UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

PROVISIONAL

E/1994/SR.24
14 February 1995

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Substantive session of 1994

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 8 July 1994, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. BOTEZ (Romania)
(Vice-President)

CONTENTS

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEME:

(a) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

94-81102

/...

In the absence of Mr. Butler (Australia), Mr. Botez (Romania), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEME (A/49/204-E/1994/90, A/49/205-E/1994/91):

(a) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (E/1994/70)

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the report contained in document E/1994/70, stressed the importance of scientific and technological capacities as the driving force of development. There were at least three reasons why that importance should be stressed even more than in the past: in an increasingly globalized and market-oriented world, technical capacity was the very basis of competitive strength; a true commitment to sustainable development required much greater efforts for the development, diffusion and application of environmentally sound technologies; and, given the emerging concern of people-centred development, there was a need to enhance the knowledge and skills of poorer households and to consider the impact of technical development on vulnerable groups.

The broad aims of the United Nations system's work in the field of science and technology were reflected in the three major objectives of the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development. Those objectives, together with a recognition of the field's vital importance, should provide a framework for the Council's discussion of coordination. Although coordination of highly technical activities was inevitably somewhat difficult, the new programme approach provided a basis for much more constructive assistance. One important question which should be addressed

under the coordination segment was the extent to which the United Nations system had successfully injected that approach, as well as national execution, into its work and adapted its mechanisms accordingly.

Mr. ROFFE (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)), noting the changes over the past two decades in perceptions of technology transfer and scientific development, said that the United Nations must recognize the crucial role of the enterprise sector for international cooperation in that field. While the role of Governments remained vital in the process of building technological capabilities, there was a need for closer collaboration between business, academic and government circles in order to incorporate the concerns of the production sector into policy formulation.

In terms of activities with which the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development had been associated, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (CSTD) had in 1993 decided to concentrate on three main substantive themes: (i) technology for small-scale activities to address the basic needs of low-income populations; (ii) gender implications of science and technology for developing countries; and (iii) the science and technology aspects of a sectoral issue to be discussed by the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in 1995. Separate panels were working on each theme, and the Commission had decided to involve its members more directly in the preparation of the panels' reports. Meanwhile, the Ad Hoc Working Group on the Relationship between Investment and Technology Transfer had focused on investment flows, technology transfer, capacity-building, competitiveness and environmentally sound technology. In its final report, adopted in March 1994, the Group had offered a wide range of conclusions and recommendations which would guide the future work of UNCTAD and provide key inputs to CSTD, enhancing both the work of the Commission and the appropriate coordination of activities between intergovernmental bodies.

As a result of the restructuring exercise, the former Centre for Science and Technology for Development had been amalgamated into UNCTAD's renamed

Division for Science and Technology. The UNCTAD secretariat saw that move as consistent with the need for the organization to focus on areas where it had a comparative advantage. It also valued cooperation with other United Nations bodies and had enjoyed a particularly close and fruitful relationship with the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development (DPCSD). Building on the already useful coordination of certain inputs between CSTD and the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), it might be useful to establish broad policy guidelines aimed at increasing the responsiveness of CSTD to the needs of CSD in areas where CSTD had evident competence. UNCTAD had also benefited from close cooperation with the regional commission and certain specialized agencies, often as a result of pragmatic arrangements rather than coordination imposed from above.

Successful coordination could not be achieved by using traditional instruments. It required a genuine understanding of new conditions, and recognition of other organizations' strengths and limits. It should be pragmatic and of benefit for all concerned, particularly the end-users.

Mr. BADRAN (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said effective coordination within the United Nations system required a rational division of labour based on the comparative advantages of each individual agency. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, for example, had traditional expertise in linking the promotion of basic, engineering and environmental sciences to activities in the field of education, culture, social sciences and communication. As such, it was well placed to address, for example, certain aspects of science and technology for development set out in Agenda 21. Committed as it was to using the programme approach to achieve more effective coordination at the national and regional levels, UNESCO had already been liaising with other United Nations bodies concerning the chapters of the Agenda for which it was to act as a task manager.

With regard to the improvement of coordination mechanisms in general, UNESCO believed there was an urgent need to organize a regular flow of

information on United Nations system activities in the field of science and technology at the national, regional and global levels, as well as close liaison with sources outside the system: an inter-agency ad hoc expert group should be created for that purpose. Also, all joint inter-agency projects in a given country should begin with the preparation of a policy analysis study, the results of which should be accessible to the international community through the country office of the corresponding resident coordinator. The primary aim of inter-agency cooperation should be to strengthen national capacities, while closely cooperating with business and industry. The ten pilot country projects on endogenous capacity-building should be carefully assessed by an ad hoc group with a view to drawing conclusions from that innovative inter-agency exercise. As an alternative to the creation of such specific ad hoc groups, thought might be given to the creation of an ad hoc inter-agency group attached to the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD). Finally, it was essential to ensure complementarity between the Bretton Woods institutions and the specialized agencies.

Mr. HADID (Observer for Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, described the findings of the Secretary-General's report as disappointing. Firstly, it provided no overall framework for action and referred only once to the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development. The Programme remained relevant in many respects, and lack of implementation did not necessarily imply obsolescence. While the science and technology components of Agenda 21 did constitute new and important inputs, they fell short of providing the required global framework and already seemed to be undergoing an erosion process, due, inter alia, to an absence of adequate resources and endeavours to abolish CSD's Working Group on Technology.

Secondly, the figures mentioned in paragraph 21 of the report clearly demonstrated the very disturbing marginalization of science and technology in United Nations activities instead of, as would be logical, a regular increase in their share.

Thirdly, there was no convincing evidence to justify the abolition of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) Task Force on Science and Technology for Development. While ad hoc coordination mechanisms could play a useful role, it was unlikely they could make up for the abolition of the only overall mechanism existing in the area. Also, with regard to the work of CSTD and CSD, the allocation of secretariat functions to UNCTAD and of substantive responsibilities to DPCSD was at best artificial and ultimately self-defeating.

Fourthly, the complex administrative and financial procedures required to establish any formal inter-agency cooperative agreements should have been the subject of specific proposals rather than simply diagnosed, as in paragraph 110 of the report.

Finally, there was a need for concrete steps to achieve significant cooperation between United Nations bodies, including the regional commissions, and the subregional and regional integration groupings of developing countries in the field of science and technology for development.

Mr. GRAF ZU RANTZAU (Germany), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the discussion of science and technology should also focus on the Commission on Sustainable Development. The United Nations system's approach to coordination should parallel the Commission's decision, taken at its second session in May 1994, to stress the concrete significance of technology transfer, cooperation and capacity-building in sectoral issues. As science and technology-related issues were a structural element of all activities of the subsidiary bodies of the Council, a structural approach must be taken to increasing coordination.

Such increased coordination and harmonization of work should result in greater efficiency and less duplication, by, inter alia, deploying already existing resources. In addition, science and technology should be promoted through projects and programmes in which they were generated, transferred or applied, rather than through all-purpose funds such as the United Nations Fund for Science and Technology for Development. An important first step in that

direction had been the establishment of the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development. UNCTAD could integrate efforts to coordinate science and technology system-wide on the basis of its already acquired expertise. The European Union welcomed the preliminary work done by UNCTAD's Ad Hoc Working Group on the Relationship between Investment and Technology Transfer, in particular its integrated approach to investment, technology transfer, environment and development. Task managers for sectoral issues should serve as focal points for science and technology. In so doing, they should not limit themselves to environmentally sound technologies; they should also be catalysts for an exchange of information. The European Union looked forward to the consultative meeting on a coalition of resources for science and technology to be held during the third quarter of 1994, organized by the Secretary-General following an initiative by the Commission for Science and Technology for Development. Such a coalition would enable different actors with a common interest in specific scientific or technology-related fields to share programmes through joint funding and implementation.

In times of budgetary constraint, it became important to adhere to the guidelines for priority-setting contained in Agenda 21, redefine programmes and adapt structures. That would liberate much-needed resources. The continuation of existing programmes which merely incorporated the terminology of Agenda 21 simply would not do. In seeking to promote change, the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development should go beyond establishing general guidelines to provide concrete details for coordination, where necessary. To that end, its authority must be strengthened.

Similar changes must be introduced in intergovernmental structures. The new Commission on Science and Technology for Development must be rationalized further and its integration into the intergovernmental machinery of UNCTAD must take into account its linkages with the Commission on Sustainable Development and other United Nations bodies. A coherent approach must also be taken by the governing bodies of the United Nations system and the functional commissions of the Council. To that end, the subsidiary bodies of the Council

should synchronize the systematic analysis of their activities in the light of Agenda 21, including science and technology, with the multi-year thematic programme of work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Structural coordination could be further enhanced by a certain degree of direct coordination among the subsidiary bodies of the Council. At the intergovernmental level, the Commission on Science and Technology for Development could serve as a forum for the necessary exchange of information. That Commission should provide concrete input for the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and the two should coordinate closely in order to avoid any possible duplication. Coordination of issues relating to science and technology must be strengthened at the regional level, in particular through the regional economic commissions.

Mr. HURIGUCHI (Japan) said that cooperation between research and policy-making organizations was particularly crucial. For example, representatives of such policy-making organizations as the Commission for Science and Technology for Development, the Commission on Sustainable Development, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development should participate in the research projects and activities of the United Nations University. A mechanism should be established to promote such coordination.

Coordination between the Council and all its different policy-making subsidiary bodies was essential to effective project execution. In that context, his delegation welcomed the working relationship established between the Chairmen of the Commission for Science and Technology for Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development. The policy-making organizations of the United Nations system must encourage the participation of all countries, particularly the recipient countries. National policy makers must also ensure that their policies were consistent with agreements formulated at the international level.

As the Task Force on Science and Technology for Development of the Administrative Committee on Coordination had noted, organizations engaged in

project execution must coordinate their medium-term plans, programme budgets and budget cycles. At the country level, the resident coordinator system must be strengthened and each organization must make every effort to appoint field-level staff of the highest calibre.

Linkages between the assistance programmes of the United Nations organizations, the World Bank and regional development banks must be strengthened. United Nations organizations must also improve their relationships with the relevant non-governmental organizations. Coordination was no easy task and would take time to achieve. The Economic and Social Council could best fulfil its coordinating role by encouraging organizational reform where necessary. In the current context, it must respond creatively and flexibly to the many changes taking place in the world and to the challenges posed by the Agreement on Global Governance incorporated into Agenda 21.

Dr. SZCZERBAN (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that the global political, socio-economic, environmental and epidemiological transition had had an adverse effect on health. The transition had been characterized by continuing "low-intensity warfare" and local conflicts, which were the symptoms of militarization in some developing countries; the export of polluting technologies to the third world; rising unemployment; and decreasing public expenditure on health care against a backdrop of rising costs. The high cost of health care had created gross inequities within countries, but particularly between the developing and industrialized countries. The problem called for urgent political attention at the global level, and, in particular, an efficient use of technology. The reform of health care systems at the national level was an encouraging sign. On a global scale, military expenditures must still be rechannelled into social - i.e., public health - welfare.

As it became increasingly multisectoral, health research must benefit from partnerships between the public sector and the private sector, the academic and industrial communities and institutions in the North and in the

South. It must involve not only ministries of health but also a number of other ministries and governmental agencies responsible for such sectors as education, science and technology and planning. It was of paramount importance to obtain a national commitment at the highest level to providing support for research capacity. External support for health and the strengthening of research capacity should be viewed as a complement to national support.

WHO, a scientifically-oriented organization, considered research an integral part of all its programming activities. It believed that the endogenous research capacity of developing countries must also be strengthened. It was time for an alternative approach to "unaffordability" and "non-feasibility", one which did not distinguish between science for the rich and science for the poor and did not merely maintain the developing world on the "consumer" side but rather stimulated its creative intellectual development. Investment in the intellectual resources of developing countries would help to make development self-perpetuating. In that context, he agreed with the Secretary-General that the strengthening of national capacity should take an interdisciplinary rather than a sectoral approach. Designated focal points for science and technology within cooperating agencies must be supported by expert scientific advisory bodies. Their objectives should include strengthening the development of science and research policies and strategies and coordinating different organizations' research and technological policies with those of other United Nations bodies and non-governmental organizations.

Mr. SREENIVASAN (India) expressed his delegation's support for the statement delivered by the Algerian representative on behalf of the Group of 77. His delegation also endorsed the broad approach to coordination outlined in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/70). However, the report showed that very little coordination was taking place at the operational level and hardly any in the area of science and technology for development. To some extent, it was true that scientifically advanced

countries were unwilling to cooperate through the United Nations system with a view to building up science and technology in developing countries. However, more must be done by the concerned United Nations agencies, funds and programmes in order to sensitize the international community to the crucial catalytic role it must play. That process cold not be left to the private sector alone.

In that context, the United Nations Fund for Science and Technology for Development must be strengthened. Greater emphasis should be placed on applied research and development and on ensuring that the results of such activities were filtered down to industries and users. To that end, activities should be encouraged to expand research from a bench-scale to a pilot level. The preference of developing countries for often obsolete technology which required a low initial capital investment perpetuated their relationship of dependence. The United Nations must help those countries to choose technology more effectively.

Additional efforts must be made to facilitate the South-South transfer of technology. Otherwise, the funds allocated for that purpose would be ploughed back to the developed countries through the delivery of equipment, machinery and the cost of technical manpower. The United Nations system should also publish a catalogue for use by developing countries in procuring state-of-the-art technology. His delegation did not fully agree with the Secretary-General that science and technology should be viewed from a sectoral perspective rather than generically. While the sectoral dimension was important, basic scientific and technological research was equally vital. In the decision it adopted, the Council should recognize the important role of science and technology, express concern at the lack of activity in that area and call for further efforts by the international community and the United Nations system to integrate science and technology effectively into the development process.

Ms. DOWDESWELL (United Nations Environment Programme) referred to a paper which described the role of science and technology in UNEP

activities - from sensing, interpreting and understanding the state of the environment to developing analytical and management tools. The paper also analysed international public policies in such areas as ozone layer protection, conservation of biological diversity and the emerging issues of trade and the environment. It described other aspects of the Programme's work, including Earthwatch, the International Environmental Technology Centre in Japan and the transfer of cleaner production processes to a number of countries.

A number of factors must be recognized in order to realize the full potential of science and technology for sustainable development. One such factor was the gap between the physical sciences, which provided information, and the behavioural sciences, which stressed value judgements and cultural questions such a lifestyle choices. It would also be important to recognize that the problems to be addressed were not sectoral but rather multidisciplinary in nature and could not be solved during the term of any single Government. Lastly, the effect of global interdependence on the environment must be understood.

Against that backdrop, she wished to offer a number of suggestions. While she welcomed the inclusion of science and technology in the agenda of the Commission on Sustainable Development, reporting was only one step towards coordination. On a more concrete level, the Commission had requested UNEP and other organizations to collaborate on a survey and assessment of environmentally sound technologies which were patented or in the public domain. The objective was to identify and correct gaps and deficiencies in information sources with a view to improving their effectiveness and expanding access to them. She hoped that the Council would encourage further action of that type, if necessary by proposing structural changes in the various funds and programmes.

Science and technology in and of themselves were not the answer. To understand how to use them more effectively, the international community must focus on changes in attitude and behaviour through a worldwide programme

of environmental citizenship. The capacity to use emerging science and technology and technological solutions appropriate for developing countries must be increased. Furthermore, all potential actors must be involved in the process - industry, business, the scientific community, women and indigenous peoples. Networks must be nurtured and used effectively.

While science allowed the forecasting of future opportunities and risks, it must be more forceful in influencing public policy decisions, particularly in the economic sphere. One pragmatic approach to that objective was to develop and apply indicators. Indicators could measure progress being achieved in sustainable development and could help to mobilize broad public support, a necessary ingredient for political action. Sensitive indicators would ensure that new techniques for monitoring environmental change were generated for assessing the impact of present and proposed actions on the natural and social environment.

Science and technology were crucial to sustainable human development, but to realize fully their potential, barriers between disciplines and organizations must be broken down. It must be recognized that progress occurred when science was linked to human behaviour.

Mr. MOJOUKHOV (Belarus) said his delegation endorsed the new approaches for improving coordination and cooperation in the field of science and technology for development, based on complementarity of the partners and a recognition of the ways in which scientific and technical cooperation differed. Commenting on the report of the Secretary-General (E/1994/70), he noted that the wide range of mandates related to science and technology emphasized the need for a clear division of labour and more effective coordination of policies at all levels. Now that a decision had been made to establish a new division of labour, an alternative coordination mechanism must be established.

Despite restructuring reforms at the intergovernmental level, such as the formation of a single Commission for Science and Technology for Development and other structural reforms of the Secretariat and inter-agency

mechanisms of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, problems of fragmentation of efforts within the United Nations system, the lack of political and financial resources and the need for budgetary coordination for mid-term programmes and projects still remained. His delegation noted with some regret that the Secretary-General's report (E/1994/70) had not even mentioned an Agenda for development and hoped that there would be a greater effort in the future to link the field of science and technology to the process of development.

While recognizing the need for greater coordination between the legislative and policy-making bodies, his delegation did not share the view that the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development should be the principal intermediary between the specialized agencies and the Council. However, his delegation did agree with the long-term goals of coordination set forth in paragraph 70 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1994/70) and endorsed the view that centralized coordination of all science and technology activities in the United Nations system was not feasible or even desirable and that the focus of coordination must be on specific areas involving more than one agency. His delegation supported the suggestion that the role of the Economic and Social Council should be strengthened as a forum for coordination among all policy-making bodies of the United Nations concerned with science and technology.

His delegation was ready to recognize that ACC was the coordinating body at the highest level within the United Nations system, as long as coordination at the global level was based on the specific measures suggested by the former ACC Task Force on Science and Technology for Development, set forth in paragraph 84 of the report. Inter-agency coordination at the regional level could only be effective if the necessary resources were provided. For example, the Economic Commission for Europe currently received the lowest amount of financing of all five regional commissions, a situation which his delegation regarded as completely unacceptable. Finally, inter-agency coordination at the country level was a critical factor for effective overall

coordination. The roles of the United Nations resident coordinators and UNDP resident representatives could vary from country to country, but a primary goal of coordination at the country level had to be the strengthening of national capacities during periods of transition and instability and the development of new fields such as computer technology, biotechnology and nuclear safety.

In conclusion, his delegation proposed that, at its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly should review and revise Programme 17 on science and technology for development of the United Nations medium-term plan for the period 1992-1997, and Subprogramme 3 on coordination and harmonization of activities of the United Nations system on science and technology, together with decisions that would be adopted during the current session of the Economic and Social Council.

Mr. OKALI (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS)) said that Habitat's efforts to promote appropriate and environmentally sound technologies had focused on the critical areas of developing a policy environment at the national and local levels supportive of appropriate technologies for settlement, development and management, building capacity at the national and local level for the acquisition and effective application of technologies, and promoting innovative technology transfer mechanisms through international cooperation. In the energy sector, it had focused on improving the efficiency of energy use and on promoting renewable low-pollution energy technologies. In the field of environmental infrastructure, activities had been concentrated in water conservation technologies, low-cost sewerage and small-scale waste recycling. Low-cost shallow sewerage technology developed by UNCHS was now widely used in high-density low-income urban settlements in developing countries. To facilitate planning and management in disaster-prone areas, Habitat had recently developed a versatile, optical disk storage system for the purpose of upgrading settlements. UNCHS had also actively pursued environmental concerns in the construction sector by promoting the improved management of

non-renewable resources, controlling physical disruption caused by such work, and minimizing atmospheric pollution.

Habitat had learned some key lessons which had implications for coordination. First, technology transition in human settlements was best managed through a combination of bottom-up and top-down approaches. therefore, cooperation within the United Nations system should focus on the involvement and participation of community-based and non-governmental organizations. At the national level, policy in the area of human settlements technology must be based on a multidisciplinary approach incorporating human settlements, environment and health. The United Nations system could coordinate action in that area at the international level. Equitable access to technologies on the part of all citizens, especially the urban poor, could be achieved by incorporating its social costs in cost-benefit analyses and pricing policies. Identifying options which combined socio-economic gains with environmental benefits should be a central objective. A range of "low-tech" environmentally sound technologies were already available and could be transferred to developing countries at a nominal licensing fee through established channels. International action should be directed at national capacity-building in those critical areas to facilitate such transfer of technology.

As the task manager for human settlements in the implementation of Agenda 21, Habitat was working closely with the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development and other relevant agencies to improve coordination within the United Nations system. It placed special emphasis on new alliances with the private sector and business community, non-governmental organizations and local community groups.

Mr. BAILLARGEON (Canada) said that document E/1994/70 contained much useful information, but that a bewildering number of United Nations bodies had some degree of involvement in science and technology. The need for greater coordination among them was evident, but his delegation was unsure whether the proposals in section V would result in progress. A concise

listing of specific recommendations might have been more useful. Canada would argue against the creation of any new coordination mechanisms; instead, the effectiveness of existing mechanisms should be enhanced.

An important basic principle was that Government-assisted science and technology activities should be based on the needs of the private sector and should be directly applicable to market products and processes. They should also be competitive in the sense that the technology should not only be economically viable but should contribute to an enhanced standard of living. Such activity should expand society's pool of knowledge and stimulate further learning and should take place within the framework of sustainable development.

In considering science and technology coordination, priority should be given to the global and country levels, where policy was established and development actually took place. His delegation strongly supported the contention that the Economic and Social Council should be the forum for coordination among all policy-making bodies concerned with technology and development. All intergovernmental bodies involved should be encouraged to work toward a common agenda on science and technology issues. As a starting-point, all such bodies could take into account the agenda of the Commission on Sustainable Development for its work relating to technology, which extended to 1997. In order to improve inter-agency coordination, the Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development should make its reports more generally available. At the country level, the resident coordinator system should fulfil the necessary coordinating role.

The question of endogenous capacity-building should be at the heart of United Nations activities. His delegation supported the decision of the Commission on Sustainable Development to encourage the establishment of environmental technology centres in order to promote the development, transfer and adaptation of environmentally sound technologies. Other issues to be considered included the need to assess and prioritize science and technology activities at the country level, the particular relevance of the programme

approach to that sector, the problem of inadequate local demand for locally produced technologies and the need for a policy concerning the ownership of intellectual property rights developed during United Nations-financed activities.

One of the key constraints on United Nations capacity-building activities was that transfer of technology was not generally market-driven. Much more attention should be paid to the private sector dimension of science and technology for development and the establishment of linkages with that sector, as well as with the education and research sectors. Such outside groups should be permitted to participate actively in the work of the United Nations in coordinating science and technology activities at both the global and country levels.

Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that one of the main goals of the United Nations system was to narrow the material gap that separated the developing countries from the industrialized countries. Science and technology were two indispensable tools for the pursuit of that goal. Concerns arising in recent years over food security, the environment, energy resources and the sustainability of production systems demanded the diligent pursuit of scientific knowledge and its application to agriculture. Demographic change in many developing countries was leading to the cultivation of marginal lands and fragile ecosystems with serious repercussions on the environment. Research must be directed towards promoting increases in productivity in high potential areas and targeting marginal and fragile environments where degradation must be reversed and production stabilized.

The great challenge facing most developing countries was increasing the supply of food and other agricultural products while maintaining a cost-effective and sustainable production system. Since solutions must come from national efforts, the primary focus of FAO had been on strengthening national capacity and cooperation among countries in research and technology

development through education, training and technical cooperation among developing countries.

Over the years, FAO had formed alliance with specialized agencies within and outside the United Nations system. Its experience had shown that, while coordination was important, the emphasis on centralized coordination was exaggerated, and could result in a waste of human, material and financial resources. Science and technology should not be treated as a sector in itself, but rather as a tool for social and economic development. Coordination was more productive when it was carried out at the country level and linked with endogenous capacity-building as part of a country programme. The challenges of coordinating a cross-sectoral issue of that type could be met only if the respective mandates of the United Nations system organizations were respected. Such mandates were a blueprint for the division of labour within the system based on respective areas of competence. Where mandates did overlap, bilateral or trilateral agreements had proven more effective than system-wide exercises. Member States must take consistent and coherent positions in the various governing bodies of the United Nations system. The Economic and Social Council would be the appropriate body where coordination problems at the intergovernmental level could be resolved.

Mr. VOICU (Romania) noted that the subject of the contribution of science and technology to the progress of mankind had been an ongoing concern of the international community for decades. Resolutions on the subject had been passed as early as 1970. In more recent times, General Assembly resolution 48/179 had stressed the urgent need to strengthen the vital role of the United Nations in the field of science and technology, particularly through better coordination, including the field of technology assessment, monitoring and forecasting. His delegation therefore supported fully the proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report concerning steps to be taken to strengthen coordination, interaction and cooperation mechanisms. While it commended the efforts to improve coordination between the Commission for Science and Technology for Development and the Commission on Sustainable

/...

Development, his delegation hoped that the value of coordination with the new Commission on International Investment and Transnational Corporations and the regional commissions would not be underestimated.

As noted in paragraph 101 of the Secretary-General's report, experience had shown that the minimum requirement for improved coordination was the exchange of information on a more regular, systematic basis. Thus, an integrated information network and regular means of communication were essential. Global coordination was inconceivable without global information. Romania shared the Secretary-General's view that successful coordination would be impossible without the will to work together. It was not enough to establish mechanisms and structures to eliminate duplication, overlap and inconsistency. Institutions must be ready to work as partners rather than rivals and to have the courage to measure the success of their efforts against the progress achieved.

Mr. VENKATARAMAN (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that the flow of technology, whether in the form of knowledge or equipment, to the developing countries had diminished in recent years. Government allocations for scientific and technological research had remained stagnant and many developing countries did not dispose of the foreign exchange resources needed to buy new equipment or upgrade research tools. At a time when developing countries were striving to keep pace with world scientific and technological progress, they faced a real danger that science and technology was becoming marginalized in these countries. In that regard, the United Nations system should place science and technology in the mainstream of development and of international cooperation and make a united effort to link science and technology more closely to the productive sectors of industry and agriculture.

The objectives of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization comprised industrial and technological growth and competitiveness, human resources development for industry, environmentally sustainable industrial growth and international cooperation in industrial investments and technology.

In its restructured context, UNIDO was seeking partnership with other agencies, such as the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Health Organization and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. For example, UNIDO, in cooperation with UNEP had launched a new programme to support national cleaner production centres which would provide technical information and advice, stimulate demonstration of cleaner production techniques and technologies and train industry and government professionals. Similarly UNIDO had participated in the organization of an international conference on economic growth with clean production in Melbourne, Australia, which had drawn up a set of guiding principles for achieving economically sustainable industrial development, with emphasis on the importance of cooperation between Governments, industries and research institutions in the developed and developing countries alike.

Mr. AHMED (Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific) said that the strategy for cooperation, particularly at the regional level, should emphasize the complementarity between agencies. For example, UNIDO's comparative advantage in critical research and selected technical areas and that of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in thematic coverage and close links with authorities of countries in the region provided an ideal opportunity for the promotion of science and technology in the industrial field. New avenues of cooperation were being developed through the successful and cost-effective UNIDO-FAO-ESCAP regional network for agricultural machinery, which combined elements of networking, sharing of expertise, and joint financing.

The role of cooperation in the field of science and technology should not be limited to industrial development. For example, ESCAP had initiated joint programmes with several agencies in the field of space technology and remote-sensing. ESCAP had taken the lead in organizing an inter-agency meeting on strengthening coordination at the regional level in May 1994, which had discussed a proposal to establish an inter-agency committee on industry and technology in which relevant United Nations agencies would participate.

As a first practical step towards operationalizing inter-agency coordination in science and technology for development, there should be an established system of regular information exchange for programmes, activities and financing arrangements so that the administrative and technical information required for implementation could be adequately diffused through each organization to member States and users at the national level. Secondly, existing resources for different United Nations agencies concerned should be pooled to finance joint research activities so as to stimulate a new spirit of collaboration among the different organizations. Finally, simplifying administrative and financial procedures between agencies would reduce the complexities involved in formulating inter-agency agreements.

Mr. BAKJAJI (Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) said that the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia had been more successful in coordinating its activities in the field of science and technology with the specialized agencies than with the components of the United Nations Secretariat. The restructuring of the Secretariat had affected most of those offices and programmes directly concerned with science and technology. ESCWA which, before the restructuring, had achieved an appreciable amount of coordination with CSTD, now had to consider how to coordinate with UNCTAD, DPCSD and the newly formed Commission on Sustainable Development and Commission for Science and Technology for Development. In that regard, his delegation strongly supported the recommendations made by the former ACC Task Force on Science and Technology for Development regarding coordination at the Headquarters level.

While the region of Western Asia was well endowed with valuable natural resources, it suffered from desertification and shortages of drinking water, and, although it was first among the developing countries in terms of investment and spending, it was plagued with acute unemployment, especially among the educated. The problems of the war-torn areas and escalating unemployment required special consideration. Both problems had strong science

and technology elements and required highly qualified expertise and a series of development activities.

In conclusion, he suggested that the representatives of ESCWA, other commissions and relevant organizations form a coordination committee to agree on specific tasks for implementation at the regional level and the role of each organization during each biennium.

Mr. MARTYNENKO (Ukraine) said his delegation welcomed the results of the first session of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and agreed that the objective of system-wide coordination in science and technology should be specific programmes for cooperation. In that regard, there should be a distinct division of labour on the basis of comparative advantages and areas of competence and a more effective division of coordinating tasks at the intergovernmental level. His delegation hoped that the current session of the Council would suggest specific proposals to establish an intergovernmental mechanism for coordination.

His delegation welcomed the high level of coordination and complementarity of the programmes of the Commission for Science and Technology for Development and the Economic Commission for Europe. His delegation would endorse a programme of activity directed at increasing national potential in the field of science and technology. It hoped that programmes of multilateral scientific and technical cooperation would be designed for the areas of conversion of military technology for civilian purposes and of new technologies for energy sources, which were of particular interest to his country. Having learned the tragic lessons of the Chernobyl catastrophe, his Government understood the need to modernize the country's overall energy industry, by introducing new technologies for energy sources and achieving greater security of its nuclear energy facilities, in terms both of the environment and of the population. His delegation hoped it would enjoy the cooperation of the international community in meeting those challenges.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.