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Chairman: Mr. PETRESKI (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.30 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF YITZHAK RABIN, PRIME MINISTER OF ISRAEL

1. Mr. COHEN (Israel) thanked the Chairman and all the members of the Committee on behalf of his country for their expressions of sympathy following the assassination of Mr. Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, and said that the Government of Israel was determined to continue to work towards a comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East.

AGENDA ITEM 97: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (A/50/113 and Add.1, A/50/254-S/1995/501, A/50/345, A/50/425-S/1995/787, A/50/475, A/50/518)

(a) TRIENNIAL POLICY REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (A/50/202-E/1995/76, A/50/202/Add.1-E/1995/76/Add.1, A/50/202/Add.2-E/1995/76/Add.2, A/50/202/Add.3-E/1995/76/Add.3)

2. Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development) introduced the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system (A/50/202 and Add.1 and 2) submitted by the Secretary-General in accordance with paragraph 55 of General Assembly resolution 47/199.

3. Since one of the central aims of the report was to supply a sound technical and substantive basis for the triennial review, special attention had been paid to collecting a broad spectrum of views on the current state of operational activities of United Nations bodies by various means: by sending questionnaires to developing countries, developed countries, United Nations organizations, resident coordinators and their senior colleagues, at the country level, and by sending missions to 14 recipient countries. In addition, extensive consultations within the United Nations system had been conducted, particularly within the context of the Administrative Committee on Coordination. The preliminary review at the substantive session of the Economic and Social Council had provided important insights which had guided the finalization of the report in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 4 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/50, and had been updated with further responses received from developing countries, UNDP, UNICEF, WFP and UNFPA.

4. The report, which defined the areas in which immediate action was required by the General Assembly at its fiftieth session, contained 28 recommendations and supporting analyses covering all aspects of resolution 47/199, in addition to information regarding improved regional coordination and operational collaboration with the Bretton Woods institutions. All the recommendations responded to specific needs: they voiced concerns expressed at the country and local levels, and decisions in those areas would foster a more systematic approach to substantive collaboration among the principal partners involved.

5. The current state of multilateral development cooperation was paradoxical. At a time when United Nations system activities were increasing in volume and scope, available resources, including official development assistance (ODA),

continued to diminish. If that trend continued, the United Nations system would lose its effectiveness on the ground and it would be that much more difficult to carry out the tasks of reform and coordination.

6. The recommendations therefore focused on the triad underpinning operational activities: governance funding and operational efficiency. While impressive progress had been made with regard to governance and efficiency, funding posed serious problems. It was therefore to be hoped that the negotiations on an improved funding system would be reinvigorated in accordance with paragraph 32 of General Assembly resolution 48/162, and that the next three years would witness the emergence of a reliable system of funding and programming that met the requirements of developing countries.

7. Operational activities were an important way of supporting national activities to implement global conferences. In that context, it was imperative to maintain country specificity. Cooperation activities undertaken by the United Nations system were based on the precept that all programmes and projects, regardless of how they were funded, retained a national character. Multilateral development cooperation must therefore serve the purposes of the national leadership, encourage the strengthening of national capacity and respect the prerogative of countries to set their own priorities. That did not apply only to funds and programmes of the United Nations: the specialized agencies and financial institutions, particularly the Bretton Woods institutions, could also be included at the request of programme countries.

8. The United Nations was passing through a critical period. The crisis of confidence in it and the lack of resources had led to considerable rethinking on the new direction to be given to its work and the new momentum given to its mandates, particularly on the occasion of its fiftieth anniversary. There was a growing emphasis on strengthening its development activities and on streamlining its presence at the country level. Operational activities being the "visible face" of the United Nations in many countries, they contributed significantly to its image. A triennial review therefore provided an important opportunity to improve the functioning of the United Nations and enhance efficiency and effectiveness.

9. Mr. SPETH (Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme) said that the triennial review of operational activities for development was taking place at a time when the United Nations development system was undergoing momentous change. The mandate of UNDP had been fundamentally transformed in order to build a more focused, effective and accountable organization. Over the next three-year programming cycle, which would coincide with the next triennial review, UNDP would contribute to implementing the 28 recommendations presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/50/202), which were all important steps towards a more vital United Nations.

10. UNDP had streamlined its structure in 1994, had a new Executive Board, and had introduced the process of setting success indicators as part of the reporting procedure. Its mandate had been transformed, and now consisted of helping to develop national capacity to achieve sustainable human development, priority being given to the fight against poverty and its corollaries, the advancement of women, environmental protection and the creation of sustainable

livelihoods. Given its focus on poverty eradication, UNDP was committed to implementing the commitments made at the World Summit for Social Development, promoting an integrated approach to poverty eradication within the United Nations system and helping countries to develop their own strategies and programmes in that field.

11. As part of its efforts to improve the quality of its programme, UNDP had changed its programming process, making it incentive-based, and would allocate its resources among countries with a view to improving programme quality and results.

12. With regard to support to the United Nations system in general and a system of resident coordinators in particular, UNDP was operating at both headquarters and country level. At headquarters level, the Administrator had been given the responsibility of improving coordination and harmonization of policies in the sphere of economic and social work, which had allowed him the privilege of assisting the Secretary-General in preparing his recommendations on an Agenda for Development, the United Nations system special initiative for Africa and follow-up measures to recent United Nations conferences, and in defining new responsibilities for the regional economic commissions. At the country level, UNDP had given priority to supporting the resident coordinator system and had taken several measures to that end: it had extended the selection pool of resident coordinators/resident representatives and had put in place special training programmes; a larger percentage of resources had been allocated to the work of resident coordinators and the assignment procedure for resident coordinators/resident representatives had been made more rigorous, in order to meet the individual needs of countries. UNDP had created a special support office at headquarters, and had established mid-career training programmes for resident coordinators and representatives in order to foster greater cohesion. Lastly, a common country situation analysis methodology was being developed by the Subgroup on Harmonization of Programming Procedures of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP).

13. Enhanced coordination required the strengthening of links with the Bretton Woods institutions. UNDP had therefore revitalized its joint task force with the World Bank in order to enhance substantive and operational collaboration at global and country levels in areas such as capacity-building, aid coordination, co-financing and complex emergencies. Furthermore, a working group on the strengthening of cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions had been constituted under the chairmanship of the Associate Administrator of UNDP, with the Department of Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis, UNCTAD, UNICEF and UNFPA as members. Lastly, to ensure enhanced links between the Bretton Woods institutions and the United Nations system, the complementary nature of the three instruments in force - the letter of intent, the policy framework paper and the country strategy note - should be improved in order to achieve people-centred sustainable development.

14. Since over 40 per cent of the ODA managed by United Nations bodies was allocated to emergency relief operations, UNDP had reoriented its efforts in order to support bodies which helped refugees, internally displaced persons and other victims of crises. A special UNDP funding facility had been created to supply countries in crisis with the resources necessary for their reconstruction

or rehabilitation, and through round tables the Programme had mobilized supplementary resources for countries such as Angola and Rwanda. Strengthening the UNDP emergency response division had been made a top priority in order to assist the resident coordinator system in a wide variety of pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis situations. To that end, procedures had been made more flexible, rosters of specially qualified personnel had been established and UNDP had significantly expanded its country-level work in peace-building, reconciliation and reconstruction. UNDP also supported the Department of Humanitarian Affairs by working to ensure that the resident coordinator had the training and experience necessary to coordinate humanitarian operations in complex situations and emergencies.

15. Lastly, the path that operational activities should take over the next three years was currently being mapped out, and the complex interrelationships which existed between operational activities for development and emergency operations should accordingly be taken into consideration so that the various components of the system could continue to make a case for donors to fund the efforts of the countries involved.

16. Mrs. SADIK (Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund) said that the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) was applying General Assembly resolution 47/199 in its policy planning, programming and training exercises. The Fund had strengthened the role of resident coordinators, particularly in the context of the implementation at country level of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development. In order to implement that Programme, UNFPA field offices had been asked to work closely with all United Nations bodies. Since many of the Conference goals were very similar to those of other recent international conferences, such cooperation guaranteed a more coherent implementation of the goals of other conferences. UNFPA also thought it important to link its mechanism for making use of the programme approach to population and development issues with the country strategy notes. It had actively participated in all the inter-agency mechanisms seeking greater harmonization in the areas of national execution, decentralization, monitoring and evaluation and also staff training.

17. With regard to issues of concern to the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions, of which she was the current Chairman, she said that the Committee had adopted procedures for assisting Governments in the preparation of country strategy notes, and, on behalf of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, it had adopted an updated statement on the role and functioning of the resident coordinator system. It had also contributed to the preparations for the triennial policy review of operational activities and to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199 by organizing various training initiatives, including field coordination workshops for United Nations country teams, follow-up workshops for national officials and training courses for trainers as part of capacity strengthening.

18. In order to have real progress, resident coordinators must be given the means to exercise their authority and, as far as possible, harmonize the procedures to be followed by countries. The programming process should include common stages such as situational analysis, consideration of future strategies and project approval. At that stage, programmes should be submitted for a

common review before approval. UNFPA had already instituted that procedure in countries where the Fund's programme had been fully decentralized.

19. Improvement of operational activities would also require a reform of the current financing system. In fact, ODA constituted only 0.29 per cent of the GNP, whereas countries had made a commitment to reach a level of 0.7 per cent of the GNP. Only a few countries, namely Denmark, the Netherlands and Norway, had fulfilled their obligations in that respect. A system of financing that was predictable, continuous and assured must be established.

20. It was also necessary to reform the Economic and Social Council. Subsidiary bodies should contribute to a common Economic and Social Council agenda in collaboration with all governing bodies of the funds and programmes, which would require long-term planning. Those bodies could then align their work programmes with that of the Council and contribute to a substantive consideration of a selected number of issues.

21. Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund) said that UNICEF had been an active participant in the inter-agency deliberations leading to the report of the Secretary-General on the triennial policy review of operational activities and it endorsed its conclusions and recommendations. UNICEF and its JCGB partners had agreed upon a new, more transparent process for the selection of resident coordinators that would widen the pool of professionals eligible for such posts. UNICEF had also been involved in the redrafting of guidelines for the resident coordinator system and in the development of guidelines for the country strategy notes. UNICEF country programmes were currently being developed within the context of strategy notes, which would facilitate inter-agency collaboration. UNDP and UNICEF intended to increase the number of their common premises, and 45 country-based offices had been identified for possible consolidation. It had also been decided to harmonize the programming cycles of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF, and a memorandum had been sent to representatives to that effect. UNICEF also continued to be involved in the follow-up activities for summits and conferences. The follow-up to the World Summit for Children had been strategically linked with that of the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development. Furthermore, UNICEF continued to work closely with the Bretton Woods institutions, particularly the World Bank.

22. With reference to the triennial policy review of operational activities for development, she said that the effectiveness of UNICEF was in no small measure due to the decentralization of its activities, which were all undertaken in the context of a multi-year country programme; recipient Governments had the responsibility to implement those programmes. The funding system for development programmes should be improved in order to ensure the predictability of resource flows, timeliness of payment, the broadest possible base of support and a focus on core resources. With regard to the coordination of activities, UNICEF would try to develop its collaboration with United Nations system partners, particularly the World Food Programme, UNHCR and the World Bank, and with partners in civil society at the local and global levels. The triennial policy review recommendations would have an effect well beyond the limits of the United Nations system. The system could play an important catalytic role in the overall allocation of ODA resources and national public expenditure. It was

essential to translate the objectives and strategies of major international conferences into national programmes of action which would take country specificity into account. The Programme of Action of the World Summit for Children must form part of the integrated implementation of the action plans that had come out of the international conferences of the 1990s. A proper system for the evaluation of results and monitoring of projects should be instituted.

23. UNICEF intended to become a centre of excellence and to provide itself with the skills, structures and procedures which would enable it to strengthen its capacity in order to ensure the survival, protection and development of children towards the year 2000 and beyond.

24. Mrs. REBONG (Philippines), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said she wished to emphasize the central role of the recipient countries - the developing countries - in the management of their own development process. The success of activities could be measured above all by their impact on the socio-economic growth of those countries. It was therefore essential that the programming of operational activities should be based on the national development plans and priorities of the recipient countries. The recipient Government should have the paramount role in the planning, coordination, monitoring and review of development assistance activities.

25. In that context, it was essential for developing countries to receive assistance for the enhancement of national capacity in priority areas, and in particular programme planning and execution. National execution would be facilitated if the rules and procedures governing programme management and reporting requirements were simplified. The United Nations system should use national expertise and indigenous technology to the fullest extent possible. Since that mandate was part of General Assembly resolution 47/199, the Group of 77 and China had expected that the Secretary-General’s report (A/50/202) would have included information in that regard.

26. It was disturbing to see that the level of resources allocated to operational activities continued to decline while demand for assistance grew. It was disappointing that the restructuring and rationalization of the management and functioning of United Nations programmes and funds had not been matched by a substantial increase in resources for operational activities for development, as called for in General Assembly resolution 48/162. Donor countries should take urgent steps to increase levels of official development assistance. Despite their limited resources, developing countries continued to meet their responsibilities and make voluntary contributions. They joined the donor community in supporting all efforts to improve the effectiveness of operational activities, including the restructuring of the governing bodies of the funds and programmes, the use of country strategy notes, the programme approach and other relevant reforms.

27. Mr. LACLAUSTRA (Spain), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the triennial review of operational activities should seek to improve decision-making and set time-frames for their implementation. The European Union overall welcomed the recommendations of the Secretary-General and was pleased with the

progress achieved in the implementation of General Assembly resolution 47/199. However, there was scope for further improvement on a number of issues.

28. There was a greater need than ever for coordination between the various United Nations bodies; each one should focus on the areas for which it was best suited. At the headquarters level, the funds and programmes should create a system based on mutual support and complementarity, with a clear division of labour. At the field level, the European Union would support concrete measures to enhance coordination of operational activities at all stages, from design to evaluation. The resident coordinator system should be further strengthened, with United Nations development agencies offering their support as local circumstances permitted. Headquarters should offer clear and practical guidance for their representatives in the field on the importance of close cooperation with resident coordinators. More should be done to widen the pool of candidates for resident coordinator positions, to provide training for candidates for such positions and to assess their performance in respect of coordination achievements.

29. Coordination should be improved at all stages of planning, particularly before activities received approval. The recommendation concerning the organization of a single review committee deserved closer study, to clarify how such a body would work, given the provisions of resolution 47/199 regarding the creation of a field-level coordination committee.

30. It was encouraging that a large number of countries had already adopted the country strategy note system, which was becoming a valuable instrument for ensuring that the United Nations responded more effectively to the plans and development priorities of the recipient countries. Although the circumstances in each country were different, common guidelines should be drawn up on the elaboration of country strategy notes, with a view to involving all development agents, including civil society, and encouraging the sharing of experiences. In that regard, the Secretary-General’s recommendation calling for the greater involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions was a welcome development.

31. As far as possible, United Nations agencies should have common premises and common services: they should also adopt common recruitment and staff training procedures.

32. Capacity-building should be directed towards promoting national execution and evaluation and enhancing coordination and policy development. While recognizing the work already being done in that regard, the issue should be kept under review to ensure that decisions taken at headquarters were actually implemented in the field.

33. With regard to national execution, while reporting procedures should be simplified, special attention should be given to accountability issues. United Nations agencies which had not yet done so, should take the necessary steps to adjust to the new approach.

34. Insufficient attention had been given to the process of monitoring operational activities and evaluating their effects. Monitoring should facilitate the timely identification of potential problems and encourage

remedial action as appropriate. The evaluation process was becoming increasingly important as the programme approach gained wider currency; evaluation should become an integral part of all programmes and projects, and would gain considerably from greater participation by all development bodies and partners.

35. Regional and multinational cooperation were extremely important, and an effort should be made to ensure greater coherence in regional programmes which involved United Nations agencies. However, the proposal concerning regional strategy notes was premature.

36. The Secretary-General's recommendations failed to mention a number of aspects of operational activities which merited closer study, particularly decentralization, the production of mission statements for various funds and programmes, the development of instruments to strengthen complementarity and coordination in the field, and the transition from humanitarian assistance to recovery.

37. The European Union was convinced that all countries, recipients and donors alike, stood to gain from greater efficiency in operational activities. Members of the European Union would soon be presenting a document outlining their views on that question, in the hope that a resolution on the matter would be adopted by consensus.

38. Mrs. VOLKOFF (Canada), also speaking on behalf of the Australian and New Zealand delegations, said that the Secretary-General's report on the triennial review of operational activities had gone a long way towards meeting the key concerns of the Halifax Summit, and that a number of its recommendations should be supported unreservedly. There was, however, a need to consolidate the progress that had been made and to move forward on a number of other fronts.

39. Coherence in operational activities was vitally important and should go beyond simple coordination. Operational activities should not be seen as an end in themselves but as part of a larger, overall strategy. Greater efforts should be made to widen the circle of institutional collaboration, and part of the responsibility, for promoting such harmonization rested with Member States; they must deliver consistent messages to all parts of the United Nations system. In dealing with the elaboration of country strategy notes and the World Bank's economic policy framework paper, host countries could benefit from greater consultation between the United Nations and the Bretton Woods institutions, with the United Nations playing a particularly important role in strengthening the social dimension of economic dialogue. A common database for analysis, policy and programming decisions at the national level should be put in place.

40. Coordination of operations in the field should go hand in hand with coordination between services at headquarters. It should be possible to enrich the work of thematic groups in the field in the light of conclusions reached by inter-agency task forces working on similar subjects. There should also be closer interaction between the Economic and Social Council and the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC).

41. Ways should be found to achieve greater coherence between humanitarian and emergency operations and long-term development activities. There was no easy transition from one type of intervention to another and hence it might prove useful to undertake pilot studies in a number of countries. The coordinating role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA) should be reviewed, in line with the provisions of Economic and Social Council resolution 1995/56. Given that the specific needs of countries were rarely the same, it was necessary to find ways of meeting those needs appropriately, on the basis of a set of fundamental principles.

42. The coherence of the programmes administered by the United Nations agencies would be greatly enhanced by further harmonization of rules and procedures. Programming cycles had already been harmonized and common definitions of national execution and of the programme approach adopted. Now, the efforts towards reviewing simultaneously the programmes undertaken by different agencies in a particular country must be continued. With regard to programme budgets, the different budget elements must be defined consistently. As for administrative budgets, the possibility of achieving greater sharing of administrative costs and services in the field must be considered. It would be useful, in that respect, to identify several countries where an integrated administrative service could be tested. Her delegation fully supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that a time-bound programme for harmonization should be submitted to the Economic and Social Council in 1996. The members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) and the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) must be urged to take seriously the work of the sub-groups examining those issues and to give them their full support.

43. She agreed with the Secretary-General's proposal that an evaluation of the impact of selected major components of operational activities should be part of the next triennial policy review. In that regard, the delegations of Australia, Canada and New Zealand strongly supported the idea of joint evaluations by different organizations based on given themes. The capacity to conduct evaluations must also be strengthened at the national level. In addition, there must be regular monitoring of operations to ensure that programme implementation was progressing according to plan and that the lessons learned were constantly fed back into overall programming. Consideration must be given to the role which might be played by country strategy notes in identifying the targets for monitoring.

44. Any improvements to the system must begin with its human resources. In appointing resident coordinators and senior representatives of the various programmes, there must be rigorous adherence to the established selection criteria. The mix of expertise required to meet the needs of host countries must be determined in consultation with those countries.

45. The Secretary-General's proposal to draw up regional strategy notes required further debate. While it was important to integrate a regional dimension into the thinking of country teams, it might appear premature to discuss the introduction of a new instrument, given that the country strategy notes were still being tested. Moreover, given the growing importance of regional factors in national development policies, a review of the role of the

regional commissions could perhaps be undertaken to assess their contribution to the achievement of national development objectives.

46. Mr. BIØRN LIAN (Norway) said that half the Norwegian Embassies consulted during the preparations for the triennial review had reported that the operational activities of the United Nations system were characterized by rivalry between the various organizations, overlapping and fragmentation and were perceived as less effective and having less impact than those of the World Bank. The challenge was, therefore, to improve the efficiency of the United Nations development bodies by creating a unified system with a coherent strategy and programme.

47. First, the resolutions adopted by the General Assembly must not only be clearer, but also more binding for both the funds and programmes and the specialized agencies. Second, firm timetables must be established: three years should be the maximum time allowed for the global follow-up to recommendations, for urgent action should be taken in order to remove any obstacles that were identified. Finally, it was necessary to focus more on the mechanisms for implementation and to determine very precisely who should do what and when.

48. Many instruments aimed at strengthening operational activities had already been developed but were not being implemented. The slow progress in drafting a common manual, for example, was a cause for concern. Priority should be given to the definition of common guidelines on the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes, as well as the presentation of budgets and accounts. In addition, the various bodies must have a common understanding of the programme approach and national execution and common guidelines should be established concerning the use of project personnel in national execution and the recruitment of government personnel to United Nations projects. Finally, rapid progress must be made in the areas of common services and common premises.

49. Other instruments needed to be developed. With regard to coordination, he supported the proposal to create a single review committee so that programmes could be reviewed by the various organizations before they were submitted for approval. Such a body would enhance the resident coordinator system. Both the country teams and the headquarters of each organization should support the resident coordinator system, in particular, by providing human and financial resources. The authority of resident coordinators must be strengthened and clarified and they must be allocated the resources needed to carry out their missions. They must review the relevance, complementarity and the degree of cooperation within the United Nations system and have the formal authority to approve all sectoral programmes and projects where approval authority had been decentralized to the field level as well as new country programmes which they would submit to headquarters.

50. His delegation welcomed the fact that a large number of countries were now formulating country strategy notes which also contributed to the strengthening of the resident coordinator system. That tool should be developed further and should specify, for instance, the division of roles between the various United Nations agencies and their complementarity.

51. His delegation had some reservations, however, regarding the new proposal to establish regional strategy notes and questioned their practical use. It did, nevertheless, support the recommendation to accord greater importance to the regional dimension in the formulation and implementation of development programmes, although measures to promote regional cooperation could be successful only if they were anchored at the national level.

52. Norway would continue its support for operational activities for development, while ensuring that they were effective and produced the anticipated results. There must, however, be more equitable burden-sharing among donors. The international community must secure a sound and stable resource base for development activities, preferably at a higher level than that set currently.

53. Mr. RAMOUL (Algeria) said that the triennial review of operational activities for development provided an opportunity to take stock of the achievements and failures of the United Nations in the field of socio-economic development and to make the necessary adjustments in the light of recent conferences and bearing in mind the new needs of developing countries. Despite the extensive reform process launched at the forty-fifth session of the General Assembly in the economic and social sectors, lack of financial resources had prevented the Organization from fully implementing the development strategies adopted by the General Assembly.

54. The financial crisis, often explained by a decrease in ODA, also stemmed from the way in which some major donors perceived the role of the United Nations in the field of international socio-economic cooperation and from countries' lack of political will. For example, UNDP, long considered the central agency for funding cooperation for development, had a smaller and smaller budget to work with. It was paradoxical to ask an organization to be effective without giving it the means to function, and it was therefore essential to set up a stable, predictable and continuous financing mechanism for operational activities. The various options put forward in the Secretary-General's reports on new funding modalities offered a workable framework for a practical solution; although all possibilities for a reliable financing system should continue to be explored, an agreement on the implementation of multi-year negotiated pledges would constitute a first major step in that direction.

55. The developing countries had continuously given proof of their commitment to the efforts of the United Nations system in favour of development and had continued to contribute to that system. If the industrialized countries allocated the agreed target of 0.7 per cent of GNP to ODA, it would be possible to finance the current operational activities of the United Nations system. They must therefore be encouraged to strive to reach that objective as soon as possible.

56. The innovative approach taken in the Secretary-General's report on the issue (A/50/202) should be stressed; placing the problems and the proposals for recommendations side by side would facilitate the task of delegations and should be a model for the future. While providing an exhaustive analysis of the role of the Economic and Social Council in the area of operational activities, the report remained silent on the role attributed to the General Assembly. It would

have been interesting to know the extent to which the division of labour and roles had been respected; it was also unfortunate that the report made the country strategy notes unavoidable tools for the orientation of the assistance provided, in spite of their voluntary character. The report should also indicate on what basis and according to what criteria countries might benefit from assistance provided in the framework of operational activities, instead of amalgamating the notions of developing countries and recipient countries. A frank debate should be launched on the criteria for eligibility because assistance, particularly to the countries in transition, should not be provided to the detriment of the developing countries.

57. Finally, the functioning of the resident coordinator system must be reviewed, because its implementation was creating practical difficulties. It would be preferable for the role currently played by one person appointed by the Secretary-General on the recommendation of the UNDP Administrator to be carried out in a collective manner, with chairmanship rotating among the various funds and programmes. The implementation of such a proposal could be the subject of consultations during the current session, in close cooperation with the secretariats of the various organizations concerned.

58. Mr. KING (Trinidad and Tobago), speaking on behalf of the members of the Caribbean Community which were Members of the United Nations, said that the triennial policy review of operational development activities should be assessed by the reflection on the work of the United Nations in its 50 years of existence and the new vision for the twenty-first century, the main objective being to do more to support the development of the developing countries.

59. In the Caribbean region, after years of structural adjustment, sustained growth remained an elusive goal for many countries. The investment expected following structural reforms had not materialized in all countries, and the social disruption they had caused had not always been remedied. The situation had been worsened by the hurricanes which had caused great damage in many islands. In meeting those challenges, the Caribbean Community would continue to cooperate with other members of the international community through the United Nations system. The fundamental principles enshrined in Assembly resolutions 44/211 and 47/199 should continue to provide the basis for operational development activities. Programming at the national level should be based on national plans and priorities, and the selection of priority areas should remain the prerogative of the beneficiary Governments, which also had to take into account other sources of bilateral or multilateral assistance.

60. The basic purpose of technical cooperation should remain the promotion of self-reliance in the developing countries in the quest for sustainable development. To that end, their productive, administrative, technical and research capabilities should be strengthened. Increased procurement from those countries should also contribute to attaining that objective. Reinforcing their capacity would put them in a position to implement the decisions taken at the major United Nations conferences.

61. Improved coordination of the activities of the United Nations system should have a significant impact on programme activities. At the headquarters level, the Administrative Committee on Coordination constituted an effective system,

but at the field level the resident coordinator system was hampered by important institutional restrictions. The representatives of the organizations must play a major role in promoting coordination in the field. They must commit themselves fully to participating in the implementation of activities under the direction of the resident coordinator. Recommendations 8, 9 and 10 of the Secretary-General's report must be carefully examined in order to make the resident coordinator system more responsive to the needs of countries.

62. The members of the Caribbean Community were also of the view that the process of formulation of the country strategy notes had a positive impact on coordination at the field level. The United Nations system viewed the notes as an essential tool for harmonizing national priorities with the United Nations system's comparative advantage.

63. Finally, it should be noted that while demands for operational activities were growing, resources were stagnating or decreasing, and remained unpredictable. That was a worrisome trend given the role of the United Nations in facilitating cooperation for development, and it must be reversed by setting up a new and more efficient financing system.

64. Mr. CHULKOV (Russian Federation) drew attention to the positive changes in operational development activities over the preceding years, especially a widening of their functional frameworks, the emergence of new tendencies concerning the promotion of sustainable human development in particular, the transition from assistance for specific projects to assistance for long-term development activities, reform of the public sector and protection of human rights.

65. Commendably, United Nations programmes and funds, while continuing to give priority to the needs of the poorest countries, were endeavouring to address the needs of other groups of countries, in particular the specific needs of the countries in transition. He noted with satisfaction the revitalization of the activities of UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the countries of Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, as well as in the Baltic countries. His delegation was especially pleased that the Executive Board of UNDP and UNFPA had decided to reinforce the financial bases of their activities in the countries of the region and that the Executive Board of UNICEF would shortly introduce a regional strategy for its activities in those countries.

66. Given the financial difficulties faced by United Nations programmes and funds, special attention must be paid to reforming the system of operational activities. To that end, a more flexible financing mechanism should be set up, more should be done to strengthen the reporting obligation, monitoring and evaluation of programmes and projects while at the same time their activities should be made more transparent. His delegation endorsed recommendations 4, 17, 23 and 28 of the Secretary-General's report (A/50/202) concerning those issues.

67. The problem of enhancing the effectiveness of operational activities was closely linked to questions concerning the programme approach, national execution and national capacity-building, as was apparent from recommendations 21 and 22 in the report. Steps should be taken to encourage a shift in focus of

operational activities away from the traditional provision of technical assistance to specific projects towards the implementation of cooperation programmes in which United Nations system support would be mobilized around national strategies and goals. Guidelines for the implementation of the programme approach and national execution should also be drawn up.

68. Sharing the experience which certain countries and regions already had in that innovative area would also help to enhance the effectiveness of operational activities. An example of that would be the fruitful cooperation between western Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States and Latin America which had made it possible to carry out an interregional project involving the exchange of their experiences of using facilities offered by UNDP. That kind of activity should be further developed, especially within the framework of the action taken by UNDP on technical cooperation between developing countries.

69. He noted with satisfaction the trend towards strengthened cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions, most notably with regard to social development, the fight against poverty and environmental protection. The Russian delegation therefore supported recommendations 24, 25 and 26 of the Secretary-General's report. A more active participation on the part of the system in the execution of projects financed by the international financial institutions could indeed improve the prospects for operational activities. It was to be hoped that the high-level segment of the Economic and Social Council on operational activities in 1996, which would consider strengthening the cooperation between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions in the area of development, would give a new impetus to that cooperation.

70. The strengthening of inter-agency cooperation and the coordination of activities between headquarters and the field would play an essential role in that context. The coordinating role of the Economic and Social Council in operational activities should be strengthened, as should that of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and its Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions. The efforts of other coordination mechanisms to implement programmes of action for the countries of Africa and the least developed countries and to combat AIDS also deserved full support.

71. Progress in inter-agency coordination at country level had been slower. Accordingly, the resident coordinator system should be strengthened, by more clearly defining the functions of resident coordinators, better financing their activities and improving interaction between Headquarters and the field. Recommendations 8 and 9 of the Secretary-General's report contained useful proposals in that respect.

72. Given that UNDP played one of the foremost roles in operational activities and the resident coordinator system, it would be a good idea to strengthen its presence in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and to establish offices in countries where it was not represented.

73. Mr. WANG Xuexian (China) said that while the international situation had changed considerably in recent years, those who had hoped that the peace dividends from the end of the cold war would help poor nations to accelerate

their economic and social development had been disappointed. The gap between the North and the South continued to widen and, what was more disappointing, official development assistance, far from being increased, was actually being reduced. Against that background, consideration of operational activities for development was of great importance for the future development of the developing countries and for the formulation of immediate objectives.

74. While it was true that the United Nations development system had, over the years, provided useful technical assistance to the developing countries, allowing them to accelerate their social and economic development, it should devote even more attention to operational activities for development.

75. The formulation of a country's development strategy and programmes and the selection of priority areas for cooperation with the relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations were matters that came within the scope of the country's sovereignty. In formulating programmes of assistance, those bodies should take into full consideration the stage of development and particular circumstances of the recipient countries, respect the wishes of their Governments and be flexible in taking measures to meet their practical needs, so that the assistance provided would play a positive role in their development efforts.

76. Coordination of operational activities for development at country level was the responsibility of the recipient country; the body designated by the Government should be responsible for the coordination of external assistance. The resident coordinator should respect the relevant institutional arrangements made by the recipient Government and should, at its request, help the country to improve its coordination ability, rather than try to replace it. The resident coordinator could play an important role in enhancing cooperation with the field representatives of the relevant organs and organizations of the United Nations development system and in ensuring rational coordination of their activities, so as to enable them to make full use of their comparative advantage in assistance activities at the country level. At Headquarters, the relevant organs and organizations should share the tasks among them in such a way as to avoid duplication of work and improve their efficiency.

77. Lack of financial resources had long been a major problem, which hampered the implementation of operational activities for development. The resources mobilized had fallen far short of the targets which had been set, and that had led to reductions in many assistance programmes and had affected the implementation of assistance activities. Many recipient countries had therefore adopted the system of cost-sharing. Lack of resources was a matter of concern which would have to be remedied if the momentum of operational activities for development was to be maintained.

78. In order to achieve a more predictable, sustainable and stable increase in resources for operational activities, the developed countries should demonstrate clearly their political will on the issue of funding, increase their contributions to the relevant organs and organizations of the system and undertake greater responsibility in terms of resources for the implementation of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.