to avoid becoming involved in activities that were within the mandate of other United Nations bodies. In that connection, he recalled the position taken by developing countries at the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in June 1993.

39. UNDP should have drawn attention to the efforts made by developing countries to reorient and reconstruct their economies. It should be understood that their efforts would not be successful and sustainable in the absence of support for integrated socio-economic development operations. In the view of the developing countries, UNDP should support all the economic development operations of the developing countries.

40. His delegation expressed its satisfaction at the participation of developing countries at the World Conference on Human Rights and their position that the right of peoples to development was inalienable. UNDP could contribute to the implementation of that right and give it the priority it deserved. The activities of the United Nations as a whole and the restructuring measures taken by the United Nations in the economic and social fields must not have a negative effect on the course of action followed by UNDP. His delegation supported the idea that the Programme should retain its semi-independent character.

41. With regard to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199, which could be regarded as an effective tool for intensifying coordination and general agreement in the field of implementation activities, his

delegation expressed the hope that resources would be provided on a stable and foreseeable basis in a manner consistent with the constantly increasing needs of developing countries, particularly African nations. He hoped that efforts would be made to strengthen the resident representatives' ability to coordinate activities within the United Nations system and to cooperate closely with liaison officers designated by the Governments of recipient countries to ensure that the programmes were consistent with requirements. No one denied the vital need to restructure the United Nations, but such restructuring should be carried out with the consensus of recipient countries.

42. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that the topic of operational activities for development was of great importance to FAO, as the largest specialized, executing or implementing agency of the United Nations system, with a regular programme that was intrinsically linked to its operational activities. The food and agricultural sectors continued to dominate the economies of many developing countries and their importance for development remained unchanged. Although the overall world food situation had improved during 1992, food shortages continued to affect many developing countries, particularly in Africa. The responsibilities, mandate and capacities of FAO were therefore as relevant as ever.

43. The agency's operational activities were directly linked to its long-standing, analytical and substantive activities in agriculture, forestry and fisheries, financed under its regular programme budget. Individual field activities were managed and supported within well-planned technical and policy frameworks, and benefited directly from the global experience and expertise of FAO as well as from its management skills. The value of those activities went far beyond the value in dollar terms of the inputs provided. The provision of substantive review and guidance for the operational activities of FAO involved various technical committees, as well as intergovernmental regional conferences and technical commissions, and the governing bodies of FAO, the Council and the Conference.

44. The process had been further strengthened through the recent introduction of programme implementation and programme evaluation reports, which considered issues related both to the regular programme and to the field programme. That new approach to the governance of operational activities had been accompanied by a continuing diversification of the pattern of technical cooperation to meet the specific requirements of recipient countries. The funding base had also continued to be broadened, with trust fund arrangements with Governments increasing, as well as funding from the developing countries themselves. The largest single funding source was still UNDP, but the level had decreased considerably, currently standing at some 38 per cent of total field programme delivery.

45. The agency's operational activities were moving progressively towards programme and multidisciplinary approaches. The strengthening of national capacities remained a key feature. Systematic efforts were being made for the increasing involvement of national directors and the use of national experts in field activities. Many of the actions taken by FAO thus reflected the major themes and approaches of General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 47/199.

46. Although a full progress report on the implementation of both resolutions was to be provided to the FAO Conference in November 1993, major aspects of resolution 47/199 had already been considered by the FAO Council in June 1993, including the country strategy note, programme approach, national execution, decentralization, the resident coordinator system, field management training and the harmonization of rules and procedures. FAO representatives in the field had a major responsibility for many of those aspects. They constituted the direct country-level link between the agency and its member developing countries, providing advice and ensuring the necessary interaction between regular programme activities and the competent national authorities. They remained fully accountable to the agency and reported directly to it. They played an equally important role in regard to operational activities, in particular through functions related to programme development and support services for field programmes and projects, and were a key component of the joint system of coordination of operational activities under the team leadership of the United Nations resident coordinator. FAO remained fully committed to the resident coordinator system and had participated in its enhancement through various activities carried out under ACC and its subsidiaries, in particular, CCPOQ.

47. The serious cutbacks in the overall resources of UNDP had resulted in a sharp decline in 1992 in FAO delivery under UNDP-funded programmes and projects as compared with the previous year. New project approvals had slowed down, reflecting the impact of the changed resource situation. At the same time, full application of the various facilities available under the new support-cost arrangements had been hampered by lack of familiarity with them. It was hoped that the jointly implemented training programmes would have a positive impact in that connection.

48. The programme for Technical Support Services at the programme level (TSS-1) was being fully implemented and efforts were already under way to finalize the preparation of a new work programme for 1994-1995. Experience so far was encouraging and had led to an increased number of policy-oriented activities through which policy and strategic advice could be provided to Member States, using the accumulated experience and competence of the five agencies concerned.

49. The level of approvals for TSS-2 funding of projects, however, had so far remained well below expectations, and FAO therefore welcomed the decision of the

Governing Council of UNDP to accelerate the pace of approvals. It also strongly supported the Governing Council's request for greater involvement of specialized agencies in the design and formulation of UNDP programmes and projects, regardless of the modalities of implementation. It was essential to enhance the tripartite nature of the UNDP programme since that was one of the main aims of the new support-cost arrangements. FAO attached great importance to adequate technical support for operational activities, which were increasingly complex and multidisciplinary in nature. The importance of having assured resources for technical support could not be over-emphasized.

50. Under the new arrangements, there was already a significant shift to greater involvement of national government institutions in project execution, with national execution increasingly becoming the norm for programmes and projects funded by UNDP. There was, however, consensus that national execution should be pursued selectively and pragmatically, taking into account the needs and the capacity of the developing countries. At the same time, throughout all stages of the programme and project cycle, Governments should continue to have access to the technical advice and support of the United Nations system, in particular the specialized agencies.

51. The use of national project directors and national staff in internationally executed projects had been pioneered by FAO, which continued to support Governments in building up the required capacities to undertake national execution. It could and did contribute to the efforts of national institutions, thereby providing various services either as the implementing agency or through technical support. In that context, FAO also endorsed the encouragement given by the Governing Council of UNDP to greater use of the specialized agencies in the design, technical appraisal and backstopping of nationally executed projects. It trusted that the same would apply to projects where the Office for Project Services was involved in the managerial aspects. FAO could provide similar technical support services in these cases as well as acting as implementing agency.

52. In conclusion, he emphasized again the importance of the Council's discussion of operational activities for development. The nature of technical cooperation and the modalities for providing it through United Nations operational activities had undergone significant changes. Important decisions had been taken by the relevant United Nations bodies and were currently being implemented. The impact of those various new developments would have to be carefully assessed. In that context, FAO looked forward to the forthcoming evaluation of the new UNDP support-cost arrangements and stood ready to cooperate fully in that regard.

53. Mr. NANDOE (Suriname) said that the Secretary-General's progress report on the implementation of Assembly resolution 47/199 (E/1993/73) noted that, as a result of cutbacks in aid budgets in many donor countries,

as well as other factors, contributions to various technical assistance funds and programmes were likely to decrease. The 47 least developed countries had experienced a fall in their per capita income for two consecutive years and, according to a recent report by UNCTAD, the outlook for 1993 was not promising. The report attributed the dampening of the least developed countries' hopes, after a decade of progress, to adverse changes in world economic conditions, such as the recession, competing claims on aid budgets, trade problems, and domestic difficulties in a number of individual countries. It must be recognized, therefore, that the capacity of UNDP to achieve its targets would be limited.

54. At the same time, the Secretary-General's report stressed the need to provide assistance in new fields such as human rights, judicial reforms and law enforcement, improved governance and the electoral process. If the multidisciplinary character of UNDP assistance was to be maintained, both developed and developing countries would have to guarantee the necessary flow of funds.

55. In that context, his delegation would like to know how paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 47/199, which stressed the need for a substantial increase in resources, was to be implemented. The Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development had referred at the Council's previous meeting to the restructuring process, but, in his delegation's view, draft resolution A/47/L.58 had been very vague about the flow of resources on a predictable, continuous and assured basis.

56. His delegation was pleased to learn that consultations were taking place on widening the pool of candidates for the post of resident representative/coordinator and that the selection process was to be made more transparent. Perhaps the Secretary-General's representative could give the Council more details regarding the selection procedures and explain the ultimate goal of transparency.

The meeting rose at 4.45 p.m.

26th meeting

Thursday, 8 July 1993, at 10.20 a.m.

President: Mr. Juan SOMAVÍA (Chile)

E/1993/SR.26

AGENDA ITEM 3

Operational activities for development (*continued*)

1. Mr. BAIER (Austria) noted with satisfaction that the United Nations system of operational activities had responded effectively and flexibly to rapidly changing requirements by redefining the balance between emergency assistance and the promotion of development and by providing support to societies grappling with fundamental economic, social and political changes. Austria also welcomed the operational activities' increased focus on people.

2. As requested by the General Assembly in its resolutions 44/211 and 47/199, the United Nations system had taken numerous steps to enhance coordination and integration, including the concept of country strategy notes, the adopted common framework for the programme approach and national execution, and harmonization between the organizations concerned. Nevertheless, the diversity of the mandates of the funds, programmes and

specialized agencies involved should be borne in mind. At the same time, the emphasis placed on decentralization and delegation of authority to the country level would strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to development requirements. Common premises, wherever feasible, would also facilitate integration, coordination, improved utilization of resources and reduction of administrative costs.

3. His delegation supported the strengthening of the function of resident coordinator and the efforts to open that post to candidates from members of the Joint Consultative Group on Policies and to make the selection process more transparent. The Resident Coordinator should oversee a multidisciplinary approach based on a division of labour and responsibilities, enhance consultations with all parties concerned through the country strategy note and, when required, adjust country programmes and major projects as they went along.

4. In the medium term, the United Nations system of operational activities would face a formidable challenge