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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 48th MEETING

Chairman:

Mr. BURKE

(Ireland)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 87: INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO STUDY, MITIGATE AND MINIMIZE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE DISASTER AT CHERNOBYL (continued) (A/C.2/46/L.30/Rev.1)

1. Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukraine), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/46/L.30/Rev.1, entitled "Strengthening of international cooperation and coordination of efforts to study, mitigate and minimize the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster", said that the draft reviewed the activities of the United Nations system and the international community in the aftermath of the Chernobyl disaster and also set the task of further consolidating international efforts. The fact that the draft resolution was sponsored by over 50 countries reflected the increasing international solidarity with the people affected by the Chernobyl disaster. He was grateful to Committee members for their active participation in the preliminary discussions, and hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 77: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION (continued)

(e) ENVIRONMENT (A/46/3, 25, A/46/138-E/1991/52, A/46/156-E/1991/54, A/46/214-E/1991/77, A/46/308, 423, and 615; A/C.2/46/3 and 11)

(f) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (A/46/3, 25, A/46/157-E/1991/55, A/46/268-E/1991/107 and Corr.1, and A/46/380-E/1991/142)

(g) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (A/46/3, 8 and Add.1 and Add.1/Corr.1, and A/46/262-E/1991/96)

2. Mr. MANSFIELD (Deputy Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme), reviewing the progress made in the 20 years since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, said that conservation of the environment had become a vital goal and environment and development were viewed as intertwined, yet a number of serious problems persisted. New findings recently released about ozone layer depletion showed that its rate and scope were far worse than estimated. That crisis must be met with urgent action by Governments to accelerate the phasing-out of controlled substances under the amended Montreal Protocol on substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in order to ensure that the London amendments would enter into force on time, and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) must also accelerate its research and assessment programmes. It was clear, however, that the lessons of the ozone layer crisis had not been learned. If action had been taken when scientists had first indicated, in 1972, that a problem existed, hastily pieced-together response strategies would be unnecessary.

3. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) represented an unprecedented opportunity to move away from reactive crisis management policies to forward-looking, deliberate and cooperative strategies based on costed commitments to action. UNEP was preparing reports for the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on issues including oceans and

(Mr. Mansfield)

coastal areas, international environmental law, toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes, and the protection of the marine environment from land-based sources of pollution. It had prepared a comprehensive report on desertification and was drafting reports of the Secretary-General on financing the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification, the structure and responsiveness of the United Nations in dealing with major environmental issues, and follow-up to General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 on sustainable development.

4. A state-of-the-environment report was also being drafted, with a profoundly disturbing message: ecological destruction was accelerating, and the window of opportunity for reversing that trend was closing. The type of human activity resulting in millions of tons of pollutants being spewed into the atmosphere must be halted. Many of the problems confronting the world - including deforestation, air and water pollution, population growth and desertification - had been understood well before the 1972 Stockholm Conference, while others - such as acid rain, proliferation of hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals, global warming and ozone layer depletion - were more recent. Although destruction of the environment was in fact by no means new and all the arguments had been heard before, not much had changed, except for the fact that now people demanded that action should be taken. They wanted to see clear commitments by the industrialized countries to accept their major responsibility for the deepening ecological crisis. They also wanted to see commitments by developing countries to pursue good housekeeping practices and to develop their capabilities for effective technology assessments, selection and contracting. And they wanted to see commitments by developing countries to leap-frog the destructive types of development of the past several decades.

5. The pivotal issues at the heart of the international environmental agenda - new and additional financial resources to developing countries, and technology transfer - must be squarely addressed. It was not a matter of aid or global philanthropy but of investing for survival. UNEP welcomed the statement by the European Community calling for new financing methods and suggesting the "polluter pays" principle, debt-for-nature swaps and accelerated technology transfer. The UNEP Governing Council had recognized the need for an objective means to facilitate the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to the poorest countries on terms favourable to them. It encouraged reforms in intellectual property rights and urged Governments to ensure that the rules of GATT were reformed to promote, not undermine, environmental protection. Despite the enormous challenges, real progress had begun with the establishment of the Interim Multilateral Ozone Fund and the Global Environment Facility.

6. Other events in 1991, however, underlined how much remained to be done. As the Iron Curtain had lifted, the full extent of the ecological catastrophe facing Eastern and Central Europe and the Soviet Union had become known. The Gulf war had revealed the failings of international accords to guarantee environmental protection. Following the hostilities, UNEP had coordinated an

(Mr. Mansfield)

inter-agency task force to provide technical assessments of environmental damage to the region.

7. Treaties were no guarantee of environmental protection and too often gave only a dangerous illusion of progress. The six treaties dealing with the environment in time of war had not been of much help when the war had erupted. Two permanent members of the Security Council had not yet ratified the 1977 Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Environmental Modification Techniques, and nearly three years after its adoption the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal had not yet entered into force. He urged Governments to ratify existing treaties before the Conference on Environment and Development and to give environmental treaties the same force as disarmament accords, with on-site verification mechanisms and agreed targets and actions.

8. Sustainable development must be made a reality, and the costs of proposed action should be viewed in the light of the costs of inaction. It was important to know the cost of global warming, ozone layer depletion, poverty, pollution and resource degradation to future generations. Environmental resources essential to collective survival must also be valued in economic terms. Neither the success of the Conference nor Governments alone would save the planet. Governments must demonstrate leadership by example and agree to tougher regulations, market adjustments, international standards, economic reforms and clear commitments to action.

9. Mr. BRANNER (Director, United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office) said that the report of the Secretary-General on the situation of countries stricken by desertification and drought in Africa (A/46/268) reflected the effects of climate and desertification on water resources, agriculture, livestock production, food supply, land use, nutritional levels, and rural and national economies. Desertification affected the economic status and future prospects of most African countries, with varying degrees of severity. The report summarized major initiatives to redress the situation and contained conclusions and recommendations. The Secretary-General's report on implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (A/46/380) summarized overall UNEP policies on and activities relating to desertification.

10. The overall picture emerging from those reports was not encouraging. Lack of both financial and human resources was a contributing factor, since the countries prone to desertification were among the poorest in the world and the assistance they had received had not been commensurate with their needs. A substantial transfer of resources in itself, however, would not be enough, since approaches to the problem of land degradation had not been effective. Planning and coordination was, therefore, another factor. It had been difficult to provide the social and physical environment that enabled and motivated the individual land user. Providing an enabling environment

(Mr. Branner)

required sufficient knowledge of the interplay between different production systems, the cause/effect of different land use and tenure systems, the consequences of different pricing systems and improved knowledge of the status of natural resource.

11. The UNCED process and its follow-up should lead to a better understanding of the links between poverty and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources. It should help countries with threatened resource bases to identify areas for internal action and lead to a better understanding of the resources required to reverse the process. In many cases, an effort now to conserve resources would be much less costly than future efforts after resources had been overexploited.

12. The United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office had contributed to significant progress in several areas. A process of harmonization among international organizations in support of development and implementation of strategic frameworks for the management of natural resources and the environment was under way. The concern for ecological and environmental monitoring was being addressed more appropriately through integrated environmental systems. Cooperation with the Sahara-Sahel Observatory had made it possible to produce the first comprehensive compilation of information monitoring the desertification process, covering some 20 countries. Progress had been made towards greater popular participation in natural resources management through better project design and a forward-looking programming approach. The Office hoped that the UNCED process would enhance those efforts and contribute to greater mobilization of the international community to address major problems.

13. Mr. RAMACHANDRAN (Executive Director, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)) introduced the report of the Commission on Human Settlements on the work of its thirteenth session (A/46/8) and the second report of the Commission on the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 (A/46/8/Add.1). He also referred to the report on living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory (A/46/262). That report focused on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 44/174, for which the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development was primarily responsible.

14. The thirteenth session of the Commission on Human Settlements, held in Harare, Zimbabwe from 29 April to 8 May 1991, had been extremely well attended. About 500 delegates representing 86 States, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies and agencies had participated, 24 of them at the ministerial level. One of the Commission's chief responsibilities was to coordinate the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 at the intergovernmental level. To that end, the Commission had conducted a detailed review based on progress reports submitted by Governments and international agencies. While the situation in certain countries had improved, the fact remained that one fifth of the

(Mr. Ramachandran)

world's population lacked adequate shelter - and such factors as rising population, rapid urbanization and stagnating, or even diminishing economic capacity in many developing countries threatened to make matters worse. The Commission had therefore recommended to the General Assembly that a second United Nations conference on human settlements (Habitat II) should be held in 1996 or 1997 to mark the twentieth anniversary of the first Habitat Conference in Vancouver. That recommendation had been endorsed by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session in July 1991.

15. The Commission had also conducted a review of two substantive themes. The first theme had been the significance of human settlements and the Global Strategy for the concept of sustainable development, with special emphasis on the relationship between economic development, improving the living conditions of the poor, and the management and planning of settlement. The second theme had been the use of energy by households, and in construction and in production of building materials, with emphasis on new, renewable and non-polluting energy sources.

16. The Commission had reviewed operational activities for development, shelter problems of populations affected by extreme poverty, the promotion of the advancement of women in human settlements development and management, and the strengthening of cooperation between the Centre and other bodies of the United Nations system, intergovernmental bodies outside the system and non-governmental organizations.

17. As the overall focus of the thirteenth session had been on the linkages between human settlements and sustainable development, the Commission had devoted a considerable amount of time to elaborating inputs for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. In an omnibus resolution addressing such topics as shelter, water supply, sanitation, waste management, energy, transportation and the use of environment-friendly building materials and construction technology, the Commission had urged the Conference to consider human settlements as both a distinct subject area and a cross-sectoral issue. Thus, at its third session, the Preparatory Committee for the Conference had indeed made human settlements a distinct programme under Agenda 21 and emphasized the human settlements aspects of other programme areas, such as land and freshwater resources management and the management of coastal zones. That move reflected the fact that human settlements constituted the living and working environment of all people. For example, energy consumption was concentrated in human settlements, making them a source of environmental degradation.

18. However, other development goals might also be furthered by increased attention to human settlements. Health, for example, would be vastly improved if solutions were found to overcrowded housing which lacked clean water and sanitation facilities. The construction of housing and infrastructure could be a major source of employment and income generation for semi-skilled and unskilled labour, thereby helping to eradicate poverty. The construction of

(Mr. Ramachandran)

shelter would also serve to alleviate the most classic manifestation of poverty - poor living conditions. Moreover, disaster mitigation and prevention measures could best be carried out in human settlements and within a human settlements framework. Lastly, there was a direct linkage between human settlements and education, the key to human resources development and capacity-building. Urban slums and impoverished rural communities were not conducive to learning. Children growing up in those environments had no quiet moment or quiet place for concentrated studying.

19. Paradoxically, important as human settlements were to practically every aspect of human endeavour, they did not receive sufficient attention from Governments. That was reflected in the comparatively low allocation of official development assistance to the sector. United Nations figures for 1990 showed that only 1.9 per cent of funding from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had been allocated to human settlements projects and programmes, and the figures for bilateral assistance told much the same story. None the less, while representing only 1.7 per cent of total UNDP expenditure in 1990, projects executed by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) (UNCHS Habitat) had accounted for over 24.5 per cent of the total follow-up investment commitments. That was by far the highest rate of investment return per dollar of technical assistance among all UNDP-assisted development sectors.

20. "Enablement", "capacity-building" and "participation" were the keywords in the strategy for meeting the rising human settlements challenge. "Enablement" meant that Governments must serve as catalysts for the many, not the few. In that context, he welcomed the adoption of an enabling approach by an increasing number of developing countries as they implemented the Global Strategy. "Capacity-building" was particularly important in rapidly growing urban areas, where, increasingly, cities must plan, develop and administer in the place of central Governments. The importance of "participation", especially the participation of women, had been highlighted in the two decades since the Vancouver Conference.

21. The provision of adequate shelter for all - as proclaimed in the Global Strategy - was one action area designated by the Commission for priority consideration at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. The theme gave recognition to the fact that the greatest environmental degradation in the world was suffered by the 1 billion people who lacked decent housing. Another action area was the provision of developmental and environmental infrastructure - water supply, sanitation, and waste disposal facilities. Yet another was the provision of affordable, environment-friendly energy-supply and transportation services. Other priority areas included the environmentally sound management of land resources; the environment-friendly development of the construction sector, using indigenous natural resources; human-resources and institutional capacity-building for environmentally sound settlements development; and management of human settlements and human settlement networks in a manner capable of reconciling developmental and environmental imperatives.

(Mr. Ramachandran)

22. In the course of the final decade of the twentieth century, considerable political will would be required to deal with major human settlements challenges, such as homelessness, even in industrialized countries; overpopulation of major cities in developing countries; a lack of even the most basic amenities in rural settlements; urban transportation; and the use of energy sources other than fuelwood in rural households.

23. Mr. VAN SCHAİK (Netherlands), speaking on behalf of the States members of the European Community, referred to an earlier statement in the Second Committee by the Netherlands Minister for Development Cooperation on behalf of the European Community in which he had emphasized the importance of joint responsibility. That concept was certainly applicable to the issues of environment, desertification and drought, and human settlements. Environmental problems, for example, were often transboundary in nature and an area in which it was particularly important for the industrialized countries to set a good example. The many substantive decisions taken by the UNEP Governing Council at its sixteenth session illustrated the kind of concerted action that was needed. UNEP could make an effective contribution to the Conference on Environment and Development by providing it with substantive inputs. Strong input from UNEP and various United Nations bodies, combined with the political will of the negotiating parties, would be vital in ensuring that conventions on climate change and biological diversity were signed at the Conference. The state-of-the-environment report being prepared by UNEP might come as a shock to the world, for the report was expected to attest to continuing environmental degradation. It should provide an important scientific basis for measures to be decided at the Conference. The UNEP report on the implementation and financing of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification was expected to give fresh impetus to the struggle against desertification and drought. UNEP should work closely with the Conference secretariat in order to ensure consistency between the texts submitted to the UNEP Governing Council at its special session and to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference at its fourth session. In general, UNEP should strengthen its role in the fields of coordination, dissemination of information and research on desertification.

24. The European Community and its member States were firmly committed to supporting the struggle against desertification and drought, and welcomed the priority accorded to sustainable land use and to desertification and drought in the agenda of the Conference. They hoped that, in future, programmes to combat desertification would be more action-oriented. That, of course, would necessitate adequate financial resources. The activities of existing organizations such as the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office, the Permanent Inter-State Committee on Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Club du Sahel should be strengthened. The initiative to establish a Sahara-Sahel Observatory was interesting. Furthermore, the fact that desertification and drought were a priority item on the agenda of the current session of the General Assembly was to be welcomed and the Assembly should firmly support the UNEP Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.



(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

25. Desertification and drought must be viewed in the broader context of land degradation and its direct and indirect causes, which were of both a technical and a social and economic nature. Combating desertification must be an integral component of dryland development, planning and management of land resources, and strategies to deal with population pressure and poverty. Sustainable land use must be at the centre of any policy aimed at controlling desertification and increasing food production on land currently in production in developing countries, and should be applied to all forms of agriculture. Sustainable land use policies should balance energy, input, capital, fertilizers, pesticides and traditional technologies, and should be adapted to local circumstances.

26. In the area of human settlements, Governments must formulate comprehensive and enabling policies in order to deal with explosive urbanization - an issue which promised to be dominant in the twenty-first century. In that connection, the Global Strategy had been instrumental in bringing about a change in approach. The European Community and its member States supported the work of the Commission on Human Settlements and welcomed the outcome of its thirteenth session. They also appreciated its readiness to participate actively in the preparations for the Conference on Environment and Development. They noted with satisfaction that the issue of human settlements would be taken up separately in the UNCED preparatory process. Agenda 21 must promote the integration of environmental concerns in the human settlements policies of the Commission and other agencies, in the context of, inter alia, the UNCHS Habitat/World Bank/UNDP Urban Management Programme. The European Community and its member States welcomed the decisions to that effect by the Preparatory Committee at its third session and looked forward to the report which the Secretary-General of the Conference, in cooperation with the Executive Director of the Commission, would submit to the Preparatory Committee at its fourth session.

27. As human settlements promised to be a major issue in the 1990s and beyond, the European Community and its member States noted with interest the proposal for a conference in 1996 or 1997, 20 years after the initial Vancouver Conference on Human Settlements. Such a conference could provide an opportunity to review national and international trends in human settlements programmes, conduct a mid-term review of the implementation of the Global Strategy and elaborate recommendations for future action. The European Community and its member States looked forward to the report by the Secretary-General, in consultation with the Executive Director of the Commission, on the objectives, content and scope of the proposed conference that was to be submitted to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session. They hoped that like the Economic and Social Council, the General Assembly would endorse the Commission's report on its thirteenth session on the understanding that the Committee of Permanent Representatives to the Commission remained informal.

(Mr. Van Schaik, Netherlands)

28. In conclusion, he wished to inform the Second Committee that the European Community had recently taken a decision to end drift-net fishing with nets longer than 2.5 kilometres in Community waters and the high seas. The decision, which would take effect on 1 June 1992, would be applicable in the North-East Atlantic by the end of 1993 - unless it could be scientifically determined that there would be no risk to the environment - and would be implemented by legislation.

29. Ms. SAAD (Egypt) said that her delegation's views on the sub-items under discussion had been outlined in an earlier statement to the Committee. Her delegation attached great importance to the sub-items dealt with in recent days, especially the issue of the environment. The report of the UNEP Governing Council (A/46/25) covered all aspects of international cooperation in the field of environment, reflected the valuable contribution made, for example, by the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on Environment and Development and by the negotiations on climate change and biological diversity. The UNEP Governing Council would no doubt contribute further to the preparatory process at its special session in February 1992.

30. Mr. MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See) said that the decision to convene the Conference on Environment and Development had been motivated by the need to counteract the threat to the environment and, at the same time, to address the just demands of developing countries for industrialized development. The attack on the environment took many forms, such as the pollution of land and seas with hazardous and toxic wastes, unsound agricultural, forestry and fishing practices, the uncontrolled destruction of animal life and reckless use of natural resources. In particular, the entire international community must take measures to halt the pollution of the atmosphere that sustained life on earth.

31. Since the beginning of the industrial revolution, mankind had been conducting a gigantic, uncontrolled experiment with the earth's atmosphere, which might already have changed irretrievably the future course of the planet. It had been predicted that the earth's temperature might increase up to 2 to 6 degrees centigrade by the middle of the next century, which left little time for effective countermeasures. Perhaps the most serious difficulty in countering man-made changes to the atmosphere lay in the fact that those changes were not an event, like the eruption of a volcano, but a slow process that people might tend to ignore.

32. The technological civilization enjoyed only by privileged nations and peoples posed a danger to the planet. The uncontrolled burning of fossil fuels released gases into the atmosphere that could increase the earth's temperature. Global warming could adversely affect agricultural production and might also induce a significant sea-level rise. The chloro-fluorocarbons released by industry rose into the stratosphere and were destroying the ozone layer over Antarctica. The flood of ultraviolet radiation let through the hole in the ozone layer damaged not only neighbouring countries but also marine life.

(Mr. Martino, Observer, Holy See)

33. Since no one nation or one particular generation was responsible for the damage to the environment, it was not the time to postulate that any one entity or nation should or could rectify it. The phenomenon was transnational and intergenerational, the first of its kind to affect humanity as a whole.

34. The implications of environmental degradation were global, and mankind must adopt radically new ways of thinking if it was to fulfil its role as steward of creation. In an interdependent environment, regional - and even national - considerations were outmoded notions. The current crisis required a new solidarity between the industrialized and the developing countries in order to ensure the rational use of resources and to promote a peaceful and healthy environment for all.

35. Mr. AL-AWADI (Kuwait) said that the grave environmental catastrophe in Kuwait demonstrated how insanity and destructiveness could jeopardize the future of humanity. In Kuwait, more than 700 burning oil wells were emitting toxic gases into the atmosphere, causing immediate and future health hazards. The outpouring of oil from wells had created huge lakes of oil that had destroyed the ground below their surface and had killed all forms of life that had existed in those areas. In addition, the millions of barrels of oil that had been poured into the sea had endangered marine life-cycles and had polluted beaches.

36. The mines and booby-traps and other munitions and ordnance used by the Iraqi occupiers had created other difficult, life-threatening problems. Hundreds of people had already suffered as a result of those dangerous materials. Even after the liberation of Kuwait, many Kuwaitis continued to fear that they might suffocate from the vast amount of smoke pouring into the atmosphere day and night. The Iraqi forces of aggression had further damaged the environment of Kuwait by digging hundreds of kilometres of trenches and pits and placing barbed wire and mines throughout the country.

37. The catastrophic state of the environment in Kuwait required a great deal of cooperation and coordinated action, and his delegation urged the international community to provide all possible means of assistance to help Kuwait deal with the consequences of the disaster. Efforts had already been undertaken by Kuwait and neighbouring countries whose environments had also been seriously damaged. Kuwait was grateful for the very well-coordinated efforts of United Nations agencies, in particular UNEP. The international community could continue to assist Kuwait by carrying out a detailed survey and assessment of damage, helping to prepare for the future effects of environmental pollution on human health, rehabilitating land polluted by oil, and assessing the damage to the marine environment and undertaking measures for its rehabilitation.

38. Mr. HADDAD (World Bank) said that, in recent years, the World Bank had stepped up its environmental activities. In fiscal year 1991, more than half of all World Bank loans had contained environment-related components.

(Mr. Haddad, World Bank)

Thirteen projects, totalling \$1.6 billion and representing close to 7 per cent of total Bank lending for the year, had dealt primarily with environmental concerns.

39. The World Bank had supported the establishment of the Global Environment Facility and the related Interim Multilateral Ozone Fund in 1990. The purpose of the first three-year pilot stage was to support projects in developing countries that addressed four concerns: reducing global warming, preserving biological diversity, protecting international waters and preventing the further depletion of the ozone layer. Twenty-five countries from both the industrialized and the developing world had already committed \$1.3 billion to the three-year initiative. Twenty-six investment and technical assistance projects, totalling over \$250 million, had been submitted for review, and another \$200 million work programme would be considered in December. Several projects were scheduled to be approved in the near future.

40. A cornerstone of the World Bank's environmental activities was its environmental assessment policy that required the assessment of all projects that might have a significant negative impact on the environment. Nearly half of all the Bank's loans approved in fiscal year 1991 had undergone either full or limited environmental assessment.

41. The World Bank had recently issued one policy paper on forestry and two directives. The policy paper represented the Bank's new approach to forest activities, which favoured more people-oriented and environmental initiatives. Lending for the protection and environmentally sound development of forests was expected to increase to over \$400 million for fiscal years 1992 to 1995. The first operational directive was intended to minimize the need for resettlement and to ensure that, when resettlement was unavoidable, displaced persons would be adequately relocated. The second directive would ensure that indigenous people were not adversely affected by Bank projects.

42. A major aspect of the World Bank's environmental work in recent years had been its greater emphasis on overall policy measures that influenced behaviour. Research projects were being conducted in order to determine the effects of trade, fiscal and development policies on the environment, and numerous environmental action plans and sector-specific analyses of environmental issues were being completed. Policy and adjustment loans with an environmental focus were also being made.

43. While the World Bank's principal focus would continue to be on environmental problems at the local and national level in developing countries, increasing attention would be paid to the solution of global environmental issues. In order to carry out those activities, the Bank had expanded its environment staff to over 130 professionals. Further recruitment was anticipated, and internal procedures and policies were being reviewed and strengthened.

44. Mr. AJAVON (Togo) said that his delegation fully endorsed the views on sub-item (e) expressed by the representative of Ghana on behalf of the Group of 77.

45. The decision to convene the Conference on Environment and Development was most welcome, and demonstrated that the international community had finally acknowledged that poverty and the frightening pace of environmental degradation were as serious a threat to mankind as nuclear weapons. Rapid population growth and accelerating industrial production placed immeasurable pressures on the environment and the earth's resources, causing environmental degradation of many kinds.

46. His delegation was deeply concerned at that situation and welcomed efforts under way to elaborate national policies, strategies and plans for sustainable and ecologically sound development. It especially appreciated the work undertaken in that regard by organizations in the United Nations system, particularly by the World Bank, UNEP, UNDP, the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations, the World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Preparatory Committee for the Conference on Environment and Development, the International Civil Aviation Organization, the World Health Organization and the World Meteorological Organization. His delegation agreed that attention should be focused on the major environmental problems identified by UNEP.

47. His country had been among those which had vigorously protested against the transboundary movement of hazardous and toxic wastes to countries lacking the technology to dispose of them, and had welcomed the signature of the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management within Africa of Hazardous Wastes.

48. His country's serious problems with coastal erosion and deforestation had led his Government to accord priority to environmental protection and establish a ministry of the environment. Reforestation activities had been initiated and an environmental code had been adopted to help protect animals and vegetation. Recognizing the value of preventive action, his Government particularly welcomed the UNEP recommendations calling for an increase in the collection, analysis and dissemination of scientific information and data concerning major ecological problems.

49. The fact that the Governments of poor developing countries faced serious difficulties in their attempt to convince their populations that some of their actions were environmentally harmful showed that poverty was both a cause and a consequence of environmental degradation. The efforts undertaken by States and the international community to deal with environmental problems pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 42/186, 42/187 and 44/227 were commendable. However, the developing countries must have sufficient financial resources to combat poverty before they could achieve environmental protection objectives. Concomitant action must be taken with respect to technology transfers and technical cooperation, particularly through training and research programmes.

(Mr. Ajavon, Togo)

Efforts to reduce poverty in the developing countries should focus on promoting food security and self-sufficiency, self-sufficiency with respect to energy, and access to primary health care and education. Appropriate action was also needed with regard to world trade and the indebtedness of the developing countries. Resources released as a result of disarmament should be used in the service of mankind, with a view to a more just and balanced economic order which made man the focus of attention.

50. Mr. VALENZUELA (Honduras), speaking on behalf of his own delegation and those of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama, underscored their concern at the worsening economic conditions in the developing countries which, along with increased population growth and rapid urbanization, had compounded housing shortages, causing serious social, economic and environmental problems.

51. The Vancouver Conference on Human Settlements, held in 1976, had been the point of departure for multilateral action to confront the housing shortage and meet the basic needs of families. The adoption of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 by the General Assembly at its forty-third session had been one of the major contributions in that field. Technical cooperation activities focusing on housing had increased significantly during the past six years, with support from UNDP trust funds and UNCHS (Habitat) and contributions from interested Governments. In Latin America, a wide range of housing-related issues was being addressed in 46 projects under way in 14 countries, which were being implemented with assistance from UNCHS (Habitat) in cooperation with UNDP, the World Bank and Governments of States members of the European Community. The Central American countries supported the "sustainable cities" project under way in 15 cities in Asia, Africa, Eastern Europe and Latin America to study housing strategies and deal with uncontrolled population growth.

52. They also welcomed the human settlements training activities financed by the World Bank and the European Economic Community. A number of Central American countries had declared housing construction a national priority, and they welcomed the active support of international institutions for their efforts. Programmes relating to human settlements focused not only on areas on the periphery of major cities, but also on housing construction in rural areas, complemented by the required public services and infrastructure projects.

53. The consolidation of democracy in Central America was fostering cooperation among the Governments of the region in confronting the social problems of their populations. They approached the housing shortage from a broad perspective, recognizing that in addition to shelter, it was important to provide, for example, potable water, electricity, health care, education and infrastructure.

(Mr. Valenzuela, Honduras)

54. Another successful project in Central America entailed the construction of rural housing by the future occupants themselves, organized by farmers' cooperatives. The project was a model which had attracted interest in countries outside the region and was supported by international organizations and the United Nations. Governments in Central America had made structural adjustments in their economies to deal with their serious economic problems, and the populations affected by those measures received assistance in integrated programmes which addressed social investment, housing and environmental needs. At their tenth summit meeting in July, the Presidents of the Central American countries had decided to establish a Central American council on housing and human settlements in order to coordinate efforts in the region, in close cooperation with social service institutions.

55. In conclusion, he expressed appreciation to the European Community and the organizations in the United Nations system - particularly UNDP, UNEP, the United Nations Population Fund, UNCHS (Habitat) and the World Bank - for their contribution to the region's national housing programmes.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.