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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 42nd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 18 July 1995, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Kamal (Pakistan) Mr. Papadatos (Greece),
Vice-President, took the Chair

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

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES,
CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (agenda item 6) (continued)

- (d) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)
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Mr. HANSEN (Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and
Emergency Relief Coordinator), introducing the report of the Secretary-General
on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR)
(A/50/201-E/1995/74), said that it was being submitted in response to the
specific request by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session for a
progress report on the implementation of the mid-term review and the initial
proposals for the second IDNDR world conference.

Natural disasters constituted an area where prevention was neither
impossible nor even very difficult and good progress could be made if the will
and resources existed. The prevention of very costly and damaging
consequences was the objective of the natural disasters reduction activities
of IDNDR and the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA). The past 12 months
had been marked by a constructive and open dialogue between the IDNDR
secretariat and Governments. The Secretary-General had extended the mandate
of the IDNDR inter-agency United Nations Steering Committee and DHA had
brought closer together the IDNDR secretariat and the Disaster Mitigation

Branch, under the conceptional umbrella of a Disaster Reduction Division, with a view to ensuring the maximum synergy of established expertise and the bridging of humanitarian and development considerations that were crucial in that regard.

Cooperation between the international and national levels within the IDNDR framework had continued to gain momentum as a result of the Yokohama Conference. Following the Conference, particular emphasis was being placed on the application of disaster-prevention concepts and on practical and community-level work.

DNH/IDNDR had been nominated task manager for the action programme for small island developing States by the Commission for Sustainable Development. That was a logical conclusion of the Yokohama Conference and its follow-up. Natural-disaster reduction was closely interrelated with environmental protection, natural-resource management and sustainable development.

An important aspect of the report dealt with the strategy and action plan for the second half of the Decade. The presentation was concise and attempted to map out a structured process of a multitude of closely connected activities - sectoral and cross-sectoral - to be executed at all levels - community, national, subregional, regional and international. The follow-up work should be at once very practical and keep in mind the vision of a safer future.

However, to ensure the success of the process, it must be supported by all those involved in IDNDR. If such support was forthcoming the last four years of the Decade would, he hoped, lead to what those involved in the IDNDR had been seeking: a safer world for the twenty-first century.

Ms. WALLER-HUNTER (Director of the Division for Sustainable Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the first half of the 1990s (A/50/213-E/1995/87), recalled that the Member States had committed themselves in 1980 to achieving substantial improvement in the standards and levels of services in drinking water supply and sanitation by the year 1990. When reviewing the achievements of the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade in 1990, the General Assembly had expressed its deep concern that, notwithstanding the Decade's successes, the rate of progress remained slow and insufficient to satisfy the needs of the poor in urban and rural areas by the year 2000.

The follow-up report prepared in accordance with General Assembly resolution 45/181 confirmed the findings submitted to the General Assembly in 1990, namely, that some 1.11 billion people in developing countries lacked access to a safe water supply and 2.87 billion lacked access to sanitation. With the exception of Asia and the Pacific, for rural water supply, and western Asia, for urban water, the rate of progress that would be needed to achieve full service coverage by the year 2000 would have to be much higher than the current rates of increase witnessed since 1990. The situation was particularly serious in Africa, where an estimated 380 million people lacked access to safe water and some 462 million lacked access to sanitation. Equally serious was the situation concerning rural sanitation in the Asia and Pacific region, where only 15 per cent of the population was reported as receiving suitable services, leaving some 1.8 billion people lacking access to sanitation.

While the situation concerning drinking water supply was far from encouraging, the situation concerning sanitation was positively alarming. Available data suggested that a continuation of the current trend might well lead to a decrease in the percentage of people in urban areas, in all regions, having sanitation services and a significant increase in the number of people without services. The relative number of rural dwellers with access to sanitation in developing countries remained desperately low and the ranks of the unserved would continue to swell unless remedial action was taken. The lack of sanitation facilities, coupled with inadequate sewerage and waste-treatment facilities, particularly in and around large urban concentrations, was creating serious surface and/or groundwater pollution problems.

The Ministerial Conference on Drinking Water and Environmental Sanitation, convened by the Government of the Netherlands in March 1994, had reviewed the situation and stressed that a business-as-usual approach would not be enough to meet the ultimate goal of providing safe water and suitable sanitation for all. Its Action Programme had been endorsed by the Commission on Sustainable Development in 1994. The recommendations contained in the Action Programme, as well as those stemming from the Global Consultation on Safe Water and Sanitation for the 1990s, held at New Delhi in September 1990, were pivotal to the achievement of significant progress in water supply and sanitation.

The implementation of the Conference's recommendation concerning the assessment of the current water-resource situation with a view to producing an inventory of the current situation and an identification of problems and constraints was equally urgent. It needed to be followed by the formulation and implementation of legal and institutional reforms and capacity-building programmes designed to produce an enabling environment for the management of water resources in accordance with the recommendations in chapter 18 of Agenda 21.

Current experience through the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Programme indicated that the capacity of the majority of developing countries to monitor the situation concerning water supply and sanitation coverage, including the reliability of services and frequency of breakdowns, remained very limited.

In the course of the International Water Supply and Sanitation Decade and ensuing years, it had become evident that the provision of water supply and sanitation services for all could not depend exclusively on public investment. A significant increase in the provision of services could come about only with the active involvement of the private sectors, local communities and through the generation of financial resources by means of cost-recovery measures.

The seriousness of the situation could not be over emphasized. Governments and communities needed to devote priority attention to solving those problems in order to avert major health and environmental problems, and the international community must intensify its efforts to provide financial and technical support to the developing countries. Special assistance to African Governments with respect to both water supply and sanitation was needed to achieve a dramatic acceleration in the provision of services.

The issue of providing safe water and sanitation to the urban and rural poor was inextricably linked with the issue of poverty alleviation. As long as people lived in conditions of absolute poverty, it was highly unlikely that a sustainable solution to the provision of water and sanitation services could be found. Income- and employment-generating schemes for the poor would improve their capacity to pay for such services. By the same token, the design of water supply and sanitation schemes should take into account their potential as catalysts for development.

Mrs. TIMOTHY (Assistant Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development: gender issues

in macroeconomic policy-making and development planning (E/1995/75), said that the focus of the report was on gender as a variable in macroeconomic and microeconomic policy analysis and formulation. Development analysts had increasingly come to understand that adding women as an after-thought in development models was totally inadequate and resulted in a distortion of the model and had realized that the success of development was highly contingent on the participation of women in the economy.

Failure to identify women as a key variable in economic development was to overlook an important target for policy improvement. The pressing problems of poverty, high-fertility rates, illiteracy and suboptimal economic performance could be more effectively addressed by recognizing the important contribution of the female population and by formulating gender policies to create the enabling environment to support women's economic role.

An increasing amount of information had enabled analysts to view the internal dynamics of the household and made it clear that the contribution of women to the household was critical to development. Policies that recognized that fact and addressed the obstacles women faced in maximizing their own welfare and that of their dependants had given a new boost to development.

In the preparations for the imminent Fourth World Conference on Women, renewed emphasis had been placed on the importance of the gender dimension in development thought. Operational approaches that targeted women entrepreneurs, created credit opportunities for women and ensured the access of women to markets had proved to be a stimulus to overall economic growth.

The full report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly would contain an in-depth review of the gender dimension of various approaches to taxation, trade liberalization, labour relations and structural adjustment. It would argue that, failing explicit recognition of the relevance of gender to economic policy-making and its analytical foundation, the social costs of misallocation of resources were likely to reduce the impact of policy reforms. It would also argue that equity and efficiency were not necessarily mutually exclusive and could be enhanced by introducing gender as a variable in economic-policy formulation and implementation.

Dr. BERTOZZI (World Health Organization) referred to the note by the Secretary-General on progress in the implementation of the global AIDS strategy (A/50/175-E/1995/57) and a note by the Secretary-General on the Joint and Co-Sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (E/1995/71). The

Director-General of WHO had submitted the first document to the Council in response to a General Assembly resolution on the activities carried out by WHO in 1993 and 1994 to implement the global AIDS strategy. The document began with an overview of the epidemic, pointing out that, at the end of 1994, nearly 20 million men, women and children throughout the world had been infected with the human immunodeficiency virus and that approximately half had been infected during adolescence and young adulthood. It went on to discuss the support for prevention activities. For a substantial reason, focus had been on care in the home and the community for persons living with HIV and AIDS. It should be noted that a vaccine development unit had been working in Brazil, Uganda and Thailand to prepare the way for trials of HIV vaccines, one of which had already begun in Thailand.

Chapter III of the report detailed the activities of organizations of the United Nations system other than WHO.

Mr. KABONGO (Joint Inspection Unit) introducing the note by the Secretary-General transmitting the Unit's report on United Nations system support for science and technology in Africa (E/1995/19), said that, since the adoption of the Vienna Programme of Action in 1979, there had been increasing agreement that economic and social development and competitiveness were vitally dependent on scientific and technological progress. However, the gap between the industrialized and developing countries had not ceased to widen, in spite of the mandate given to the United Nations system by the Programme to strengthen the scientific and technological capacity of the developing countries, and the Joint Inspection Unit had endeavoured to establish what the contribution of the system had in fact been.

The results of a thorough evaluation of some projects carried out in Africa were contained in the report, which was one of three; the second, devoted to Asia and the Pacific, had been completed and would shortly be published while the third on Latin America was due in 1996. In preparing the report on Africa, the Inspectors had limited their field of investigation to support given by organizations in the system to strengthening scientific and technological institutions, and had visited selected project sites in various African countries.

The following were the principal conclusions the Unit had reached. The first was, surprisingly enough, that, 16 years after the adoption of the Vienna Programme, the organizations of the United Nations system did not share

the same conception or definition of science and technology. The report indicated the different definitions prevalent in each agency. While it might be argued that the conceptual differences were linked to the varying nature of each agency's mandate and might favour productive complementarities in the field, the Inspectors had reached the opposite conclusion. The absence of a single conceptual framework had proved a serious obstacle to any attempt at strategic and operational coordination or programmes.

The second conclusion was that the concept of technology transfer was equally poorly defined and implemented by United Nations agencies that placed the emphasis on the technical input provided, such as experts, equipment, and technical documentation, and were not sufficiently interested in the dynamic and interactive aspect of inputs, their dissemination throughout the productive sectors, and their impact on the development process. The majority of projects had not succeeded in keeping in touch with the socio-economic environment, more particularly the private sector, of the countries concerned.

The third conclusion was that the preparation and execution of projects were too inflexible and did not make due allowance for the social and cultural environment, the scientific and technological capacities of recipient countries, or the capacity of Governments to assure the lasting viability of projects once the assistance of the executing agencies had been withdrawn.

The fourth conclusion was that only a very small number of projects had been conceived and executed as integral parts of a national or subregional programme. The adoption of a programme approach was impeded either by ignorance of the concept on the part of executing agencies or by the practice of adapting the objectives of projects to financial resources available for execution within a given period, and not to a wider programme entailing technical and financial inputs over an indefinite period.

The final, and more general, conclusion related to the basic political, economic and educational preconditions for the development of science and technology in Africa. Political commitment and stability and incentive policies for the private sector were indispensable. The political and economic reforms proceeding in many African countries over recent years were very promising in that regard.

Equally important was a fuller realization of the fundamental role of science and technology in development - indeed in economic survival. That realization would entail a considerable raising of technical-education

standards, particularly at the intermediate and secondary levels, and political will and stronger financial support at the national, subregional and regional levels.

Another important recommendation of the report concerned the necessity to strengthen collaboration between United Nations bodies and the African countries, particularly by the establishment in each economic subregion of strategic pilot institutions capable of serving as motors of scientific and technological development and models of excellence, and promoting the training of a skilled workforce.

Ms. BAUTISTA (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that science and technology, which were essential elements of sustainable development, could only be acquired by developing countries through international cooperation. United Nations efforts on behalf of Africa must be focused on human capacity-building with a view to industrial reinforcement of the agricultural and mining sectors, their integration into the world market, and their adaptation to the new liberalized trading system agreed upon at Marrakech. If Africa was to strengthen its competitiveness, it must acquire state-of-the-art technologies and not be restricted to appropriate technology alone.

The Group of 77 and China reaffirmed their interest in the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development and in the focus of its work on the implications of information technologies for development. It welcomed the Commission's decision to cooperate with UNCTAD and favoured further collaboration with other organs and agencies. UNDP should consider the request that it contribute to the funding of Commission activities. More transparency was desirable in the Commission's decision-making regarding the use of resources, in particular extrabudgetary resources.

The Group of 77 and China recognized the importance of the work being carried out by the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and favoured greater international cooperation in that area. It supported the Committee's request for the preparation and early publication of a revised addition to the Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, and to the Manual of Tests and Criteria. The Committee should pay more attention to enhancing the capabilities of developing countries in the transport and handling of dangerous goods.

It was regrettable that the report on women in development (E/1995/75) had become available only when the session was starting. The Group of 77 and China reiterated their full support for all policies and programmes that strengthened the role of women as both agents and beneficiaries of the development process, and called for the enhancement of their participation in economic, social and political decision-making. Rural women should be enabled to contribute to the development of their communities and share fully in the benefits of improved living standards. Particular attention should be paid to the special needs of women with disabilities, the elderly, and those in vulnerable situations, such as migrants and refugees. It was to be hoped that advances towards those objectives would be achieved at the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The Group of 77 and China welcomed the consensus on the establishment of the Joint and Co-Sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), which should be encouraged to collaborate with Member States and particularly with the national programmes of developing countries. Although it had important social and economic implications, HIV/AIDS remained primarily a health problem, and Member States should ensure that health experts were included in their delegations to the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board. All donor Governments should intensify their support for the efforts of the developing countries.

The Group of 77 and China noted with concern the continuing deterioration in safe water supply and sanitation services, particularly in rural areas, and agreed that increased financing and improvements in the operation and maintenance of services were required. Not only must poverty be alleviated, it must be eradicated if lasting solutions were to be found.

The Group of 77 and China welcomed the report on the activities undertaken in the implementation of the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action, particularly the emphasis placed on country-driven programmes and projects. They would, however, have preferred to see the recommendations of the Scientific and Technical Committee attached to the report as in the past, together with a summary of the global programmes and projects undertaken since the World Conference.

Measures to enhance national capacities to mitigate the effects of natural disasters would not only save lives and spare property but reduce the need for emergency assistance. Disaster reduction should be part of

sustainable-development planning, and the Group of 77 and China recommended that, at its fiftieth session, the General Assembly should consider IDNDR under the economic and environmental items, as was done in the Council. They viewed with concern the statement in the report that the IDNDR Trust Fund had "remained an under-funded facility, barely able to support the essential functions of the Decade Framework of Action and the secretariat". They also wished to be reassured that funding for relief activities was not provided at the expense of development activities. They agreed with the recommendations in the report regarding continued implementation by the IDNDR secretariat, the provision of adequate resources for that purpose, and the initiation of preparations for an international functional meeting to ensure the consolidation of achievements of the Decade as it drew to a close.

Mr. VALENZUELA (Observer for Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the report on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction recognized the universality of natural disasters and their disruptive social and economic repercussions. Preventive measures were of paramount importance. Environmental protection could help to avoid disasters, and development planning could reduce the vulnerability of populations at risk.

In view of the contribution of disaster-reduction measures to sustainable development, the Union welcomed the nomination by the Commission on Sustainable Development of the Director of the IDNDR secretariat, on behalf of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), as task manager for natural disasters. It noted with interest the suggestions in the report for the full integration of disaster reduction into national planning and development programmes, and it agreed with the need to shift emphasis to national-level activities, particularly response-capacity building in disaster-prone developing countries. The success of the Decade would largely depend on the ability of countries and communities at risk to meet their own responsibilities in disaster reduction, to which United Nations development agencies could make an important contribution.

Europe provided an example of a well-structured, concerted long-term approach to natural-disaster reduction. The member States of the Union were continuously updating risk assessments and disaster-management plans at both the national and community levels, and those plans were coordinated and standardized within the Union as part of its internal cooperation.

Specific technical-cooperation programmes were also being developed with neighbouring and associated countries. The Union's Fourth Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development on Environment and Climate (1994-1998) emphasized that natural-hazard prevention and management was particularly urgent in several European countries. Since the launching of the Decade, the Union had prepared a consolidated approach to the development of forecasting, prevention and hazard-reducing technologies and was integrating disaster reduction into its international development cooperation activities.

The Union commended the progress made since the World Conference for Natural Disaster Reduction and hoped that the momentum would be maintained through close dialogue between the IDNDR secretariat and the Member States. It also stressed the importance of national committees and of the Scientific and Technical Committee as part of the framework of action discussed in chapter III of the report. All disaster-prone countries stood to benefit from it and all could contribute their specific expertise and capabilities. Together with Japan, the Union was the main contributor to IDNDR, and it called on all its partners to engage in a broad-based sharing of the burdens.

The Union noted with interest the proposals in the report for the second half of the Decade, which would bring together a multitude of activities. IDNDR was a temporary mechanism, and everyone should be conscious that the challenge of disaster reduction would extend beyond the year 2000, and that a well-focused and realistic effort on the part of the international community would continue to be required.

Mr. HOPE (United States of America), having reminded the Council of his delegation's comments at an earlier meeting concerning sub-items (d) and (n), said that his Government accepted the two recommendations of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods; they were designed to make such transport less burdensome and to serve as a basis for international and regional regulations. His delegation did not, however, agree with the statement in paragraph 86 of the report on products harmful to health and the environment (E/1995/66) that an international framework was required to translate the results of the technical work on harmonization of chemical classification and labelling systems into a legally binding instrument. Internationally harmonized systems adopted by the Committee of Experts had already been successfully translated into binding instruments,

and international, regional and domestic regulatory bodies had already incorporated the Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods into their transport regulations and laws.

As the Fourth World Conference on Women approached, his delegation was increasingly convinced that women in developing countries must fully participate in and benefit from national-development plans, which should be analysed from a gender perspective. Although significant advances had been made in education, employment, health, family planning, legal equality and political participation over the past 10 years, many constraints upon women remained and should be overcome. It was, therefore, regrettable that the report on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development (E/1995/75) had become available so late. Only through such measures could women be made full partners in the development process.

It was also regrettable that the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development had been unable to complete its work on the items of biomass for energy and the development of energy resources in developing countries.

It continued to be the firm position of his delegation that the unnecessary multiplication of United Nations entities with closely related or overlapping mandates had resulted in a repetitious consideration of many matters, including energy, had consumed administrative resources unnecessarily, and had led to confusion of many activities. Serious consideration must be given to the consolidation of functionally similar bodies and programmes in order to save money, improve administration and enhance performance.

The fact that the Committee in question had had difficulty in completing its work strengthened his delegation's belief that it should be absorbed into the Commission on Sustainable Development - much of its work was in any case closely related to the implementation of Agenda 21 and the work of the Commission.

Mr. BUNNAG (Thailand), having endorsed the statement by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the prevention and control of AIDS, said his delegation welcomed the report on progress in the implementation of the global AIDS strategy (E/1995/57). WHO had a vital role to play in the implementation of the Global Programme on AIDS, in collaboration with other specialized agencies and NGOs.

His delegation also welcomed the establishment of UNAIDS, which, with its six sponsors, would achieve effective international coordination in preventing and controlling the pandemic.

Thailand would participate actively in the work of the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) of UNAIDS, as it had in the WHO Global Programme, during 1993 and 1994 and had been selected as one of the three field sites for HIV vaccine efficacy trials. Operational research studies had also been initiated in Thailand on the feasibility of integrating HIV/Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD) services into maternal and child health care and family planning programmes.

His Government was strongly convinced that respect for the human rights and dignity of HIV-infected individuals and AIDS sufferers was vital to the success of national AIDS programmes. Non-governmental and community-based organizations in Thailand had been effective partners in fostering compassion for people with HIV/AIDS through information, education and social support programmes. The Government had sought to avoid discriminatory actions in terms of services, employment and travel for HIV/AIDS-infected persons, and a regulation prohibiting the entry into Thailand of foreigners with HIV/AIDS had been repealed in March 1992. The National AIDS Committee had a standing subcommittee on legal and human rights issues.

His Government had initiated, in June 1989, a national HIV surveillance programme which allowed health professionals and policy makers to assess the expanding HIV/AIDS epidemic, monitored progress in the fight against the infection, and helped to create greater political awareness and to mobilize the necessary human and financial resources. The surveillance data was made widely available to the press and general public and the National AIDS Committee had developed a strategy for an open and honest exchange of information.

Thailand was not only willing to join in the fight against AIDS, it was leading that fight in its part of the world. It had acquired highly valuable experience from which other countries could benefit. His Government was offering study tours and training in coping with STD prevention and AIDS to an increasing number of health workers from both inside and outside the region.

He welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) (A/50/201-E/1995/74) and

commended the work of the IDNDR secretariat and related bodies. Information sharing and consultations through the Contact Group of Permanent Missions had been useful and should be enhanced.

His Government, which was fully aware of the impact of natural disasters on economic and social development and accorded priority to the development of an early-warning system as an effective instrument in preventing and reducing human and economic losses, had plans to link its meteorological early-warning system with those of neighbouring countries.

His delegation supported the proposals in paragraph 108 of the Secretary-General's report concerning the preparations for the second world conference on natural disaster reduction, to be held in 1999. The conference would provide an opportunity for the international community to review the headway made, and the obstacles encountered, in implementing the Yokohama Plan of Action and to set directions for the Plan's implementation in the decades to come.

Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile), said that his delegation would have preferred the general segment of the Council's deliberations to take place in a more informal atmosphere. The delivery of official statements might well be an expeditious way of organizing a discussion that ranged over many different topics but it deprived delegations of the opportunity to exchange their views. The Council was engaged in a restructuring exercise with a view to changing its working methods and still had some distance to go.

On a related subject, he said it was absolutely essential for documentation to reach delegations in good time if they were to be able to participate constructively in a discussion. While he was grateful to the Secretariat for its efforts to improve the overall quality of the documentation, he wished to appeal for documents to be issued at least two weeks before they were due to be discussed, so as to give delegations time to read them and obtain instructions from their Governments.

While his delegation endorsed the statement by representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, it wished to refer additionally to the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (E/1995/31), a body of great political importance. The Commission had still much to do to alter the image of its activities as simply involving support for industrial development. In reality, science and technology for development went much further. With the necessary modification in

perspective, the Commission's work could be oriented towards having a real and practical impact. Further to the comments by the representative of the Philippines about the need for greater transparency in the Commission's work, he urged the Secretariat to bear that need in mind, particularly with respect to the topics for discussion and the membership of the working groups.

The PRESIDENT said he had noted the comments made by the representative of Chile concerning the late issuance of documentation and assured him that the matter would be taken up at the Council's organizational session.

Mr. YAMPOLSKY (Ukraine) said that his delegation was interested in the proposals in the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (E/1995/31) designed to intensify the Commission's role as coordinator of United Nations scientific and technological activities at the national, regional and international levels. It was unfortunate that such activities had so far made little use of a comprehensive approach by which science and technology could be used to benefit the sustained development of countries with economies in transition and developing countries.

As a result, there were no clearly identified priorities within the United Nations in terms of science and technology for development and it was unclear which United Nations bodies were empowered to coordinate priority activities. When combined with the lack of systematized national approaches by countries to science and technology as a way of building domestic capacity, the result was the dissipation and channelling to other activities of the limited resources available and duplication of efforts. Improving United Nations efforts to mobilize science and technology for development had thus become a priority for the Commission. In pursuing that goal, it should work closely with the regional economic commissions and with the bilateral and multilateral financing institutions.

His delegation attached special importance to the efforts of the specialized agencies to promote capacity-building in science and technology, the conversion of military technology for civilian use and energy conservation and supply. It therefore supported the Commission's suggestions, contained in the draft resolution recommended to the Council, that an issues note should be prepared on the scientific and technological aspects of sustainable

energy systems and that the topic of scientific and technological aspects of the conversion of military capacities should be included in the Commission's activities.

His delegation fully supported the decisions adopted by the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development at its special session (E/1995/25 and Corr.1). It would like to see United Nations activities in that field stepped up at both the global and regional levels, on the assumption that the interests of developing countries and countries with economies in transition would be adequately taken into account in the elaboration and implementation of the corresponding international programmes.

Cooperation in that area was of particular importance for his country, since it was facing a number of complex technical, economic and social problems resulting from his Government's decision to close down the operational units at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant until the year 2000. There were, in fact, a growing number of countries facing problems arising from the need to shut down damaged or obsolete nuclear power units and it would be useful, therefore, if the relevant United Nations bodies, in close cooperation with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), were to prepare international programmes for resolving those problems and establishing sustainable and safe energy systems.

Mr. MANGACHI (United Republic of Tanzania) said his delegation welcomed the note by the Secretary-General on United Nations system support for science and technology in Africa (A/50/125-E/1995/19 and Add.1) but thought that there were areas other than the institution-building efforts on which the JIU report focused that deserved commensurate consideration to enable capacity-building and technology transfer to take place, particularly in the case of the African LDCs. The main obstacle to the acquisition of technology was a lack of financial resources to purchase the technology and the capital goods required. The LDCs, in particular, were not able to sustain the royalties and fees for technology inputs and lacked the trained human resources and infrastructure to pursue scientific and technological activities on their own.

It was essential, therefore, that international cooperation with the LDCs should aim at strengthening education in the basic sciences and instituting an effective system of research, vocational training and on-the-job training. One problem associated with the lack of highly trained personnel in such

countries was the brain drain of experts to the developed countries. Appropriate incentives should be provided to encourage high-quality scientists and technologists to remain in the LDCs.

Domestic research and development capacity played a strategic role in enabling developing countries to achieve rapid technological transformation. The few scientific and technological institutions that existed in the LDCs suffered from shortages of personnel, inadequate funding and lack of facilities such as laboratories, libraries and equipment. The link between research and development (R & D) and production activities was weak, as indicated by the failure to commercialize many R & D results. There was thus an urgent need for the United Nations system, in its support for science and technology in such countries, to focus more on enhancement of R & D institutions.

Because of their lack of research facilities and of the scientific basis for producing endogenous technologies, the LDCs would have to rely on imported technologies for some time to come. While foreign direct investment (FDI) was considered to be a useful mode for the transfer of technology, those countries were able to attract FDI only in the simplest of assembly and processing activities. The outcome might be a division of the world into countries with a monopoly of science and technology and those which merely constituted markets therefor. The United Nations should therefore revive the dialogue on a mode of technology transfer that would facilitate the acquisition of technology and promote development in the LDCs.

Any technological invention had to be protected by a patent, and users had to pay royalties and fees to its owners. Patents in developing countries were owned almost exclusively by foreign individuals or transnational companies. The challenge was how the technologies needed could be made available to the LDCs without imposing the stringent requirements of intellectual property rights. Invention activities should also be supported in order to increase the share of the LDCs in the ownership of intellectual property rights.

His delegation welcomed the report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development (E/1995/31). At its second session, the Commission had considered a number of topics that were extremely relevant to the LDCs. His delegation endorsed the proposal that the Commission should focus its work in the period 1995-1997 on information technologies and their implications for

development. For the LDCs to benefit from the Commission's work, however, a special effort would have to be made to provide the necessary equipment, training and infrastructure to ensure the absorption, adaptation and further development of information technologies.

Mr. MALHOTRA (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that, in keeping with its long-standing commitment to improving the status of women, UNESCO would continue to promote the equality of women and men, women's human rights, endogenous capacity-building, full citizenship and self-empowerment within its fields of competence. Its strategy involved: incorporating a gender perspective into all planning, implementation and evaluation activities; full use of women's visions, competence, experience and potential in meeting world challenges; and specific projects to benefit girls and women.

It was difficult to obtain accurate estimates of female literacy in rural areas. The figures available to UNESCO nevertheless showed that, in almost all regions including Europe, the proportion of illiterate women was highest in rural areas and reached almost 90 per cent in some African and Asian countries. Illiteracy was almost total among rural women over the age of 45 and, given the importance of grandmothers and great-aunts in the education of third-world children, that fact had significant consequences.

UNESCO had recently studied women's influence on policy in countries in transition to a market economy. It had paid attention to women's role as active agents of change in such economies and in the development of the informal sector, which was becoming increasingly prominent in the global economy. Several international meetings had dealt with means of improving the economic situation of women.

Education was perhaps the single most important factor in the empowerment of women and the improvement of their quality of life: whether women could read and write made a big difference. In the area of higher education, UNESCO had stressed special programmes to promote women's involvement in professional fields directly related to development. UNESCO chairs would be established to promote the contribution of women to science and technology, community health and development, communication and information, population studies and the culture of peace.

In the UNESCO strategy, the focus shifted from viewing women as a homogeneous group to looking at women's strength, roles, needs and aspirations in the wider context of society and culture and in relation to the roles and situation of men. One of the consequences of that perspective was recognition of women as a heterogeneous group, entitled to the same freedoms, responsibilities, rights and rewards as men.

Mr. KISELEV (Russian Federation) said that a key aspect of the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development was the preparation of analytical reports on contemporary issues in science and technology. The reports submitted to the Commission at its second session aimed at a comparative analysis of the situation in various groups of countries, including those with economies in transition. It was encouraging that that comprehensive approach, which took account of the interests and needs of all groups of countries, had been reflected in the Commission's resolutions.

His delegation supported the omnibus draft resolution recommended by the Commission to the Council and also endorsed the Commission's resolution concerning the need for broader dissemination of the results of its work. The Commission's role in coordinating activities with the Commission on Sustainable Development and other bodies, with a view to elaborating a global strategy on science and technology for development, should be strengthened.

A prominent position in the restructuring of the world economy was occupied by the conversion of military capacities for civilian use and sustainable development. Such conversion could help both to resolve the problems faced by specific countries and resolve global problems (environmental monitoring, communications, etc.). The conversion of military capacities could also have an indirect effect on the developing countries, since the resources thus released could be used to provide them with technical assistance. The Commission on Science and Technology for Development had the capacity to look into that question from the standpoint of science and technology. His delegation was also interested in the scientific and technical aspects of sustainable energy systems and hoped that the topic would become part of the Commission's future work. Another issue that must be resolved at the Council's current session was that of the synchronization of the terms of the members of the Commission.

His delegation had a generally favourable impression of the work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, particularly its completion of the ninth revised edition of the Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and of the "Manual of Tests and Criteria". Nevertheless, the work done by the United Nations to standardize transport regulations was not sufficiently effective. The Committee of Experts would have to devote more intensive efforts to harmonizing the United Nations recommendations with the regulations of the International Maritime Organization (IMO), the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and others.

His delegation greatly appreciated the contribution made by the WHO Global Programme on AIDS to the fight against that disease as well as the efforts of all international organizations, governmental bodies and private funds to implement the Programme. The current most urgent task was to ensure that the Memorandum of Understanding was signed promptly by the joint and co-sponsoring organizations, so that the legal basis for the new UNAIDS programme would be established, a strategy for 1996-2000 laid out and the role and financial obligations of each organization determined.

The Secretary-General's report on the progress made in providing safe water supply and sanitation for all during the first half of the 1990s (A/50/213-E/1995/87) was an objective one and its conclusions and recommendations could be taken as a basis for future activities by the international organizations and for national efforts to improve water supply and sanitation throughout the world.

His delegation supported the activities carried out as part of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) by the United Nations system in general, and the IDNDR secretariat, in particular. In keeping with the decisions of the Yokohama Conference, his Government had taken a number of important initiatives to reduce the threat of natural disasters. It was in favour of more active involvement of the regional commissions and United Nations organs in activities connected with the Decade at the regional and subregional levels.

His delegation appreciated the role of the Statistical Commission in coordinating the work of the various United Nations organs and in drawing up practical recommendations for updating statistical methods and practices. One major outcome of the Commission's twenty-eighth session was the draft

resolution recommended to the Council on the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme (E/1995/25, para. 1), which would be of great importance for the planning, development and monitoring of the demographic situation throughout the world as well as for socio-economic policies. His delegation thus supported the adoption by the Council of that draft resolution.

The basic conclusions and recommendations of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development adopted at its special session (E/1995/25 and Corr.1), were acceptable. Most timely, in that regard, was the conclusion by the Commission on Sustainable Development, based on the Committee's recommendation, that a joint effort by Governments was needed to promote wide use of non-traditional sources of energy. Especially noteworthy was the recommendation about strengthening the global network of international centres for the development and use of ecologically sound energy technology. His Government had submitted to UNDP a proposal for the establishment in Moscow, under United Nations auspices, of an international centre on non-traditional energy.

His delegation, which fully shared the Committee's concern at the inadequate coordination, in the United Nations system, of energy matters, supported its recommendation for strengthening coordination in that sphere, and, in particular its proposal on the establishment of an energy database including new and renewable sources of energy, within the United Nations system.

Miss McNISH (Jamaica), having endorsed the statement by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that her delegation commended the work of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development, as reviewed in its report on the second session (E/1995/31), and urged the Council to adopt the omnibus resolution on science and technology recommended by the Commission (para.1). It found the Commission's decision to focus its work during the next two years on the theme of information technologies and their implications for development particularly interesting and endorsed the request that the Commission, in conjunction with UNCTAD, should establish, for interested countries, a programme of country reviews on science, technology and innovation policy. It would also welcome a decision to extend the current Commission's term of office.

While her delegation was grateful to the Assistant Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women for her introduction of the Secretary-General's report relating to women in development (E/1995/75), it regretted that the text had been made available to the Council only that morning. Despite the growing recognition of women's role in the development process, fundamental obstacles still remained to women's effective integration in development. The Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women had yet to be implemented in full; women the world over continued to suffer the most from violence, poverty and underdevelopment. The ICPD Programme of Action reaffirmed that bringing women into the mainstream of development was an important end in itself and must be given prominence in policy-making and programme planning. The imminent Fourth World Conference on Women must therefore be action-oriented and should not simply reiterate past commitments.

Her delegation had noticed the extensive preparations, at the national, regional and international levels, for that Conference, in particular the work on the draft platform of action. Her Government, with other Governments of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), had formulated and adopted a subregional plan of action as an input; and it agreed that the Commission on the Status of Women was the appropriate preparatory body. The platform of action should reflect the progress achieved at other United Nations global conferences, as well as the reaffirmation, at the World Summit for Social Development, that equality between men and women was critical to social and economic development.

More crucial than the Conference itself, however, were the follow-up and the implementation of its decisions, for which political and economic commitment would be critical. Her delegation welcomed the importance attached to inter-agency cooperation in implementing the declarations and programmes of action of other global conferences, and endorsed the recommendation that a similar inter-agency mechanism should be established to ensure the implementation of the platform of action once that was adopted. Every effort must be made to ensure that the Conference's effectiveness was not jeopardized or compromised in any way.

Mr. LANDIS (World Meteorological Organization) said that the Twelfth WMO Congress, meeting in June 1995, had considered WMO's activities

within the framework of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR). It had agreed that WMO should continue to play a leading role in dealing with disasters of meteorological and hydrological origin, and noted the significant contributions it had made to the activities of the Decade, including the work of the IDNDR secretariat, and its support for various meetings held to coordinate international activities, including the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction.

The Congress had called on the members of WMO to accept responsibility for the role of national meteorological and hydrological services. It had been informed about the progress made in implementing the WMO Plan of Action for the Decade, adopted by the Eleventh Congress, and on developments in the four special projects it contained: a tropical cyclone warning system for the south-west Indian Ocean; comprehensive risk assessment; a system for technology exchange for natural disasters; and, in collaboration with the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU), a similar one on tropical cyclone disasters. The Secretary-General had been asked to keep the Executive Council and Congress informed about developments at the international level in implementing IDNDR and to submit proposals, to the Thirteenth Congress, as to the role WMO might play.

The Congress, having considered the question of predictions for a range of disasters other than those for which forecasts and warnings were currently exchanged, had asked the Secretary-General to establish, jointly with the IDNDR secretariat, other United Nations bodies, the International Oceanographic Commission and ICSU, to consider the extent to which such forecasts and warnings could be made and how they could benefit from better international coordination, including the long experience of WMO in that regard.

Mr. MUHAMMAD AMISH (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that his delegation supported the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and that made by the representative of the United Republic of Tanzania about the need for the United Nations to support programmes for the development of science and technology in Africa, with particular reference to the LDCs.

As for the activities in connection with the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade, it was important, when reviewing the progress made during the first half of the 1990s, to look at policies on pricing the

relevant services to the developing countries. While his delegation had nothing, in principle, against the relating of payment to benefits, the principle should not be applied haphazardly but should be graduated in accordance with the recipient countries' varying needs and capacity to pay. The United Nations should urge international donors and financial institutions to help in that regard.

With regard to policies and programmes aimed at enhancing the status of women, the impression was sometimes given that women's rights generally received less recognition in the developing world than elsewhere. United Nations bodies in particular should take care to avoid that implication and bear in mind that the special problems the developing countries did indeed face affected both men and women.

It was acknowledged that environmental questions were of concern to all countries, developing and developed alike. It was important, however, when providing finance for environmental projects and others aimed at scientific and technological progress, not to impose new and often harsh conditionality. A flexible approach was called for, in which the recipient country's particular circumstances were given due consideration.

Mr. GWAM (Nigeria) said that the developing countries were the most vulnerable to the impact of natural disasters. Drought accounted for most such fatalities in Africa, Asia and Latin America; and the fatalities and displacement rates arising from desertification and other major natural disasters were high in developing countries. Within the past two decades, over 3 million people had been killed, and 1 billion affected, by natural disasters and, by the year 2100, the world's population would be increasingly concentrated in hazard-prone areas.

The Scientific and Technical Committee of the IDNDR had stated that disaster impact could be reduced through risk assessment and, most importantly, through international dissemination of disaster-reduction techniques; disaster-reduction measures cost less in the long run than disaster relief and reconstruction. Nevertheless, the latter continued to be the primary focus of national and international decisions, particularly those of the United Nations, to the exclusion of prevention and preparedness. The causes included the craving for notice by the countries which provided relief materials and the insufficient dissemination of information about disaster-reduction techniques.

The World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction and the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action had done much to resolve the information problem but a follow-up meeting was needed to ensure implementation of the Strategy and Plan of Action. The General Assembly should thus be requested to invite the Secretary-General to provide the resources to prepare for the second world conference through the regular budget and voluntary contributions to the IDNDR Trust Fund, and all countries should be urged to contribute to the Trust Fund.

His delegation appreciated the efforts of the Secretary-General and the IDNDR secretariat to promote the implementation of the Strategy and Plan of Action at all levels. It also thanked UNDP and the countries that had contributed funds to the three African subregional workshops held under the auspices of the Disaster Reduction Division of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, in coordination with regional and subregional bodies. As the Secretary-General had stated in his report (E/1995/74, para.14), the workshops had enabled African government officials to assess country needs and develop national and local capacities for disaster reduction.

The IDNDR secretariat should implement urgently the decision of the Scientific and Technical Committee relating to regional disaster centres, and his Government fully supported the establishment of an African regional centre for disaster management. His delegation welcomed the Council's discussion of the subject under item 6 of its agenda instead of under item 5, since the context was the environmental issue of natural-disaster reduction rather than the humanitarian issue of disaster response.

Mr. WANG Qun (China), referring to the note by the Secretary-General on the Joint and Co-Sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (E/1995/71), said that the Programme Coordinating Board (PCB) should be the decision-making organ of the Joint and Co-Sponsored Programme and be mainly responsible for providing political support and coordination in the system-wide United Nations efforts against AIDS.

In policy formulation and other relevant work, the Programme should, in principle, respect each country's sovereignty, legislation and local conditions, and cooperate with national programmes and plans. Since it was a new entity, the six sponsors should enhance coordination and cooperation among themselves in programme and project management and the use of resources, promoting the Programme's work under the unified leadership of the Executive Director and seeking to strengthen country-level coordination.

Since AIDS prevention and control called for considerable financial inputs, it was to be hoped that the Programme would expand its fund-raising channels. His Government had, from the outset, engaged in international cooperation against AIDS and, as a member of the PCB, would actively fulfil its responsibility in its efforts and contributions to the worldwide struggle against AIDS.

The most urgent problem with regard to the International Decade for National Disaster Reduction, was a lack of funding. Therefore, the funding of the core secretariat should be incorporated into the United Nations regular budget and the major donor countries and international organizations should increase their contributions to the IDNDR Trust Fund. In addition, the international community should provide the developing countries, through multilateral and bilateral channels, with funds and technology transfer to implement the Yokohama Strategy and Plan of Action.

His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General's suggested restructuring of the Special High-level Council, whose membership should have wide representation based on the principle of equitable geographical distribution. Its nature should be that of a functional commission, providing policy guidelines for IDNDR activities. The Contact Group of Permanent Missions should be an arrangement to promote the exchange of information and should be open-ended, informal and consultative in nature. The United Nations Steering Committee for the Decade should cooperate closely with an inter-agency committee, and his delegation was in favour of extending its functions.

His Government was in favour of convening the second world conference on disaster reduction. The IDNDR secretariat should begin the preparatory work as soon as possible, assisted by the relevant agencies of the United Nations system, drawing on the experience of previous major United Nations global conferences and involving the active participation of Governments, IDNDR country committees and regions. In addition, public awareness of the future conference should be enhanced.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.