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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 45th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 20 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 10.15 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION (agenda item 4) (continued) (E/1995/L.26, L.30 and L.31)

Draft resolution on organization of the operational activities of the
United Nations for international development cooperation segment (E/1995/L.26)

Mrs. MENENDEZ (Observer for Spain), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the European Union, said it was intended to impart additional order and content to the Council's discussions in future years. Accordingly, it requested the executive boards of the funds and programmes of the United Nations to ensure that their annual sessions were scheduled early enough to enable their reports to be issued in good time so that the Council could undertake its policy guidance function. Paragraph 2 embodied a decision that the high-level meeting of the operational activities segment in 1996 should focus on how to promote future international development cooperation and strengthen collaboration between member States, the United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions at the field level. Lastly, paragraph 3 proposed a number of themes for discussion at the working-level meetings in 1996.

Draft resolution on policy guidance on operational activities for development
to the funds and programmes (E/1995/L.31)

Mrs. MENENDEZ (Observer for Spain), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the European Union, said it was intended to clarify the policy guidance to be provided by the Council to United Nations funds and programmes in accordance with General Assembly resolution 48/162. It thus offered suggestions for policies in a number of areas, including priority setting, country programming, monitoring, evaluation and impact, reports to the Council on operational activities and common administrative services.

Draft resolution on operational activities of the United Nations for
international development cooperation segment (E/1995/L.30)

Ms. BAUTISTA (Philippines), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it embodied considerations of the utmost importance for strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of United Nations operational activities for international development cooperation. It reaffirmed the need for a substantial increase in the

resources for operational activities on a predictable, continuous and assured basis and urged donor countries to present for discussion during the operational activities segment in 1996 a report on how they would implement paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 47/199.

The draft resolution also requested the Secretary-General to finalize the report on the triennial policy review of operational activities in consultation with Member States and to make recommendations on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199. The Council would decide that, in 1996, the high-level meeting of the operational activities segment should focus on strengthening collaboration between the United Nations development system and the Bretton Woods institutions in the fields of social and economic development. The Council would further decide on specific themes to be included in the work-level meetings of the operational activities segment.

In paragraph 8, subparagraph (c) (ii), the words "the efficiency and effectiveness of the assistance provided by" should be inserted between "evaluation of" and "United Nations funds and programmes".

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS: REPORTS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES, CONFERENCES AND RELATED QUESTIONS (agenda item 6) (continued) (E/1995/L.27)

(e) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROGRAMME OF ACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1995/L.28)

(f) INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1995/L.29)

Draft resolution on consumer protection (E/1995/L.27)

Mr. GONZALEZ (Chile), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors which had been joined by the representatives of Colombia, Mexico, Norway and the Philippines and the observer for Ecuador, said that the year 1995 marked the tenth anniversary of the adoption of guidelines for consumer protection in General Assembly resolution 39/248. (In the first preambular paragraph of the draft resolution, the date "9 April 1995" should, of course, be revised to read "9 April 1985".) The draft resolution recognized that much had been done by the United Nations to apply the guidelines for consumer protection. It urged Governments to continue their efforts in the cause of consumer protection, which were of importance for all countries, but especially for the developing ones. It also noted that at its

third session, the Commission on Sustainable Development had recommended that the consumer protection guidelines be expanded to include guidelines for sustainable consumption patterns.

Draft resolution on implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (E/1995/L.28)

Ms. BAUTISTA (Philippines), introducing the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it would have the Council decide that the terms of reference and mandate of the revitalized Commission on Population and Development should reflect the comprehensive and integrated nature of population and development issues and that the Commission should monitor the progress made in achieving the targets for financial resources necessary to implement the recommendations of the International Conference on Population and Development.

In view of the Commission's expanded tasks and the impact of decisions in the fields of population and development on the economic and social situation in the developing countries, there was an urgent need for direct participation by a larger number of countries in the Commission's work. The Council would thus decide to enlarge the Commission's membership to 53 members, to be elected for a term of 3 years, with due regard for equitable geographical distribution.

The draft resolution also recommended that the General Assembly should, at its fiftieth session, consider establishing a separate executive board for the United Nations Population Fund.

Draft decision on international migration and development (E/1995/L.29)

Ms. BAUTISTA (Philippines), introducing the draft decision on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said it was a straightforward text which aimed to bring the issue of international migration and development forward for discussion by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 49/127, the discussion by the Assembly would also cover the question of convening a United Nations conference on international migration and development.

REGIONAL COOPERATION IN THE ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND RELATED FIELDS
(agenda item 7) (E/1995/40-46)

Mr. MOOY (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) said that, over the past year, the Asia and Pacific region had sustained its high growth performance and currently accounted for over a quarter of world GDP, with its developing countries

accounting for 9 per cent. Current projections indicated that the high average rate of economic growth in the region would continue at least until the end of the century.

The countries in the region were not, however, a homogeneous group and the positive experience to date had not been shared by all countries, and certainly not by the least developed countries (LDCs), the Pacific island economies and the economies in transition, which had not been able to achieve sustained growth in per capita income. The central Asian republics were still grappling with reduced output and unacceptably high rates of inflation.

The uneven distribution of development and its benefits among the various population segments within countries continued to remain a basic challenge. Extreme poverty still affected 800 million people in the region, in spite of a substantial reduction in the proportion of the impoverished in the populations of most countries. Wider and more equitable access to food, nutrition, sanitation, housing, health and education was an urgent imperative.

Protection of the environment and promotion of truly sustainable development were of common concern to all the countries of the region, in view of the rapid increase in air and water pollution, deforestation and desertification and the overexploitation of mineral and fuel reserves. Another subject of concern was the development of human resources: if the region was to maintain its competitive edge in the rapidly evolving global economy, it must continue to direct its attention to enhancing the productive capacity of its human resources. And no progress was possible on any front without adequate infrastructure, including road, rail and sea networks, airports and harbours, communication facilities, energy and water supplies.

A most serious challenge confronting the countries of the Asia and Pacific region was to secure macroeconomic stability with generally low rates of inflation. Governments would increasingly have to fine-tune their economic management policies in order to ensure macroeconomic stability while sustaining and strengthening the momentum for growth.

One dimension of poverty in the region related to uneven growth. If the countries which were lagging were to be integrated into the mainstream of economic development, a much greater volume of external support, particularly official development assistance (ODA), was required, including technical assistance to develop domestic capacity. The stark contrasts in the region's development scenario facilitated complementarity in production and demand;

but industrial standards needed to be developed in order to promote trade, for example, through inter-industry complementarity - a necessary approach in view of the growing competitiveness in the world economy. One means of narrowing the gap was to promote intermediate relationships among countries, such as "tripartite relationships", linking North-South with South-South cooperation, in connection not only with technology but also with trade and projects. ESCAP had undertaken some programmes of that nature, and would encourage its member countries' further participation.

At its fifty-first session, the Commission had adopted a resolution on the mid-term review, at the regional level, of the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the 1990s. It had also noted the decisions adopted by the Special Bodies on Least Developed and Land-locked Developing Countries and on Pacific Island Developing Countries.

The Commission had expressed its appreciation of the successful conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations, which was viewed as offering new opportunities and challenges. It had also focused its attention on the substantial environmental costs of economic growth. While awareness of the need to address environmental problems appeared to be gaining momentum, the technical and financial capacity to take adequate corrective and preventive action remained limited.

The Commission's balanced approach in dealing with economic and social issues of emerging concern was reflected in the guidance it had provided for the forthcoming ministerial conferences, namely, the Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific in November 1995, the Ministerial Conference on Infrastructure in 1996, and the Regional Ministerial Conference on Social Development in 1997. With a view to an integrated approach to development at the regional level, ESCAP, at a meeting held in May 1994, had decided to establish the Regional Inter-agency Committee for Asia and the Pacific (RICAP), chaired by himself; the first meeting of RICAP had been successfully concluded at Bangkok the previous month.

The Commission had unanimously endorsed the Russian Federation's application to become a regional member, and recommended that the Council should adopt a resolution accordingly at its current session.

The Asia-Pacific region, like other developing regions, was experiencing a time of testing and transition. Democratic values were taking firm root, and many countries had achieved impressive economic growth. The question was

how to ensure that the vast majority of the population enjoyed the fruits of progress. The Commission remained firmly committed to assisting its member Governments in that important task.

Ms. PASTIZZI-FERENCIC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) said that, following the severe recession and consequent maladjustments of the 1980s in Latin America's development, most of the region's countries had made a reasonable recovery by 1994, accompanied by growing financial stability, gradual diversification and modernization of production, improved macroeconomic management and a moderate increase in saving and investment levels, supported in part by a substantial inflow of external resources.

The climate of growing democratization and major advances towards economic interdependence, boosted by a new round of formal integration commitments, had helped; on the negative side, however, were unaddressed social problems and growing poverty, reflecting the high social cost of structural adjustment. The Mexican financial crisis and its regional repercussions had been reflected, inter alia, in stock-exchange performances over the past few months. At the end of the first quarter of 1995, the regional economies showed a greater diversity of performance than in previous years. Some details were annexed to the text made available to the members of the Council.

The current situation, however, by no means signified a return to the 1980s. In particular, the major advances in macroeconomic management and economic reform were significant. Debt indicators were down, fiscal adjustment and institutional reform had taken place, and productivity had increased significantly. Latin America's medium-term prospects, therefore, were viewed with optimism.

The Commission's main activities during the past year, including those of the Latin American and Caribbean Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) and the Latin American Demographic Centre (CELADE), had focused on many development issues concerned with medium-term growth. In the first place, it had continued to monitor the region's economic and social evolution (in which connection she mentioned some of the publications relevant to that task).

Secondly, it had continued to conduct research and formulate proposals on issues such as reform of the public sector and experience in decentralization.

Special importance had been assigned to industrial restructuring to achieve competitiveness, financial-market reform, and trade liberalization and to activities to expand and intensify commercial and economic links between Latin American and Eastern European countries.

Thirdly, ECLAC continued to be a meeting place; in addition to some 30 seminars, it had prepared and carried out the sixth session of the Regional Conference on the Integration of Women into the Economic and Social Development of Latin America and the Caribbean, and the 21st meeting of Presiding Officers of the Conference. It had also supported the third Regional Meeting of Ministers and High-level Authorities of Urban Development and Housing in Latin America and the Caribbean, held at Quito in November 1994. Its secretariat had also been involved in preparations for the World Summit for Social Development.

Fourthly, the ECLAC secretariat continued to combine analytical and operational activities, especially in technical assistance and training. In that context, ILPES had developed a flexible, modular system of recurring courses of average length, on subjects such as municipal and local development project management, and CELADE had participated in the preparatory and follow-up activities connected with the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

Lastly, ECLAC continued to play its role as the main source of information, data and statistics on the region's economic and social performance. Work had continued on the setting up of the Short-term Indicators Database, the incorporation of new international statistical classifications and the development of a data bank on Latin American countries' external debt. Assistance had also been provided to Latin American countries in implementing the new System of National Accounts.

By carrying out work at its subregional offices as well as at headquarters, ECLAC was able to tailor its activities to the diverse situations in the region and maintain a field presence, thus keeping its activities relevant to its member Governments and continuing to have an impact on the region's development thinking.

Mr. SARR (Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)) said that the Council's discussion of the economic and social situation in Africa at its high-level segment testified to the importance it

attached to the subject. The development challenges faced by that continent called for a sound partnership among African Governments, the private sector, civil society and the international community.

Africa had experienced a modest recovery in regional outputs during 1994, with a GDP growth of 2.4 per cent, compared to only 0.9 per cent in 1993 and -0.3 per cent in 1992. Despite that modest increase - the highest for the 1990-1994 period - per capita income continued to fall, because GDP growth was as yet unable to keep up with population growth. Thus, living conditions had continued to deteriorate since the beginning of the current decade.

As could be seen from the World Economic and Social Survey, 1995 (E/1995/50), the steady improvement in overall economic performances since 1992 was expected to continue in 1995, with a GDP growth of 3 per cent, which would almost catch up on population growth. The performance would depend, of course, on developments in the world economy and on internal conditions. In that regard, the outlook for commodity prices seemed favourable for 1995, while some countries stood to benefit from the implementation of the Naples terms relating to external debt. Other conditions, of course, were the pace of economic reforms, the climatic situation and progress in resolving conflicts.

The overall situation had, of course to be viewed in the context of the remarkable strides made in other regions and of the fall in external assistance flows, which was inducing the African countries to look increasingly at what could be done chiefly by using their own resources, external resources playing a complementary role. Therefore, the Commission, at its most recent session, had considered capacity-building in the region's countries as one of the main topics for action.

Another major issue it had considered was that of regional cooperation and integration. With the coming into force, in May 1994, of the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community, ECA had intensified its efforts in support of the Treaty's implementation. In collaboration with the Organization of African Unity (OAU) and the African Development Bank, it had helped to set up a committee to formulate proposals for resource mobilization in support of the Community. It should be recalled, in that regard, that 33 of the world's 48 LDCs were members of ECA. Assisting those countries was part of the Commission's overall objective of promoting Africa's economic and social development, as well as a priority item of its 1994-1995 work

programme. In anticipation of the global mid-term review of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries in the 1990s, the Commission's Conference of Ministers had, at its thirtieth session, adopted a special memorandum which stressed the need for stronger efforts by African LDCs and their development partners.

In view of the current trend towards globalization, exemplified by the recent conclusion of the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations and the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Commission had organized, in collaboration with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), an international conference on the implications of the Uruguay Round agreements. It had also organized, jointly with the United Nations Organization for Education, Science and Culture (UNESCO), ITU and the International Development Research Centre of Canada, the first African Regional Symposium on Telematics Development, held in April 1995; the symposium had produced several recommendations for accelerating the use of information technology in Africa.

The Commission's firm and continuing commitment to the advancement of women, who represented one of the least advantaged sectors of societies, had been reflected, inter alia, by the Fifth African Regional Conference on Women, which it had organized at Dakar in 1994. The Conference had adopted the African Platform for Action on the Advancement of Women, as a contribution to the Fourth World Conference on Women.

The Commission's operational role in the advancement of women was matched by its analytical work on women's issues in Africa. A special ECA study on gender disparities in formal education in Africa showed how the pattern of educational systems in Africa had affected female students and suggested ways and means of bridging the gender gap. ECA had long attached priority to the advancement of women and the African Centre for Women, established 20 years previously, testified to the fact.

Another prominent feature of the Commission's activities was the development of water resources. In response to the need to increase water supply for commercial and household use, it had organized, in collaboration with the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), an international conference on water resources in March 1995. The Conference had formulated a strategy to rehabilitate the institutional, financial, manpower and technological capacity

of national water services. The outcome of the Conference would be used as an input to the ongoing initiative of the Secretary-General concerning Africa, in which the management of water resources was a priority area.

The progress made in dealing with the external debt crisis of the developing countries should neither lull the international community into complacency nor conceal the severe constraints that Africa's external debt placed on the growth and development potential of the region. According to ECA estimates, Africa's total external debt by the end of 1994 had stood at US\$ 312.2 billion, or 231.3 per cent of total exports.

African countries had, to some extent, benefited from the Toronto terms and recognized the improvements brought about in the Naples terms. However, there was an urgent need to improve the latter and for a bold initiative on multilateral debt. It was encouraging to note that the Group of Seven major industrialized countries (G-7) had, at its 1995 Summit, recognized that some of the poorest countries had substantial multilateral debt problems. It was clear that a large number of those countries belonged to the African region.

ECA was deeply committed to supporting the process of economic and social change in Africa. That commitment was, first and foremost, in support of the consistent economic reforms which most African countries had been painfully implementing. It also supported the efforts made by the OAU with regard to conflict prevention, management and resolution in order to ensure peace and stability, which were a sine qua non for economic growth and development. The Commission was vigorously promoting economic cooperation and integration so that Africa could enter the twenty-first century as a strong economic and trading bloc. It was committed to being a major force in addressing the challenge of drastically reducing the widespread poverty which characterized the region.

Mr. EL-BEBLAWI (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) said that, over the past year, the ESCWA region's performance in socio-economic fields had continued to be influenced by a number of interacting factors. Chief among them had been the decline in oil prices, which had significantly reduced the revenues of the oil-producing and oil-exporting countries of the region. That had had negative consequences that had adversely affected the balance of trade and Governments' budgets and had led to the introduction of austerity measures in public spending. On the

whole, economic activities in the ESCWA region continued to decline, mainly due to the post-Gulf-war situation which still affected the economies of several ESCWA member States.

The most significant ESCWA regional feature remained the serious imbalance between brisk population growth and sluggish economic expansion. In addition, the state of political relations among certain countries in the region had led to prolonged disruption of trade and commercial channels, thus resulting in a substantial reduction in the flow of capital investment in the region. The high rate of unemployment, coupled with inflation, also constituted a serious problem in many countries. Other challenges included the effects of the Middle East peace process on the region's socio-economic and political scene.

It must be admitted that, since its inception, ESCWA had suffered from an identity crisis that limited its role vis-à-vis other regional organizations. In addition, it had suffered from deep-rooted structural problems in recent years. All those factors had led ESCWA to undertake a thorough self-examination to define for itself an identity that would distinguish it from other regional institutions in the new era of peace, development and democracy in the Middle East. The self-examination process had resulted in two main outcomes: a restructuring of the work programmes and a reorganization of the ESCWA secretariat.

Based on the Charter of the United Nations, ESCWA was better equipped to play a major role with respect to the new regional and international challenges of the post-cold-war era. In fact, resolutions adopted at the most recent session of the Commission in May 1995 had once again confirmed the role of ESCWA in the region and mandated its secretariat to implement its new programme approach.

In conclusion, he said that the definition of the distinctive role of ESCWA in the region, the new orientation of work programmes and its reorganized structure would allow it to play its role in a most appropriate manner in accordance with the major developments taking place in Western Asia.

Mr. BERTHELOT (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE)) said that the process of integration within the region was continuing. There had been significant integration of Central and Eastern European countries into the region as a whole. Such integration was carried out through exchanges of various types, and intersectoral exchanges

constituted a particularly important sign of integration in general. Integration was also reflected in capital movement and in foreign direct investment (FDI), although such investment might not always be at the level that might be wished. It might even be said that some Central European countries were already integrated into the European Union in the same way that countries like Spain and Portugal had been largely integrated into the European Community before becoming full members.

Growth and reform went hand in hand. Countries that were the first to embark on a serious reform process were also the first to register recovery and growth. The growth that had taken place in Central Europe and the fact that the rate of decline had slowed in the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) were not really exceptional. It was important to draw lessons from the reform process. In the Economic Survey of Europe in 1994-1995, ECE stressed reforms that concentrated on stabilization and liberalization. They were two indispensable elements but were not sufficient in themselves.

In particular, structural reforms in the countries in transition had been inadequate and inflation had remained high because certain structural rigidities had not been addressed. Consequently, there was still great uncertainty with regard to the possibility of maintaining the investment rate. In the future, investment would have to be sought from financial institutions. Unfortunately, there had not been sufficient reform of those institutions in that area.

If efforts to bring about reform were to continue, action had to be taken by Governments and such action had to be supported by public opinion. From that point of view, it was encouraging to note that recent elections in a number of countries in transition had shown that democracy had taken root and was working in those countries.

It was impossible to ignore the current ethnic conflicts, wars and terrible human rights abuses which were occurring in the region. The danger of future conflicts and tensions also affected the economic situation and the way people thought. In addition, the sanctions applied by the Security Council had in some cases affected adjacent countries as well as the countries that had been targeted.

There was a vital need to continue structural reforms in the countries in transition and to emphasize the structural aspect of all the reforms

undertaken. It was also important that the attitude of the international community should be clearly defined, so that the people would understand what it meant by reform and that it was willing to accept the greater integration of the countries concerned. It was essential to facilitate trade and investment and, where required, to provide institutional support.

With regard to trends in the region as a whole, there were four he wished to emphasize. First of all, with respect to the ongoing integration process, it was also necessary to consider how integration was proceeding in other areas such as the CIS or the North American Free Trade Association (NAFTA). Another trend that was emerging in the region had to do with subregional groupings. In that connection, he mentioned that ECE had begun a dialogue with the existing regional groupings. Various institutions had been emerging within the framework of the former Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which had become the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and that change had made it possible to focus on the importance of economic security within the region. He was happy with the role given to ECE in the economic aspect of the OSCE activities.

During the coming year, the Commission would maintain the same fundamental objectives as hitherto, namely, that of promoting harmonization and integration throughout the region. That would be done in particular with a view to preparing the Conference on Environment for Europe that was due to be held at Sofia in October 1995. That Conference would be an extremely important one and it was to be hoped that it would help ECE to develop common joint long-term policies for the environment in Europe. He also hoped that it would help to promote cooperation and to provide support to countries that were in a particularly difficult situation.

Two of the Commission's activities of interest not only to the countries of the region but also to those outside it were the revision of the TIR convention, which facilitated the transit of cargoes by road, and which was at risk because of increasingly widespread fraud and organized crime; and the revitalization of the working groups on the facilitation of international trade, which would provide a new framework for the increasingly global use of EDIFACT. ECE was ready to cooperate closely with the other regional commissions in exploring the benefits of that programme, and it would continue to cooperate with UNCTAD, especially through its new trade-efficiency programme.

The needs of the countries in transition would continue to shape much ECE work, complemented by the programme of transition workshops and the regional advisory services programme - activities which the Secretariat would seek to diversify. The specific needs of the Mediterranean region would be reflected in a new ECE initiative, which, he hoped, would be reinforced by the forthcoming Barcelona Conference of the European Union.

ECE had decided to hold its Jubilee Fiftieth Anniversary session in 1997 at a high level, and to prepare for the occasion a declaration on the strengthening of economic cooperation within the region and on the strategic direction of its future work. A process was to be set up in September 1995 to prepare the session and to conduct a further in-depth review of its programme and methods of work with a view to achieving greater efficiency and savings. He was confident that, within that context, the prioritization of ECE work would be reinforced and adapted to current needs.

Introducing, in his role as coordinator of the regional commissions, the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/1995/40), he drew particular attention to the four emerging, common and mutually reinforcing trends that were mentioned in chapter III of the report: ongoing reforms in restructuring; increasing involvement with major global United Nations conferences; the work programme, looking ahead to country needs into the next century; and increased focus on regional coordination.

Reform and restructuring had been almost constant preoccupations of all the regional commissions in recent years. They had sought to streamline their structures and operations and to make them more effective in the service of their membership. The result was a more integrated structure geared to meet emerging challenges and opportunities, the benefits of which would be further enhanced by the increased involvement of the regional commissions in the preparations for, and implementation of the results of, the major United Nations global conferences.

The five executive secretaries were committed to pursuing the efficacy of reforms and restructuring. They would act both on the initiative of their membership and on their own initiative. The executive secretaries and the Officer-in-Charge of UNCTAD had jointly launched a further independent study of activities in their programmes of work to see where there might be potential for streamlining and synergies.

He also drew attention to the proposal of the five executive secretaries on cooperation among the regional commissions in the field of international migration, contained in chapter IV of the report. The executive secretaries considered that international migration issues continued to be inadequately documented and understood in many parts of the world, especially the developing regions, with the consequence that policy-making lacked scientifically-grounded information and knowledge. They also considered that, in some regions, there was ample room for the facilitation of dialogue, at the policy-making and technical levels, among the countries concerned. They, therefore, proposed that the regional commissions should cooperate on activities to improve information and knowledge on international migration and its economic and social courses and consequences.

Those activities would greatly contribute to the implementation of the ICPD Programme of Action and to preparations for the debate on international migration issues at the 1997 session of the Commission on Population and Development. The analytical capabilities of the regional Commissions' secretariats would focus on economic and social aspects of migration specific to their respective regions, in cooperation with international and regional organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Labour Organization (ILO), and the Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis (DESIPA).

The executive secretaries had found the recent informal exchange of views with delegations to the Council extremely useful - a judgement shared by the President of the Council, who had expressed the view that a similar meeting should be held in 1996, perhaps on more structured lines.

Ms. BAUTISTA (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that they took special note of the action-oriented programmes being pursued by States under the aegis of the regional commissions, including: capacity-building for science and technology and industrial development; implementation of Agenda 21; infrastructure, communications and transport development; reform of the public sector and financial markets and decentralization; transformation of agricultural production; establishment of social and economic databases; human-resource development; poverty alleviation; and the empowerment of women.

Together with the decisions and resolutions adopted by the regional commissions, the programmes testified to the importance of regional

cooperation. As well as transforming an international agenda into concrete activities, taking account of the specificities of each region, and thus bringing them closer to the people, the regional commissions provided the necessary forum for cooperation. They possessed an array of comparative advantages that enhanced their contributions in the economic and social fields.

The Group of 77 and China fully supported their submissions that: shared interests and the need to coexist, resulting from a complex network of economic and cultural relationships, facilitated analysis of regional issues; the regional commissions bridged the gap between United Nations entities operating at the global level and those with country operations, and were thus able to promote regional initiatives; they constituted well-tried intergovernmental machinery capable of supporting cooperation among experts and policy makers; their expertise and experience enabled them to address regional issues of a cross-sectoral nature; and they served as a forum for dialogue between the various subregional groupings and for the harmonization of standards and practices of countries of the region in question.

The Group of 77 and China thus called for closer coordination between the Council and the regional commissions, which should be given an opportunity to participate actively in Council meetings, including through dialogue between Council members and the executive secretaries during the Council's substantive session. The Group of 77 and China also requested the regional commissions to continue to include in their programmes of work global economic and social issues that enjoyed the support of the international community.

Mr. REVA (Ukraine) expressed support for the Secretary-General's efforts to continue the decentralization of United Nations activities in the social and economic sectors and to enhance the independent role of the regional commissions. He also welcomed the emphasis placed in the report on the need for further enhancement of coordination of the work of the regional commissions with that of United Nations operational organs, specialized agencies and other international organizations.

ECE was a unique body in that it embraced all the countries and regions of Europe, and his delegation supported its endeavours to develop cooperation with other regional and subregional bodies, particularly the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

The results achieved at the fiftieth session of the Commission were generally to be commended. His delegation supported the appeal to the Secretary-General, in decision A (50) (E/1995/40, paras. 4-6), to consider the possibility of further strengthening the Commission and providing the resources necessary for it to fulfil its mandate, taking into account the considerable increase of its membership from 34 to 55 countries and the launching of its programme of assistance to countries in transition.

The problems faced by the countries in transition were fraught with serious long-term consequences for the political and economic situation of Europe and the world, and activity on their behalf was rightly a priority of the Commission's activities, which should be further activated and strengthened. The time had come to strengthen the functions of the Commission as a focal point within the United Nations system to facilitate the promotion of mutual cooperation on behalf of the countries in transition, as provided for in decision B (50), (paras. 7 and 8) of which Ukraine had been a sponsor.

A new area of long-term activity for the Commission on behalf of those countries was its programme of regional advisory services, which were an outstanding example of practical decentralization. The initial stages of the programme had aroused great interest in the countries in transition, including Ukraine, which had played an active role in the adoption of decision C (50) (para. 9) at the fiftieth session of the Commission.

In his statement in the high-level segment, the head of the Ukrainian delegation had stressed the need to step up the activities of the regional commissions in the social sphere as a vital part of the economic and social interrelationship which was of essential importance in the follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

The year 1997 would mark the fiftieth anniversary of the foundation of the ECE, which should not be allowed to pass without recognition of the significant contribution it had made to the achievement of United Nations purposes. It would also provide an occasion for defining the strategic directions of future activities. His delegation, accordingly, supported decision A (50) and believed that preparatory work for the jubilee should be initiated forthwith.

The meeting rose at noon.