

36th meeting

Monday, 19 July 1993, at 3.20 p.m.

President: Mr. Juan SOMAVÍA (Chile)

E/1993/SR.36

AGENDA ITEM 9

Sustainable development

1. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), introducing the item, said that as the parent intergovernmental body of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the Council had an important role to play in ensuring that the decisions of UNCED were reflected in the work of the United Nations system. The concept of sustainable development impinged on the work of virtually all the economic and social organizations in the system.

2. The Commission's first substantive session (E/1993/25/Add.1) had been a success and had launched it well on its way towards meeting the high expectations placed on it at UNCED and subsequently in the General Assembly. There had been some concern after the Rio Summit that the commitments made there were being forgotten. The tasks before the Commission were challenging and the world economic system could not be changed overnight. However, the Commission's first session proved that the spirit of Rio was still alive.

3. The discussions at the high-level ministerial meeting had been productive and had clearly shown strong political support. Another important aspect was that the meeting had enhanced interaction with the non-governmental community, which had played a major role at UNCED and was continuing to show interest in its follow-up.

4. The question of finance and technological transfer was perhaps one of the most difficult issues the Rio Summit had had to consider and would remain an area in which political goodwill would be required to find constructive solutions that placed in the hands of the developing countries the means required by them to implement the objectives of sustainable development.

5. An important outcome of the Commission's session had been the proposal to convene two ad hoc working groups on the financial and technical aspects of specific areas of Agenda 21. The purpose of the groups was to place before the Commission a strong professional assessment of what had to be done, the adequacy of existing efforts and mechanisms, and related policy conclu-

sions on which action would be taken by the Commission.

6. One of the concrete manifestations of the sense of partnership between the North and the South was the announcement by the delegations of Colombia and the United States that they would work together to offer joint support for the ad hoc group on technology transfer. He also wished to point out that the Bureau and the Secretary-General had been entrusted with the task of playing an active role during the inter-sessional period by coordinating the preparations for the two ad hoc groups and other relevant elements.

7. It was not enough to think of the follow-up to Rio purely in terms of action at the international level. The bulk of the work to implement Agenda 21 had to be carried out at the national level in both developed and developing countries.

8. A number of recommendations to the Commission related to the financial aspects of Agenda 21, the transfer of technology, cooperation and capacity-building. It was important that those crucial issues should be considered in the Commission in relation to specific sectoral goals. Such an approach would enable it to formulate realistic policy frameworks for the means of implementing Agenda 21 and its components, thus contributing to finance and technology discussions held in other intergovernmental bodies. The effectiveness of the Commission as an intergovernmental focal point for monitoring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 could be comprehensively assessed only at a later stage when some of those commitments were translated into action and when the progress achieved at the national, regional and international levels was examined.

9. The Commission's first session had set an action-oriented course and provided strong political impetus to the future work to be carried out by Governments, international organizations and all other parties.

10. Certain specific decisions and recommendations of the Commission required special attention and action on the part of the Council. The Commission had agreed on its multi-thematic programme of work, which would enable it during the next three years to undertake a first round assessment and analysis of progress achieved in the implementation of the main chapters and programme

areas of Agenda 21 and other results of UNCED. That would be followed by a more comprehensive review in 1997, leading to the proposed special session of the General Assembly planned for that year. In carrying out its programme of work, the Commission should consider in an integrated manner the linkages between different sustainable development objectives.

11. The Commission had specifically requested the Council to consider measures aimed at promoting productive interaction between itself and other relevant subsidiary bodies of the Council as well as with other inter-governmental organs and organizations in the United Nations system.

12. Given the nature of Agenda 21, it was likely that many of its elements would be the subject of discussion and action in other intergovernmental bodies. It was therefore important to avoid parallelism in the various activities and duplication of responsibility and to ensure that the Commission benefited fully from the results of work carried out in other intergovernmental bodies in the specific areas related to sustainable development.

13. A major contribution by the Commission should be to add value to what was being done elsewhere in the system. The Commission had invited the Council to consider intergovernmental machinery related to science and technology in the coordination segment of its substantive session in 1994 with a view to clarifying the distribution of labour between the various bodies involved in science and technology in the system. While the Commission generally supported recent decisions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination concerning the follow-up to UNCED, it called for measures by the governing bodies of the relevant organs of the system, and at the inter-agency level, to incorporate sustainable development considerations in their programmes and activities.

14. Lastly, the Commission's decision to establish two inter-sessional ad hoc groups on finance and technology transfer would involve financial implications and specific financial arrangements for them would have to be approved by the Council.

15. Mr. ISMAIL (Malaysia), Chairman of the Commission on Sustainable Development, said that the Commission's first substantive session (E/1993/25/Add.1), in June 1993 had produced seven important decisions. The first concerned the future work of the Commission and covered issues involving reporting procedures to the Commission and organizational matters.

16. The second decision dealt with guidelines to the secretariat for organizing information provided by Governments. The decision clearly signalled the desire of countries to exchange information and experiences relating to sustainable development activities at the national level.

17. The third decision encompassed the multi-year thematic programme of work. The cross-sectoral clusters would be reviewed on an annual basis and the sectoral

clusters within the three-year schedule so that all areas of Agenda 21 could be covered by 1996. That would enable the Commission to undertake an overall review of Agenda 21 implementation at its 1997 session in preparation for the special session of the General Assembly.

18. The fourth decision on finance had established an inter-sessional ad hoc open-ended working group composed of Governments, which would nominate experts in order to assist the Commission. In addition, the Commission had expressed concern that the general response to UNCED recommendations and commitments regarding funding fell significantly short of expectations. The Commission emphasized that the inadequacy of financial resources remained a major constraint for effective implementation of Agenda 21 and the phasing-in of sustainable development. The effective and early implementation of all the commitments contained in chapter 33 of Agenda 21 was essential. The cost of inaction could outweigh the financial cost of implementing Agenda 21.

19. The importance of ensuring a supportive international economic climate and domestic economic and financial activities conducive to sustained economic growth and development in order to achieve sustainability had been emphasized by many delegations. In that context, the Commission had highlighted the importance of making further progress in such areas as debt relief, in particular for developing countries, and encouraging free trade and market access. The Commission had also stressed the importance of promoting sustainable development through trade liberalization and had recognized that an open, equitable, secure and predictable multilateral trading system was critical for achieving sustainable development. The Commission had voiced strong support for an early, balanced, comprehensive and successful outcome of the Uruguay Round that would reverse protectionism, improve market access, particularly for developing country exports, and bring about further liberalization and expansion of world trade.

20. With regard to the Global Environmental Facility, the Commission had welcomed the decision by the participants to conclude negotiations on replenishment and restructuring by December 1993. In that connection, the Commission had stressed the importance of improved transparency in the Global Environmental Facility, sufficient flexibility to expand the scope and coverage of the Facility to relevant programme areas of Agenda 21 with global environmental benefits, regular reporting of the Facility to the Commission on its activities, according non-governmental organizations an improved consultative status, and ensuring access to and disbursement of funds on mutually agreed criteria.

21. A similar outcome in relation to the establishment of an inter-sessional ad hoc open-ended working group had emerged from the fifth decision pertaining to technology. The Commission had decided that there was particular need to focus on the dissemination of information, the removal of barriers and creation of incentives, financial support and endogenous capacity-building. The

Commission had emphasized the need for effective interaction and collaborative arrangements with intergovernmental bodies which were of special relevance to the work of the Commission in relation to technology. The Commission had also underlined the importance of dialogue and interaction with relevant intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, the private sector and other major groups to encourage new forms of technology cooperation and partnership in technological areas of particular relevance to developing countries.

22. At its meeting on 1 July 1993, the Bureau had agreed that the ad hoc working group on finance would be composed of Governments, which would nominate their experts. The group would be open-ended and experts nominated need not be government officials. Experts from other non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations concerned with finance should also participate. Support should be given to experts, particularly those from developing countries, on the lines of the arrangements for ad hoc working groups of functional commissions.

23. The arrangements for the ad hoc working group on technology would be similar to those for the finance group. It was essential that the private sector should participate in the work of the group. The groups would meet by February 1994.

24. The sixth decision involved the need for effective inter-agency coordination in the multilateral system to ensure that sustainable development principles were incorporated in the system's programmes and processes.

25. A seventh decision related to the provisional agenda for the next session.

26. The high-level meeting had provided an opportunity for a frank exchange of views and a dialogue on the various issues. The participants had reaffirmed their commitment to the growing global partnership for sustainable development and emphasized the Commission's dynamic role as a central political forum for monitoring and reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21. The high-level segment had provided a strong political impetus to the Commission's activities.

27. The issues discussed at the high-level meeting were clearly spelt out in the Chairman's summary (E/1993/25/Add.1, chap. II). Two points he would emphasize were that it had been agreed that the Commission should also serve as a multilateral institutional focal point for addressing issues related to unsustainable production and consumption patterns and lifestyles in their relation to sustainable development, a topic which was not being addressed by any other intergovernmental body within the United Nations system, and also that a number of Governments had offered to host follow-up meetings, on issues relevant to the multi-year thematic programme of work, during the inter-sessional period. The Commission was mandated to meet once a year, but,

clearly, much work needed to be done during the inter-sessional period. The Bureau and the Secretary-General would be undertaking a series of consultations in that regard. Some donor countries had announced welcome increases in the level of assistance to developing countries.

28. It was clear from the outcome of the Commission's first substantive session that the Bureau would be required to engage in a number of follow-up activities. They had already met on 1 July 1993 and would meet again on 23 July. He had written to those Governments which had indicated their interest in hosting meetings offering advice and guidelines in order to avoid duplication of effort and provide coordination. Based on the successful experience of the first session, the Bureau considered the high-level meeting for the second substantive session should last two days and be scheduled towards the end of the session.

29. The outcome of the first session was extremely gratifying. The ministers and other participants had been determined to cooperate in promoting sustainable development. Notwithstanding their diverse backgrounds and differing points of view, they had been unanimous in expressing determination to work together. The intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations had also played a constructive role and made a useful contribution to the work of the Commission's first session. He hoped the partnership would continue in the years ahead. He believed the Commission was in a strong position to serve as a catalyst, consensus builder and facilitator in addressing issues relating to environment and development. Given the multidisciplinary and multisectoral nature of the issues involved, the Commission had taken a major step forward by providing the necessary leadership. The Bureau stood ready to work closely with delegations and regional and other groups, during the inter-sessional period, in order to prepare for the Commission's second session in May 1994.

30. Mr. URBAIN (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Community and its member States, said that it had grown to be universally recognized that development models which led to the exhaustion of resources and the irreversible pollution of the environment were no longer tenable. That was the consensus that had emerged from UNCED. The concept of sustainable development had become unchallengeable. Economic development and respect for the environment must now go hand in hand.

31. The members of the European Community were particularly gratified that the Secretary-General had taken those new priorities into account in restructuring the economic and social sectors of the Secretariat and in establishing the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. The Department would be responsible for preparing the documentation which would serve as the basis for the work of the intergovernmental bodies. Ensuring that the link between environment and development was recognized throughout the system would be no easy task. The members of the European

Community would give the Under-Secretary-General and his fellow workers their full support, while recognizing that the efforts and activities of member States and non-governmental organizations were also essential to the success of the undertaking.

32. The reform of the Secretariat had coincided with the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The members of the European Community welcomed the spirit of compromise which had prevailed during the negotiations on the Commission's establishment and were ready to make every effort to prevent it from lapsing into ritual and routine. They were eager that it should accomplish substantive work in a spirit of consensus, even in the consideration of difficult topics. The results of the high-level segment of the Commission's first session were encouraging. Although the formula still needed improvement it clearly offered opportunities for genuine debate. The important thing was that the high-level segment should continue to provide the Commission with political impetus, while reflecting the concerns and priorities of the societies concerned.

33. The more technical work of the Commission, before the high-level segment, had made possible the establishment of the main guidelines for national reporting and for coordination throughout the United Nations system in the UNCED follow-up. At the same time, the questions of technology transfer and financial flows had been approached in a realistic and balanced manner, which also gave grounds for satisfaction. In sum, the work of the first session had been successful, given the short time that had elapsed since Rio, the complexity of the Commission's mandate and the innovative character of the debate. The Council should endorse all the Commission's decisions.

34. The members of the European Community had noted the establishment of an Inter-agency Committee on Sustainable Development within ACC. They welcomed the initiative and hoped to be kept regularly informed of the Committee's activities. As far as the follow-up to the first session of the Commission was concerned, they would be in favour of a flexible procedure enabling the Commission's future work, including the thematic programme, to be prepared as effectively and coherently as possible.

35. The Commission was now one of the important organs of the United Nations. The level of the delegations which had attended the first substantive meeting bore witness to the political importance attached to it by the European Community and its member States. They hoped to maintain that level of attendance. The enthusiastic response of the non-governmental organizations was another important factor. In regard to the functioning of the Commission, he recalled that the General Assembly had recognized that the European Community should participate fully, though without the right to vote, in the Commission's work. Consultations were taking place in that connection and there was every hope that a compromise formula would shortly be arrived at. The

Community and its member States had also argued in favour of the Commission's sessions being held alternately in Geneva and New York. They would participate actively in the consultations on that matter.

36. One of the other most important mechanisms which were part of the follow-up to UNCED was the Global Environmental Facility. The negotiations on its definitive structure had been based on guidelines agreed at Rio. In regard to the replenishment of the Facility, the results of the first official donors' meeting in Beijing in May had been encouraging. The timetable for the transition to the definitive phase by the end of the year had been worked out. A consensus was also developing on the order of magnitude of the Facility. It should be borne in mind, however, that the exercise must be considered as a whole. The level of refinancing was linked to the decision-making machinery, just as the timetable for the implementation of the final phase depended on programmatic questions. The two-stage approach identified in the Chairman's conclusions after the Beijing meeting seemed preferable in that regard. The European Community was continuing to follow those discussions with special attention—first, because of the importance of the matter, but also because the innovative arrangements for financing and managing the Facility should be such as to encourage the responsible utilization of multilateral contributions. In addition, the Facility was the best current example of cooperation between the United Nations and the World Bank.

37. The UNEP Governing Council had taken several important decisions concerning the follow-up to UNCED. UNEP obviously had an important part to play in implementing Agenda 21 but there should be an appropriate division of labour between it and the other bodies concerned. UNEP should give priority to the development of environmental law and institutional frameworks for the protection of the environment and to the dissemination of information on the state of the environment in general. The European Community welcomed the fact that UNEP had recognized the importance of the regional dimension of sustainable development. The Community would continue to follow the work of UNEP with the attention it deserved. It also attached great importance to the follow-up in regard to climatic change and biological diversity. Its member States reaffirmed the importance of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and were in favour of measures to bring it into force at an early date. He recalled that Germany had offered to act as host for the first meeting of States parties to the Convention.

38. The Convention on Biological Diversity was also a very important instrument which the Community hoped would receive the largest possible number of ratifications before the end of the year. The Community and its member States were actively engaged in elaborating the necessary legislation to bring the Convention into effect. They would take up the other follow-up mechanisms, in regard to desertification, migratory fish stocks and the sustainable development of small island countries, in due

course. It was important for the Council to continue to be able to form an overall idea of the progress achieved, given its important role of coordination. On the follow-up in regard to forests, the Community and its member States were in favour of the gradual elaboration of the principles agreed to in Rio. Any new international instrument in that connection should take into account the ecological, political and commercial complexities of the question.

39. As far as the operational sector of the United Nations system was concerned, the Community and its member States believed that the concept of sustainable development should be integrated into programmes rather than considered a new subject. Many programmes included an environmental component or had environmental consequences which were not well understood. The interest shown by the Governing Council in the UNDP strategy in support of sustainable development was welcome. The Council had rightly emphasized the partnership between UNDP, the World Bank and UNEP in the framework of the follow-up to UNCED. The Governing Council had also supported the launching of Capacity 21. The donor countries had insisted on specific criteria for the utilization of its resources, including their catalytic and complementary character. They intended to look closely at the implementation of those criteria, including the particular attention to be paid to the least developed countries. That specific mandate was only a partial response to their questions. In managing multilateral aid, the members of the European Community would seek to pursue, together with all interested countries, the gradual reorientation of programmes with a view to the integration of an environmental dimension.

40. In conclusion, he stressed that the terms "development" and "sustainable" were now inseparable. The new structures of the secretariat already reflected that fact. The Community and its member States believed that intergovernmental structures should do the same. They intended to see that the link was maintained in their bilateral assistance programmes, and would continue to attach importance to it in the Commission and in the Council.

41. Mr. HUSLID (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden, said that the promotion of sustainable development was one of the most central challenges of the age. In recent years, important progress had been made through UNCED, the successful negotiation of conventions on climate change and biological diversity, the establishment of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the creation of the Global Environmental Facility. The task of ensuring that action followed the UNCED declarations rested with Governments and with the multilateral system, including the Commission on Sustainable Development.

42. The current situation gave no grounds for complacency. It was unacceptable that large parts of the world's population should be excluded from economic and social

development and suffer poverty, social alienation and environmental degradation. The results of UNCED, and the institutional follow-up, had provided a framework for putting the world on a more sustainable footing, but the work itself remained to be done. To fulfil the commitments made in Rio it was necessary to take action at the country level. The developed countries especially should reorient themselves towards a more resource-efficient society, marked by recycling, reuse and reduced emissions among other things.

43. The Commission had made a good start. The participation of more than 40 Ministers in the high-level segment and the fruitful and constructive political debate had demonstrated the political will of Member States. At its first substantive session, the Commission had agreed on a programme of work, national reporting and a number of other important issues that would be crucial for the implementation and follow-up of UNCED. Nevertheless, the Commission's priorities still needed to be clarified in several areas, and care must be taken to ensure proper preparations for the major issues that the Commission would deal with in the next four years.

44. In that context, the Nordic countries welcomed the offers of a number of Governments to host meetings to prepare for the Commission's next session. Several Nordic countries had also offered to host seminars and workshops in order to contribute to those preparations. The establishment of the two inter-sessional open-ended working groups, to deal with financial resources and access to, and transfer of, technology, would also contribute to the preparations.

45. A number of issues would be particularly important in making sure that the Commission played its intended central coordinating and guiding role. First, the balance between environmental and developmental issues was crucial to the Commission's work, and that balance could best be maintained by an integrated approach to the individual agenda items. A balanced approach would contribute to the achievement of environmental goals and to a fairer distribution of resources and wealth throughout the world. The proposal that the Commission should initiate a debate on the basic issue of changing production and consumption patterns towards a more sustainable basis should be seen against that background. Changes in behaviour were essential for implementing the goals of Agenda 21 and the Commission should not delay in tackling those issues.

46. Secondly, it was important that continued high-level attendance should be maintained. The agenda for future high-level sessions, therefore, should be well-focused and issue-oriented. Agreement on such an agenda should be reached well ahead of time, to allow for proper preparation of important and emerging issues and to attract high-level attendance. At the Commission's first substantive session, the Nordic countries had proposed that the 1994 high-level segment should be devoted to consideration of the interrelationship between economy and environment. Thirdly, the Commission

should approach its programme of work flexibly, so that emerging issues could be taken up as they arose. Fourthly, the action and the changes necessary to achieve the goals of UNCED would require difficult decisions at the national level and would be far from cost-free.

47. If individual Governments were to make those difficult decisions, they needed to be reassured that their national efforts were part of a genuine global partnership in which burdens were shared between countries according to their responsibilities and abilities. To achieve such an atmosphere of confidence, Member States must be able to demonstrate, through the Commission, that national action to promote environment and development was being taken by all countries. In addition, member States needed to be convinced that the financial resources required were likely to become available. The Nordic countries shared the Commission's concern that the general response to UNCED recommendations regarding funding had fallen significantly short of expectations and requirements. All opportunities to increase financial resources should therefore be explored to ensure that Agenda 21 could be implemented. The elements contained in the proposals of the Nordic countries regarding financial resources were still valid.

48. The Nordic countries were generally satisfied with the results of the first substantive session. The real test would come, however, at the 1994 session, when specific chapters of Agenda 21 would be debated. The Nordic countries were confident that all countries would continue the positive and constructive collaboration demonstrated at the first session. They were also confident that Member States would continue to work for an effective follow-up to the UNCED process throughout the United Nations system.

49. Mr. MARKS (United States of America) congratulated the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, and the Chairman of the Commission on their precise and detailed reports, which signalled the successful launch of a major global project.

50. A properly balanced twofold emphasis on national responsibility and national and international partnership was required to ensure success in carrying out the commitments made at UNCED. Voluntary national descriptions of efforts undertaken and experiences gained in applying Agenda 21 would be the key to fostering the necessary intergovernmental dialogue, which, combined with inter-sessional efforts to address the issues of availability of financial resources, would be essential for the success of the Commission's work. His Government reaffirmed its offer to work with Colombia, currently Chairman of the Group of 77, in helping to prepare for the inter-sessional consideration of technology transfer, cooperation and capacity-building. It hoped to be in a position to put forward more specific plans at the forthcoming Assembly session. In considering the inter-sessional agenda for the Commission, it was important

to keep in mind the need for cost-effectiveness and efficiency and the need to stay within the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1994-1995 agreed at the Assembly's forty-seventh session. He looked forward to a rapid decision to note and forward the Commission's report to the General Assembly.

51. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said there was a risk that the impact of the Rio Summit would be weakened by the widespread recession, pressure for resumed growth, the priority accorded to the maintenance of peace, including social peace, and the shift to a market economy in some countries.

52. The food and agriculture sectors were ill placed to surmount those crises and pursue the path marked out by UNCED. They were vulnerable to environmental disasters, their production cycles were long and their products perishable. The difficulty of achieving the target of doubling production in under 20 years was compounded by the fall in agricultural prices and the deterioration of the terms of trade between agriculture and the other sectors of the economy over the past 10 years. In the absence of corrective measures, the liberalization of trade would increase the ecological and economic vulnerability of agriculture in many countries. Rural poverty, which made for environmental degradation in the countryside and mounting poverty and social disorder in the towns, would spread if rural populations were not given more favourable conditions for sustainable development. New forms of support would have to be found for agriculture, particularly in the most disadvantaged regions. At its Conference in November 1993, FAO would present a major study of agriculture to the year 2010 and would continue to provide technical support for the GATT negotiations.

53. At its 1991 Conference, FAO had restructured and concentrated its programmes on priority areas subsequently incorporated in Agenda 21. It had not had to make changes to accommodate its programmes to the Rio recommendations.

54. Unfortunately the financial resources mobilized fell short of the desired goal. In the Commission on Sustainable Development, ACC had drawn attention to the shortfall of resources and the Commission had requested the Council to invite all United Nations bodies to inform it of their priorities and financial needs for the implementation of Agenda 21 and other UNCED recommendations. It would not be easy for the United Nations system to discharge its additional responsibilities in a situation of zero growth in budgets and shrinking extra-budgetary resources. FAO would like to see closer cooperation between the specialized agencies and UNEP with its Fund for the Environment, the Global Environmental Facility and the new Capacity 21 programme of UNDP. Joint action would make it possible to take advantage of specialized agency experience and ensure effective integration in the field of United Nations activities for development and the protection of the

environment. There was a clear need for better coordination of multisectoral and sectoral planning across the wide range of activities involved.

55. While there had been little argument at UNCED about the crucial questions of agriculture and food security, forests, particularly tropical forests, had been the subject of long and difficult debate. There was, he thought, a tendency to look at effects rather than causes. The main cause of deforestation was the search for arable land to cultivate. The most effective way of curtailing it was to enable farmers to achieve sustainable increased production from land already under cultivation, and the countries concerned to earn enough from agricultural exports.

56. Within the limits of available resources, FAO had prepared itself to play an important role in the follow-up to UNCED. It gave its full backing to the Inter-Agency Committee for Sustainable Development and would cooperate closely with the United Nations and other members of the system to ensure a successful follow-up to the Rio Summit.

57. Mrs. CHUDA (Observer for Slovakia) said that her country welcomed General Assembly resolution 47/191 establishing the Commission on Sustainable Development. Although not a member of the Commission, her Government strongly supported its activities and was offering Slovak experts to its open-ended working groups. Since the tasks facing the Commission were not only important but arduous, and the implementation of Agenda 21 would require the active cooperation of all countries, including those in transition, she appreciated the Executive Director of UNEP's assurances that the latter countries would not be left out of the process.

58. While her Government was grateful for the assistance it had received, especially in defining problems, it had not been able to make full use of the services of foreign experts, and some had not been of the calibre required. There had been a tendency to provide technologies to the Central European countries that were better than those previously used, but not of the standard required for sustainable development. Accordingly, her delegation strongly supported the proposal to make one of the working groups responsible for the transfer of technologies, and the offer of the services of Slovak experts related to that working group in particular. In accordance with its commitment to the solution of the global problems involved, her Government was in the process of establishing a national committee for sustainable development. She reiterated her Government's proposal at the seventeenth session of the UNEP Governing Council that the UNEP Regional Office should be established in Bratislava.

59. Mr. BAILLARGEON (Canada) said that his delegation supported the Commission's first report (E/1993/25/Add.1). The decisions made at the first substantive session would give a results-oriented thrust to international sustainable development. Many of them

also figured in the results of the high-level meeting of Ministers held at the end of the session, and, in keeping with General Assembly resolution 47/191, it was important that the outcome of such meetings should be regarded as an integral part of the Commission's decision-making procedure. His delegation particularly welcomed the support given by the Ministers for national plans and strategies, for early implementation of the Forest Principles, and for the establishment of inter-sessional working groups on finance and technology.

60. The groups would play a critical role in preparations for the Commission's second substantive session. Canada was pleased that their deliberations were to focus on the major themes of Agenda 21, and believed that all major organizations concerned, including international financial institutions and intergovernmental organizations should be encouraged to participate. His Government believed that funding for the working groups should be kept within available United Nations resources and should not adversely affect other programmes and initiatives. Efforts should be made to reduce costs by such devices as producing brief preparatory reports to shorten meeting times and discussing common areas of action on relevant themes.

61. He hoped the Council would support the Commission in its central role of monitoring, reviewing and facilitating the implementation of UNCED decisions so as to achieve tangible results for the earth, its ecosystems and its inhabitants. His Government was proud to have played an active role at the Commission's first session and looked forward to working with others to ensure that the Commission would live up to the high expectations it had aroused in 1994.

62. Mr. BELTRAME (Italy) said Italy fully subscribed to the representative of Belgium's statement on behalf of the European Community. He had pleasure in informing the Council that, as an earnest of its commitment to sustainable development, and in preparation for the Commission's second session, his Government would hold an inter-sessional seminar in Rome at some time in the first quarter of 1994 on the treatment of urban and hazardous wastes for countries of the Mediterranean region.

63. Mr. KHADER (United Nations Development Programme) said that the Commission's first session had sent a message of high-level political commitment, cooperation and will to action, and had shown a very encouraging focus on sound and practical solutions to the implementation of Agenda 21. It had also clearly signalled the need for closer and more effective collaboration within the United Nations system. UNDP was committed to pursuing that course, strengthening its partnership with UNEP and working closely with the United Nations, in particular with the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development, in supporting the Commission's work.

64. At the Commission's first session, the Associate Administrator of UNDP had outlined many of the initia-

tives being taken in response to the intention and recommendations of UNCED, including an evaluation of the UNDP contribution, at global and country levels, to the Commission's work. UNDP would continue its dialogue with the developing country Governments and non-governmental organizations to determine specific needs for technical assistance in capacity-building, including ways in which each country could help to strengthen its public sector and civil society to promote and monitor progress towards sustainable development.

65. He reaffirmed the firm commitment of UNDP to implement the mandate, given in Agenda 21 on capacity-building. It would do so through Capacity 21, country programmes and the activities of special funds within the purview of UNDP. UNDP had accepted the responsibility of task managers on capacity-building in the United Nations system, which it would fulfil in close liaison with its agency partners.

66. The Commission on Sustainable Development had made a good start and could be assured of the full support and cooperation of UNDP.

67. Mr. SHIBATA (Japan) said that his delegation endorsed the Commission's report (E/1993/25/Add.1), and welcomed the statements by the Chairman of the Commission and the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development. In that connection, he noted that the declaration of the recent G-7 summit in Tokyo had reaffirmed that environmental issues remained a high priority on its policy agenda despite difficult economic times. It welcomed the successful first meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the progress made towards implementation and ratification of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity by the end of 1993, and on negotiation of a convention on desertification. The Group renewed its determination to secure environmentally sustainable development through an effective follow-up of the fruits of UNCED, including the commitment to publish national action plans by the end of the year. It would work to ensure that the Global Environmental Facility, with necessary improvements, functioned as the financial mechanism to provide funding for the incremental costs of implementing the global environment conventions signed at Rio de Janeiro. It encouraged the multilateral development banks to focus more intensively on sustainable development, to incorporate environmental appraisals into project preparation and to make them publicly available. It looked forward to a successful outcome of the United Nations Conference on Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks. It would continue to seek appropriate internationally agreed arrangements on the management, conservation and sustainable development of forests. It welcomed the analysis being done by OECD on the contribution of environment and energy technologies in meeting global environmental concerns.

68. The statement testified to the importance Japan and the other countries of the Group attached to implementation of the UNCED decisions and recommendations. His Government was determined to go on contributing positively to the work of the Commission, and his delegation would work with the Commission's Bureau, and with the secretariat and other delegations, to ensure progress in the inter-sessional tasks.

69. Mr. RAKOTONAIVO (Madagascar) said that the Council must recognize the urgency of taking action on questions of environment and development, in order to promote sustainable, ecologically rational development. In that regard, his delegation supported the idea of making the Commission a political forum responsible for defining specific action to be taken by Governments and the international community as a whole as well as an agency for implementing decisions. He supported the view that measures to give effect to Agenda 21 should benefit from an international climate conducive to cooperation and partnership and thus to an integrated approach to the world's major economic and social problems. He wished to share with the Council a number of thoughts about the Commission's first two sessions. First, with regard to institutional arrangements, his delegation supported the measures taken or envisaged by bodies of the United Nations system and international organizations, including the financial institutions, to strengthen international cooperation and embody the recommendations stemming from UNCED in their programme of work. The institutions were invited to go on submitting periodic reports on their follow-up activities in conformity with the modules of the multi-year thematic programme of work drawn up by the Commission. Secondly, in order to achieve sustainable development it was essential to ensure, on the one hand, a transfer of ecologically rational technology, cooperation and the development of endogenous capacity and, on the other, the attainment of the objectives set forth by UNCED to that end. The Commission must focus on measures to encourage a wide distribution of information and to promote and, if necessary, finance access to eco-technology on concessional terms.

70. Thirdly, his delegation attached particular importance to the Commission's decisions on the setting up of national machinery for coordination and exchange of information on the implementation of Agenda 21, with a view to constant monitoring and speedy attention to problems of financing and other difficulties encountered by countries. It was essential to evaluate national capacities and assistance requirements, as well as the capacities of the United Nations system, the multilateral financial institutions and other means of financing, for that purpose.

71. With regard to the crucial issue of financing activities for sustainable development, his delegation regretted the hesitant approach of bilateral and multilateral donors in allocating further resources for the various funds and programmes, and wholeheartedly endorsed the comments and recommendations contained in the Commis-

sion's report (E/1993/25/Add.1, chap. I, sect. F). It also stressed the importance of establishing machinery to monitor financial flows and the deliberations of decision-taking bodies with regard to the use of available resources. The Commission must give precise directives, in that regard, to all the financial institutions. His delegation welcomed the Commission's decision, mentioned in paragraph 61 of its report, to establish an inter-sessional ad hoc, open-ended working group, composed of national experts, to assist the Commission in those tasks (*ibid.*, para. 61). It hoped that the working group would carefully study the question of the organic links between the Commission and the financing institutions. It also looked forward to a speedy conclusion of negotiations on the reform and restructuring of the Global Environmental Facility.

72. He reiterated his country's commitment to working towards sustainable development. His Government saw as its first task the raising of people's awareness about the extent of the challenge raised in adopting the Earth Charter and had recently established an Office of Commissioner for the Environment. Madagascar would follow with great interest international action in the field of environment and development, and would strive to give effect to the Commission's recommendations, with particular regard to the information required for the purpose of achieving sustainable development. It looked forward to further assistance from its bilateral and multilateral partners.

73. Mr. AMAZIANE (Morocco) thanked the Chairman of the Commission and the Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development for their statements.

74. The high-level meetings of the Commission should strive to ensure a more fruitful dialogue. Unfortunately, at the Commission's first session the meetings had been largely taken up by lengthy statements. His delegation hoped for a more constructive approach at the next session. On the subject of a multi-year thematic programme of work, his delegation welcomed the decision to have an annual consideration of various cross-sectoral issues, such as the transfer of resources. It also welcomed the decision to begin consideration, at the Commission's second session, of such vital topics as water resources—a crucial issue for a number of countries, including Morocco, which proposed to host a high-level meeting, with the participation of countries from North and South, on that issue, with particular reference to problems in Africa. Morocco hoped that it could count on the assistance of the Under-Secretary-General and of the Commission's Bureau in that regard.

75. With regard to the organizing of information provided by Governments on the implementation of Agenda 21, clear guidelines were essential. The voluntary nature of government contributions had rightly been stressed; nevertheless, the establishment of a systematic provision of information, possibly by means of a questionnaire, would be desirable. The implementation of Agenda 21 would begin at the national level; there must be some means, therefore, for international monitoring of countries' commitments on matters such as financing and technology transfer, and detailed reports should be expected, in particular, from the developed countries, whose impact would be greater. In that regard, his delegation regretted that follow-up action to the outcome of UNCED had not been commensurate with requirements, and that there had even been a falling off in terms of ODA.

76. The international trade situation remained a cause for concern. It was heartening that the G-7 would try to conclude the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations successfully by the end of the year. His delegation also hoped to see extra effort for the purpose of debt conversion to environmental projects. It was disappointed that the G-7's recent statement made no specific reference in that regard but had been confined to a statement of general principles.

77. With regard to the Global Environmental Facility, the planned reorganization must not neglect the aims of Agenda 21, a matter of crucial concern for countries such as Morocco. As for the establishment of a working group on transfer of technology, his delegation reiterated its support for the view that provision should be made to meet the travel expenses of the developing-country participants.

78. His delegation agreed with the Chairman of the Commission that its high-level meetings should seek to focus the Commission's work, and should therefore be convened at the end of each session. It also agreed that, at the Commission's next session, the high-level meeting should have as a topic for consideration the issue of sustainable consumption and production patterns and lifestyles in countries in general and in a developed country in particular, since such an important matter would not be deliberated elsewhere. Lastly, his delegation supported the request that the Council should endorse, without amendment, the recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Council might perhaps look at the matter in greater detail during its resumed session.

The meeting rose at 5.20 p.m.