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Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE
BIENNIUM 1998-1999 (item 4 (a))

Section 25. Humanitarian assistance

1. At its 18th meeting, on 23 June 1997, the Committee considered section 25, Humanitarian assistance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Discussion

2. Many delegations expressed support for the activities of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. They supported the priorities proposed under the programme of work, in particular the emphasis placed on the strengthening of the coordinating function of the Department, and the proposed level and distribution of the resources within the section. Some delegations expressed their appreciation concerning the outstanding contribution of the Department to the activities of the Inter-Agency Task Force on Chernobyl and emphasized that it should be strengthened further.

3. Several delegations expressed concern at the high dependence of the Department on extrabudgetary funding and considered that this situation was not in line with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 51/194 of 17 December 1996. Other delegations stressed that all activities of the Organization should be given assured funding and that over-reliance on extrabudgetary resources should be avoided.

4. Some delegations emphasized the importance of the demining activities carried out by the Department and the need for close coordination with similar activities of other departments of the Secretariat and other relevant entities. They also emphasized the need for a more active role of the Department in advocacy for a global ban on the use, stockpiling, production, and export of anti-personnel landmines. One delegation stressed that the United Nations needed to be empowered to ensure that no restrictions were applied by any State that would hinder or otherwise impede, in any manner, access to mine-clearance technology. It should also provide the necessary financial means to fulfil these charges. The same delegation emphasized that relevant resolutions of intergovernmental bodies should be taken into account, in particular paragraph 12 of General Assembly resolution 51/149 of 13 December 1996.

5. With respect to disaster reduction activities, some delegations stressed that this work was largely about long-term national capacity-building and, as such, should be carried out by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) rather than the Department of Humanitarian Affairs.

6. Several delegations referred to the ongoing restructuring of the Secretariat and considered that there should be a more intensive dialogue between Member States and the Secretary-General on the restructuring of the United Nations humanitarian activities. Some delegations recommended that decisions on the role of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs not be taken until the reform proposals of the Secretary-General on track II had been announced and considered.

7. Some delegations stressed the need for full implementation by the Secretariat of the recommendations on the in-depth evaluation of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, as reviewed and recommended by the Committee at its current session.

8. One delegation emphasized that humanitarian assistance should not be scaled down prematurely and that adequate resources should be provided for the smooth transition from relief to rehabilitation and development efforts.

Conclusions and recommendations

9. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly that it approve the programme narrative of section 25, Humanitarian assistance, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, subject to further consideration as stated in paragraph 35 of the introduction.
