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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 32nd MEETING

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

President: Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan)
later: Mr. GERVAIS (Côte d'Ivoire)
(Vice-President)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION:

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(agenda item 4) (continued) (E/1995/98)

The PRESIDENT outlined the proposed programme of work for the operational activities segment. Having invited delegations to comment thereon and having received no requests to speak, he said he took it that the programme of work was acceptable to the Council.

Mr. STOBY (Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs), introducing the note by the Secretariat on triennial policy review of operational activities for development within the United Nations system, (E/1995/98), said that the annex to the note was actually an interim report. The final report called for by General Assembly resolution 47/199, in which the Secretary-General would assess the implementation of that resolution and make policy recommendations derived from that analysis, had not yet been completed. The reason was that two methods of inquiry had been used in preparing the interim report. Although 15 country missions had been undertaken, which had yielded a great deal of information, the major source of information had been the questionnaires sent to resident coordinators, the specialized agencies, donor countries and recipient countries.

To date, only 14 replies had been received from developing countries, whereas a target of 30 had been set as offering enough material for the developing countries' viewpoint to be adequately reflected. Once that target had been reached, and in the light of the comments made in the course of the Council's current discussion, the report would be finalized and submitted to the General Assembly at its fiftieth session.

Over the past five years, the context and content of operational activities had undergone changes and new demands and dimensions had arisen.

The reach and range of operational activities had widened, with new claimants and new needs. Those changes had not, however, altered the fundamental character of United Nations development aid, namely, universality, multilateralism, neutrality and catalytic effect.

The Secretariat's assessment highlighted the growing heterogeneity of development needs and the varying perceptions of ways in which the United Nations could be of maximum assistance to recipient countries. There was an enhanced awareness of the linkages among political, economic, social and environmental issues and between relief and development. The responses of the international community must therefore be conceived in an integral manner and implemented in a coherent and coordinated framework.

The unique situation of each country meant that flexibility and pragmatism were required in applying such measures as the country strategy note and the programme approach. Given the plurality of the United Nations system and the specific mandates and expertise of each organization within it, similar flexibility must be shown in assessing the extent to which individual organizations had implemented the various measures.

The shift towards national execution from agency execution was one measure on which there was virtually unanimous agreement. Although the number of agency-executed projects had declined, the involvement of the specialized agencies in nationally executed projects had actually increased, as they had been serving as implementing or cooperating organizations. Nevertheless, the shift to national execution, coupled with a decline in the core resources of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), had seriously affected the ability of several specialized agencies to make their presence felt in operational activities.

Several United Nations system organizations had introduced structural and management changes, both at headquarters and in the field, with a view to improving their country-level activities and some of them had delegated greater authority to the field. Nevertheless, much remained to be done to simplify rules and procedures, harmonize policies and enhance accountability at the country level.

Several United Nations organizations had also taken important steps towards capacity-strengthening in developing countries. A large proportion of technical cooperation should involve building the capacity, not only to execute projects, but more importantly, to plan, set priorities and prepare

coherent national programmes. The progress already made by various organizations in strengthening national capacity in their substantive areas should be transformed into a sustained, system-wide process. Each country's needs, strengths and weaknesses were distinct, and capacity-building had to be tailored to those differences.

The importance of the resident coordinator system as a major instrument for coordination was widely recognized and, in his final report, the Secretary-General would make policy recommendations on that subject. Several cooperative programmes had been launched in such areas as poverty alleviation and UNDP, in particular, had provided funds to support the functions of the resident coordinator. The Administrator of UNDP had also made other important contributions to strengthening the resident coordinator system.

Another area in which the Secretary-General would be making policy recommendations was closer cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions. The impact of adjustment programmes, the growing role of the World Bank in technical cooperation and the need for greater consistency and complementarity in the policy approaches proposed by external development partners, required that the two parts of the United Nations system should establish a stronger working relationship at both the headquarters and country levels.

Subregional and regional coordination had also become important, and the role of the United Nations in helping Member States forge closer cooperative ties required increased attention.

In reviewing the progress made in implementing General Assembly resolution 47/199, two other aspects of the reform process must be kept in mind, namely, reform of the governing structures of the funds and programmes and the establishment of a more stable resource base for the United Nations development system. Significant shifts had taken place in the funding of operational activities, from central to special-purpose funding, and the cost-sharing contributions by developing countries had grown dramatically. Unfortunately, intergovernmental consultations on the funding of operational activities had not yet yielded major breakthroughs.

The reform process assigned key policy roles to the General Assembly and the Council with regard to the executive boards of funds and programmes. The experience gained so far should be reviewed, and appropriate procedures introduced to strengthen those roles. The Council should guide and monitor

the work of the executive boards so as to enhance the impact of operational activities. That was another subject on which policy recommendations would be made by the Secretary-General in the final report.

In preparing the triennial policy reviews, the Secretariat had relied heavily on questionnaires to obtain direct and accurate responses from as many countries as possible, supplemented by the 15 field missions that had been supported by extrabudgetary funds provided by a number of industrialized countries. The limitations of such resources had prevented missions being undertaken to more countries. With respect to future reviews, a better balance should be sought between questionnaires and country missions. It was not fair to expect a few countries to contribute the funds for a review which was relevant to all Member States, particularly the developing countries. Consideration should therefore be given to the provision of sufficient resources in the regular budget of the United Nations and, if possible, in those of United Nations agencies, to permit a more comprehensive and in-depth analysis involving more country missions.

Mr. Gervais (Côte d'Ivoire), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Mr. MABILANGAN (Phillipines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 developing countries and China, said that there were a number of premises that should be applied to operational activities, namely, that multilateral assistance from the United Nations was both useful and necessary, the resources for operational activities for development should be substantially increased and placed on a predictable and assured basis, operational activities should be characterized by universality, philanthropism, neutrality and multilateralism and should be capable of responding flexibly to the needs of developing countries, national plans and priorities were the only viable frame of reference for the programming of operational activities, and the recipient Government had the primary responsibility for coordinating all types of external assistance.

The developing countries had cooperated with the donor countries to find ways of improving operational activities; they hoped that that would also lead to an improvement in the level of resources for United Nations development funds and programmes. The reforms introduced so far included the restructuring of governing bodies, the introduction of the country strategy note (CSN) and programme approach and changes in the programming arrangements and allocation of resources by UNDP.

Despite all those efforts, the developing countries had yet to see any increase, in real terms, in the resources available to the United Nations development funds and programmes, particularly core resources. The annex to the note by the Secretariat pointed out that core contributions to UNDP had remained stagnant in real terms over the past 20 years and that the shortfall in funds for meeting the core targets was accompanied by a clear shift by donor countries towards funding specific thematic areas which were deemed to be consistent with their particular interests (E/1995/98, paras. 31 and 32). The developing countries submitted that those phenomena were inconsistent with the nature of United Nations multilateral assistance. The consultations on new modalities for financing operational activities for development had not been very encouraging, either.

Despite their limited resources, the developing countries had been meeting their responsibilities with regard to ensuring predictability and burden-sharing. They were continuing to make voluntary contributions, establish cost-sharing arrangements and cover the expenses for United Nations field offices. The interim report noted that most of the increase in cost-sharing contributions in 1994 had come from the developing countries themselves (para. 32).

Operational activities epitomized international cooperation. It was in that light that the Group of 77 and China urged the developed countries to match their efforts to achieve efficiency in the operation and use of resources of United Nations funds and programmes with the necessary political will to ensure the adequacy, predictability and growth of resources. They agreed with the Secretariat that the final report of the Secretary-General on the triennial policy review should take into account the views of as many States as possible and requested the Secretariat's further assistance in that regard.

Mr. AGUIRRE de CARCER (Observer for Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the further strengthening of the efficiency of operational activities would be crucial to ensuring confidence in the role of the United Nations in implementing development assistance and attracting additional resources. The Union welcomed the comprehensive analysis contained in the annex to the note by the Secretariat (E/1995/98) and awaited the policy recommendations to be submitted by the Secretary-General in his final report.

The Union believed that the triennial policy review should be carried out in a more focused and action-oriented manner than in the past. It was necessary to concentrate on those issues that would have the greatest overall impact, namely, coordination at field level, capacity-building and accountability. Particular attention should also be paid to the problems encountered and experience gained at the field level in implementing General Assembly resolution 47/199, particularly in the three areas he had just mentioned. More substantive reports on the implementation of that resolution should have been submitted by the various funds and programmes. The real relevance of the measures outlined in the resolution could be measured only against the realities encountered at field level.

Resolution 47/199 emphasized the importance of promoting a coordinated approach by the United Nations system to the needs of recipient countries, particularly at the field level. The Secretariat's interim report indicated that the tasks the United Nations system was increasingly requested to undertake required further progress towards a cross-sectoral and coordinated approach at the country level. All too often, the programmes and funds were pursuing their own courses.

The CSN was an essential tool for achieving such coordination and was becoming a valuable instrument for providing an effective response to the plans and priorities of the recipient countries. The number of countries - 84 - that had decided to start preparing a CSN was encouraging. The United Nations should continue to assist the national authorities in assessing the advantages to be drawn from a CSN and in drafting it. In cases when the CSN was not seen as beneficial or the process had not been launched for other reasons, alternative exercises could be considered. Greater complementarity between the field activities of the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions should be promoted, and close links should be developed between their respective programming exercises.

Another essential element for enhancing coordination at the field level was strengthening the role of the resident coordinator system, which played an effective role in the implementation of the principal tools in resolution 47/199, particularly the programme approach, national execution and the CSN. True leadership must be exercised by the resident coordinator to ensure a division of labour reflecting the comparative advantages of

United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies. More coherent support, including financial and human resources, must therefore be provided for the resident coordinators by all United Nations organizations.

Though UNDP managed the system, all parts of the United Nations system should feel that they shared in the ownership of it. While the Union welcomed the recent decision of the UNDP Executive Board to allocate financial support to the system, it took the view that other agencies should also consider providing funds to a pool for its support. They should also present highly qualified candidates for the responsible position of resident coordinator.

Though some progress had been made in coordination at field level and in the promotion of capacity-building, there was scope for further improvement. The programme approach should do a great deal to assist countries in integrating the outcome of recent United Nations conferences into their national development strategies. Harmonization of the programming efforts of funds and programmes should be continued.

Another crucial element for promoting capacity-building was national execution, and there seemed to be good progress in that area. The Union supported a wider reliance on national execution, including the use of NGOs in various implementation roles.

Lastly, much remained to be done to improve the accountability of operational activities for development. Questions were frequently raised, not only within United Nations intergovernmental bodies but also in national parliaments, concerning the efficiency, output and sustainability of operational activities for development. The United Nations was accountable for its operations and must improve its monitoring and evaluation mechanisms substantially. The Secretariat's interim report clearly showed that insufficient attention had thus far been devoted to such efforts. However, the Union welcomed the first step represented by the establishment of an inter-agency working group on evaluation as a subsidiary body of ACC but believed that that should not cause the individual agencies to diminish their efforts to improve their monitoring and review mechanisms.

The Union was aware that further strengthening of operational activities also required adequate resources and was prepared to continue negotiations on that matter in the open-ended working group established by the General Assembly.

The progress achieved in implementing resolution 47/199 was, on the whole, positive but the Union saw scope for considerable improvement in certain key areas. It hoped that the President of the Council would prepare a summary of the current debate, fully reflecting the various views expressed, to help the Secretariat draft recommendations for the final report on the triennial policy review.

Mr. YAO Wenlong (China), having endorsed the statement by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that his delegation was deeply concerned about the shortage of funds in recent years which had seriously affected the normal implementation of assistance activities. At the General Assembly's request, in resolution 48/162, the Secretary-General had submitted a special report on the financing of the operational activities for development within the United Nations system (A/48/940). As rightly stated in that report, it was hard, without a strong political will, to achieve the expected goals, whatever the mechanism or modalities. His delegation thus appealed to the developed countries, especially certain traditional major donor countries, to shoulder more financial responsibilities in that regard.

General Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 47/199 had repeatedly emphasized the coordination of operational activities, at both the headquarters and field levels, within the United Nations development system, and had requested the relevant organizations to decentralize and harmonize their rules and procedures. The resolutions also suggested a wider range of choice for the appointment of resident coordinators. Although the objective of coordination was unquestionable, recipient Governments should bear the foremost responsibility for coordination at the country level, coordination within the United Nations system being secondary.

Resident coordinators should respect the institutional arrangements made by those Governments and could help them, at their request, to strengthen their capacities. Resident coordinators could coordinate the activities of the relevant organizations of the United Nations development system, on the premise that a partnership was maintained among them and with the resident coordinators. With good coordination at the country level, the various forms of assistance could be complementary and produce better results. Coordination at the headquarters level would be enhanced by a clear division of labour, efforts to avoid duplication and improved efficiency.

The organizations of the United Nations development system could also help recipient Governments, at the latter's request, with regard to the CSN system advocated by General Assembly resolution 47/199, it being left to the Governments to decide whether or not a CSN needed to be formulated. In particular, the note should be used only as a reference when executive boards approved assistance for country programmes and not as a condition or criterion for programme approval.

Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom), having endorsed the statement by the observer for Spain, on behalf of the European Union, said that, although progress had been made in response to General Assembly resolution 47/199, the organizations of the United Nations development system needed to be much more focused and action-oriented in their approach to the work of the triennial policy review. In that regard, the Council had an important role to play in giving policy guidance.

Reference had been made by the Secretariat, on the subject of joint consultation policy, to widening the pool of recruitment. That objective was welcome, but its implementation seemed to have been slow. His delegation wished to know, therefore, whether the Secretariat saw any barriers in that regard, and how the various agencies were approaching the issue. Moreover, paragraph 33 of General Assembly resolution 47/199 referred, *inter alia*, to agreement on a common United Nations system-wide manual on programme and project procedures, but the latter seemed not to have been mentioned in the Secretariat's interim report (E/1995/98). He wondered, therefore, whether a lack of progress in the matter was to be inferred.

Mr. STOBY (Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said that the tasks relating to paragraph 33 of Assembly resolution 47/199 were dealt with in paragraphs 164-168 of the interim report (E/1995/98). It seemed, however, that the organizations concerned felt that the production of a manual was perhaps not the best way to proceed - a matter on which the Chairman of the Joint Consultative Group on Policies (JCGP) could perhaps comment.

Mr. GRAISSE (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that progress in widening the pool of recruitment had not been as limited as might appear; UNDP had been making headway in that regard well before the General Assembly had made the request contained in resolution 47/199. There was currently a much wider catchment area and an improved system of

information, including requirement profiles, for appointments to the resident representative and resident coordinator system; the methods established fully complied with the Assembly's call for increased transparency.

Although current budgetary constraints and cost-cutting requirements had created some difficulty with regard to recruitment from outside the current pool, UNDP had priority authorization to make exceptions in the case of resident coordinators; as could be seen from the interim report, some 45 per cent of the requirements had been met with regard to the appointment of persons with past experience of international organizations.

Mr. MACHIN (United Kingdom) said he hoped that the discussion would not focus solely on the recruitment efforts by UNDP, since success would also depend on contributions from other agencies and from sources outside the system.

Mr. ALTESMAN (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said he thought that the widening of the pool of resident coordinators could be a major impact of General Assembly resolution 47/199. Although it was too early to adduce hard evidence, he felt that two clear benefits would emerge. One was a reappraisal of system-wide personnel management, which would lower the barriers to the interchange of staff. The other was a broadened sense of ownership of the resident coordinator system, which would enhance the various headquarters' interest and participation in appointments. The Executive Director of UNICEF had expressed a keen interest in developments in that regard.

Mr. STOBY (Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said that it might facilitate the discussion if the Council considered the interim report section by section.

Mr. SHAH (India) said that his delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, particularly on funding requirements as part of the triennial policy review; his delegation had already stated its views, at an earlier meeting, on the earmarking of resources. It was important, as part of the review, to continue efforts towards harmonizing programme cycles, promoting the programme approach and national execution, and enhancing the resident coordinator system.

His delegation was concerned, however, at the impression, given in the interim report, of a move from certain specific issues to a broader

generalization about the role and scope of operational activities. In paragraph 29, for example, he wondered just what was perceived as the United Nations mandate in helping to construct a functioning Government and a coherent civil society in some countries. He would also like to know, with reference to paragraph 23, what was meant by the United Nations system's being without an agenda of its own.

Mr. STOBY (Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said that the wording in paragraph 29 was meant to reflect United Nations activities, in countries such as Cambodia and Haiti, in which mandates from the General Assembly and Security Council could, of course, lead to some interaction of issues, such as political, humanitarian and environmental ones. The implication of the words referred to in paragraph 23 related to the entire United Nations development approach, in which, of course, the requirements of the Governments concerned would always be paramount.

Mr. SHAH (India) said he thought that the statement that the United Nations system had no agenda of its own was open to question. With regard to paragraph 29, the topic before the Council was the review of operational activities for development at field level; but the paragraph's wording seemingly implied that the resident coordinator system was being extended so as to be the repository of all United Nations activities.

Mr. STOBY (Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said there was no implication that the resident coordinator system would be used for anything other than the activities mandated.

Mr. BRUN (Norway) thanked the Secretariat for the analytical documentation it had provided. In addition to studying the details, his Government had sent a questionnaire to its diplomatic missions in all countries where there was a United Nations presence; it was clear from the response that the relevance and impact of United Nations activities were quite highly regarded in general, although views varied from one country to another.

With regard to section B of the interim report, progress in programme development and implementation had often been less than what had been expected a few years previously in areas such as the introduction of CSNs, the harmonization of programme cycles, the move towards a programme approach and a

shift towards national execution. The resident coordinator system needed to be better implemented throughout the system, and the coordinator's mandate to develop coordination at the country level must be strengthened.

The CSNs formed an excellent basis for the identification of areas of cooperation among the organizations of the United Nations system, including high-priority areas. Maximum use of CSNs should be encouraged, though emphasis might be needed on the development of guidelines and training. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the completion of some 41 notes was expected by the end of 1995.

National execution should focus on strengthening national capacity to take on full responsibility for a programme cycle. In that regard, the programme approach was essential for clarifying the division of roles. It must be ensured, however, that the approach represented a true change in programming, not merely a clustering of projects.

The impression gained at field level was that some differences in ambitions persisted among agencies, and even a certain reluctance to cooperate, in matters such as the programme approach and national execution. Clearer headquarters instructions and support were needed, therefore; in that regard, he noted that many resident coordinators would welcome better instructions and guidelines, and his delegation wondered what plans the Secretariat had in that regard.

The PRESIDENT said, in reply to a question by Mr. SLIPTCHENKO (Ukraine), that the members of the Council would have an opportunity later to make general comments on the interim report as a whole.

Mr. Jae Jm HONG (Republic of Korea), having endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, with respect to section A of the interim report, he shared the views put forward by the Secretariat concerning the trends in operational activities for development. He noted that there had been a substantial increase in requests for upstream technical and policy advice and intervention in the management/coordination of external cooperation. His delegation could support further strengthening of the programme approach, which focused on upstream policy advice to the government and private sectors. Of course, in that process, efforts should be focused on the capacity-building of recipient countries so as to have greater impact on their development efforts.

Mr. PAES SABOIA (Brazil) said that his delegation supported the proposal to establish operational links between the resident coordinator system and institutions such as the World Bank and regional development banks which were major sources in many countries of finance for United Nations programmes. Working arrangements rather than excessively formal mechanisms would help the countries sort out operational problems which arose from the difficult financing and administrative regulations under which those institutions operated. Furthermore, they would contribute to the overall purpose of ensuring greater cooperation between the various organizations.

Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda), having endorsed the statement made by the representative of the Philippines on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that he was intrigued by the statement in paragraph 33 of the interim report that "This role is being compromised by recent resource trends and shifts to national execution in many countries". Since his delegation believed strongly in national institutions as a way of increasing capacity and the ownership of the particular programme, he would welcome an explanation as to why national execution was perceived as having a negative impact.

Mr. SORENSEN (International Labour Organization) said that the objective of United Nations operational activities was not just to strengthen the capacities of the technical agencies but was focused on national capacity-building. The specialized agencies were seeking to reorient the interface between the funding organization and themselves. In that connection, they had encountered some problems which were referred to in the paragraph in question. It related to what was called the comparative advantage of the United Nations system and full utilization of the accumulated knowledge and experience of the specialized agencies in their relevant technical areas.

Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that national execution was the overall goal for all those concerned. The programmes were government plans and the specialized agencies made a contribution because of their considerable experience. However, the ultimate goal was to ensure that the Governments themselves executed the projects.

Mr. IRUMBA (Uganda) said he was not completely satisfied because the statement seemed to indicate that national execution was detracting from

the capacity of the specialized agencies to perform their roles. The agencies could be hired as consultants and their skills utilized, but, the objective of the programme should be to strengthen national-execution capacity.

Mr. ZYMANSKI (Poland) said that, in the post-cold-war era, the transition to democracy and the market economy had proved to be a very complex exercise leading to heavy social costs. To minimize those costs, there was need for an international exchange of experiences and, in that respect, the United Nations system could and should play a major role.

The change-over to sustainable human development called for a totally new approach to the concept of and new arrangements for development. The concept had been further elaborated at the Conferences on population and social matters. In the implementation of the Programmes of Action adopted at those conferences, UNFPA and UNDP, together with UNICEF, had a special role to play. His delegation supported the close cooperation of those organs in that regard. Such cooperation had to be firmly pursued at all levels by the donor and recipient Governments and by the NGOs.

His delegation thought that the decisions of the recent session of the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board constituted a good basis for mutual cooperation. The international organizations should not be entirely blamed for lack of sufficient purpose in the realization of sustainable human development, when the current international and political situation did not facilitate meeting the ambitious challenges and targets set at international forums and inspired by individual human hopes heightened by and commensurate with rapid technological and scientific progress.

If the principles and mechanisms for new opportunity activities were to be workable, they needed to be established through the genuine involvement of all those concerned, including the donor and recipient countries. They could not and should not be imposed by secretariats. There must be a firm commitment to implement the agreed mechanism not only by the secretariats but also by the other development partners.

The new flexible formula agreed upon by the UNDP/UNFPA Executive Board should facilitate active partnership. The recipient countries should be invited to share their views and experiences with the system. In the future, the period of triennial reviews should perhaps be made to coincide with the three-year technical cooperation cycle.

Mr. TOYAD (Malaysia), having endorsed the statement by the delegation of the Philippines, said, with regard to cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions, he noted that there was no reference to the kind of framework that would be established to facilitate coordination with those institutions. It was an important area, because considerable resources came from the institutions in question.

Mr. STOBY (Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said, with regard to paragraph 5 of the interim report, which indicated that there had been a change in the type of support requested, that that was an area where some sort of policy guidance would be required from the Council and, more particularly, from the General Assembly. It was the sort of issue that the Member States would be asked to consider, both in a few days' time when the matter was discussed with Governments in the Council and later, when it was discussed in the General Assembly.

With regard to the question concerning the relations with the Bretton Woods institutions, he had mentioned in his opening statement that the Secretary-General intended to make some recommendations. At the current stage he was unable to say what those recommendations would be but they would be based not only on the discussions that were shortly to take place but also on those that had already been held in the Council. The recommendations would also take account of other policy instruments which had touched upon the matter, including the communiqué regarding the Summit of the Group of Seven major industrialized countries (G-7).

Mr. CALOVSKI (Observer for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) said, with reference to section A of the annex to the Secretariat's note, that he would like to know whether there were any concrete ideas or proposals on how to deal with the situation.

Mr. HAEMMERLI (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) said that the Secretary-General had tabled proposals in connection with the negotiations on the new funding system launched within the framework of annex 1 of resolution 48/162. There were a number of specific and concrete proposals in two separate reports. He would be happy to make those proposals available at a later date to any persons who were not aware of them.

Mr. PEDROSO (Cuba) said that the improvement of national institutions did not fall within the competence of United Nations activities at the field level. Within the framework of national policies and strategies, countries were free to request from UNDP any assistance they deemed relevant without detriment to their sovereignty, but it was quite another matter if such assistance from UNDP was displayed as a trend.

Paragraph 5 gave the opinions of the resident coordinators in the field, which were interesting enough, but what delegations really wanted to know was what the Governments of recipient countries thought of the situation. It was not at all clear whether paragraph 5 reflected the views of the recipient countries with regard to priorities in terms of requests for assistance from UNDP.

In paragraph 23, it was stated that some Governments, particularly in Latin America, Africa and Eastern Europe, were seeking support from the United Nations system on upstream matters. However, if only some Governments were involved, that could not be put forward as a general trend in respect of operational activities for development.

According to paragraph 29, the United Nations system was, in some countries, helping to construct a functioning Government and a coherent civil society. He would like to know what was happening in other countries. The United Nations was often criticized with respect to its administration and efficiency, and his delegation wondered how that same Organization could help at the field level to establish efficient and capable administrations. The matter concerned a sensitive area that fell within the sovereignty of States.

With regard to national execution, he fully agreed that, in his own country's specific case, virtually all the assistance of the United Nations was being executed through various national actors. That was a matter that could be discussed subsequently in the General Assembly.

One essential issue being sidestepped was that of resources. It was not possible to have improved coordination if the resources for the implementation of the decisions taken by the United Nations system were non-existent.

Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that the interim report contained a great deal of information and he found the results of the questionnaires quite relevant. The tables gave an overview of the replies by the various resident coordinators' offices to the questionnaires. It would, no doubt, have been helpful to have more specific replies in terms of groups

of countries and a more specific view of the role of the United Nations in the various countries. He requested the Secretariat to provide, in the final version of the report, the same information but with specific reference to the LDCs, because it was in the LDCs that the United Nations development system had the most vital role to play.

It was interesting to learn from paragraph 16 that the World Bank's involvement in technical cooperation activities had steadily increased over the years. However, it would have been more informative to have a chapter containing data by groups of countries. There again, he thought that the World Bank was more involved in technical cooperation activities in the LDCs, a distinction that was not sufficiently clear in the report.

With respect to the CSN, readers were told that, in some cases, the World Bank had participated in the drafting of some strategy notes. He wondered whether it would not be possible for the resident coordinator's office in the field to prepare country assistance strategies for the World Bank.

Mr. SHIBATA (Japan) said that, while financial resources for development assistance were being increasingly used to provide humanitarian relief, his Government thought that too great a burden was being imposed on a single organ, namely, UNHCR. There had been cases when, at the end of an emergency situation, it had not been possible to transfer projects from UNHCR because there was no development agency dealing with projects of the kind in question. The development agencies, especially UNDP, should establish specific programmes for carrying out such projects.

With regard to coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions, his delegation welcomed the suggestion in the interim report that UNDP and other United Nations agencies should cooperate with those institutions for the purpose of strengthening the capacity of United Nations development activities in the areas of environment and poverty alleviation. Moreover, the United Nations system should strive to complement the Bretton Woods institutions in any fields where the former had a comparative advantage.

It was disappointing to find that, according to table 5A of the report, only five countries had so far completed and adopted the CSN, and that only 41 were expected to have done so before the end of 1995. It was clear that many countries remained indifferent to the concept. Paragraph 48 of the interim report mentioned lack of resources as a possible explanation, but his

delegation thought that significant results could be obtained if existing resources were used more efficiently with the assistance of the resident coordinator.

He would welcome the views of the Secretariat and agencies on the reasons for the reluctance of so many countries to prepare comprehensive CSNs. Drafting CSNs took time and energy, and perhaps an incentive should be provided. Consideration might be given to making completion of the notes a factor in determining how United Nations development funds were distributed. Efficiently conducted, the CSN could make a contribution to the effectiveness of the United Nations system comparable to that made by the regional coordinators.

His delegation shared the concerns expressed about the accountability problems arising from national execution. Although it could help to ensure that the governments of developing countries took direct responsibility for their development, the manner in which national execution was conducted should vary according to the stage of development achieved by individual countries and should go hand in hand with capacity-building activities.

Mr. KAARIA (Observer for Finland) said he would like clarification of some technical terms used in paragraph 32 of the interim report. "Cost sharing" was traditionally used in respect of the share of the donor's contribution made to another donor's operational activities, but the reference in that paragraph was to cost-sharing contributions from developing countries. When developing countries engaged in development projects supported by development assistance, the total sum involved in the project was traditionally divided into the part contributed by the country and the part contributed by its development-cooperation partners. He wondered whether the cost-sharing mentioned related to that kind of government involvement or to something else. There were, perhaps, government projects outside the developing country's own projects to which it was a cost-sharing contributor. If so, it would seem to be rather an odd situation.

Mr. MIKHNEVICH (Belarus) said that his Government, which attached great importance to the activation of the operational activities of the United Nations system, wished to strengthen its cooperation with the reformed UNDP, which would be furthered by the implementation of the first UNDP country programme for Belarus.

The distinctive feature of United Nations operational activities was their universality. His delegation supported the strengthening of international development cooperation, to make the United Nations system a united and powerful driving force for sustainable development, and the concentration of UNDP resources on key sustainable-development policies. It was, however, gravely concerned that, under the existing system of allocating resources, the principle of basing indicative planning figures (IPF) on per capita GNP was not being adhered to. Steps should be taken to remedy that situation.

Mr. HAEMMERLI (Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development), replying to the observer for Finland, said that the significant aspect of cost-sharing and funds-in-trust arrangements was that they were programmable resources and as such governed by rules and procedures. They were analogous to core resources, at least inasmuch as UNDP terminology was concerned. The observer for Finland had presumably, been referring to third-party cost sharing, by which one developing country financed the development activities of another. Such practices were not common and no aggregated data relating to them appeared in the statistics. Most cost-sharing and counterpart contributions were made on behalf of the country concerned.

Mr. GRAISSE (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)), referring to the question asked by the observer for Finland, said that, traditionally, donor countries provided multilateral and bilateral resources as part of cost-sharing contributions to UNDP-financed projects; they were known as "third-party cost-sharing contributions". The major change in the situation had been the sharp increase in the resources made available by developing countries themselves, contributions from donor countries remaining more or less unchanged. It was that new situation that was reflected in the tables. The practice was commonest in the Latin American area where developing countries contributed considerable sums - derived from their own budgets, or from World Bank, IDA or Inter-American Bank loans - to UNDP projects.

In reply to the point made by the representative of Japan regarding a lack of UNDP follow up to activities initiated by UNHCR, he said that there had been cases, e.g. in Central America, Cambodia and Mozambique, where UNDP

had taken over programme responsibilities from UNHCR. The UNDP Executive Board had recently decided that, under its next programming cycle, \$55 million would be allocated for assistance to countries in "difficult situations", and the Administrator had frequently affirmed that UNDP was determined to become a better development partner for UNHCR.

With regard to the point made by the representative of Cuba concerning paragraph 5 of the interim report, the English text of the paragraph was quite clear: the resident coordinators merely reported on the requests received from Governments. There was no UNDP special programme that encouraged or financed activities in the areas mentioned.

Ms. VOLKOFF (Canada) said that the interim report was a great improvement on its predecessors because it was analytical and provided a better linkage between the work of the Council and the working of the country programmes themselves. One of the themes of particular interest was sustainability, and there a distinction had to be made between the sustainability of United Nations programmes in the field and United Nations assistance to the sustainable development of recipient countries.

All four themes of section B on programme development and implementation - country strategy note, harmonization of programming cycles, programme approach, and national execution - were essentially aimed at a country approach as a foundation of sustainability. There were other elements, however, such as the thematic working groups mentioned in section D that were equally relevant.

She found it curious that, as stated in paragraph 144 of the interim report, the record of field programme committees and thematic working groups was so uneven, and that some countries found that technique less useful than had been foreseen in Assembly resolution 47/199. Attention should surely be directed to the problems experienced by countries rather than to the imposition of preconceived solutions.

Closely linked to sustainability was the question of the impact of programmes, and the interim report made some interesting suggestions with regard to future monitoring and evaluation, but more positive action was required. Efforts to arrive at consistent definitions were praiseworthy but hardly enough. One way that the Council could perhaps assist was by examining some of the thematic areas, in connection, for example, with the analysis of

the thematic groups. It might be found that some general themes occurred more frequently than others and lent themselves to specific impact evaluation.

With regard to the selection of personnel, and more specifically of the resident coordinators, her delegation believed that it was extremely important to select candidates with collaborative abilities, who could work harmoniously with both Governments and the various agencies.

Ms. ALBRECHTSEN (Denmark), having endorsed the statement by the representative of Spain on behalf of the European Union, said that, although a number of positive comments were made on CSNs in the interim report, so few of them had been completed that it would be premature to attempt an overall assessment of their value. A number of questions did, however, arise. She wondered whether the existing guidelines formulated by the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) gave sufficient guidance to those working at the field level, whether they were useful to such people only in the short term or in some more lasting way, for example, when there was a change of personnel using them, whether there was sufficient coherence in the way that individual funds and programmes understood the use to which the CSNs could be put in planning or reviewing country programmes and whether true complementarity was ensured between country programmes. In that connection, she noted that only half of those responding to questions had emphasized the importance of complementarity. Lastly, she would like to know whether there was scope for relating the CSN process to World Bank and IMF activities, as had been proposed by a number of field representatives.

She noted from paragraph 79 of the interim report that the Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes had endorsed, in principle, the gradual introduction of the programme approach. Her delegation would like to know what that amounted to in practice. With regard to national execution, she noted that no answer had yet been given to the question asked by the representative of Japan about accountability. An answer was clearly called for in view of the matters of serious concern mentioned in paragraph 100 of the report.

Mr. STOBY (Director of the Division for Policy Coordination and Economic and Social Council Affairs) said that it should be borne in mind that the CSNs resulted from an initiative by the Secretary-General that had been taken up by Governments and transformed by them into an operational instrument. As far as the application of CSNs was concerned, it had been

agreed that they should be adopted on the initiative of Governments, although the United Nations system would work with them in the field through the resident coordinators. The decision was to remain with Governments not only regarding the pace at which to proceed but also whether to accept the CSNs at all.

The current stage was marked by slow advances and some indifference on the part of countries, but the United Nations system could not compel countries to adopt the CSNs if they did not wish to do so. It might be that the notes were not sufficiently attractive for Governments, being felt by some to hold out no prospect of increases in resource flows. The matters concerned were of great importance and the Secretary-General would be addressing them in the final report.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.