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Summary record of the 17th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 24 October 1997, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. de Rojas (Venezuela)
later: Mr. Glanzer (Vice-Chairman) (Austria)**Contents**

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

Agenda Item 95: Macroeconomic policy questions
(continued) (A/C.2/52/L.2 and L.3)

- (a) Financing of development, including net transfer of resources between developing and developed countries (continued)

Draft resolution on the convening of an international conference on the financing of development
(A/C.2/52/L.2)

1. Mr. Mwakapugi (United Republic of Tanzania) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and said that he hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

- (c) Science and technology for development
(continued)

Draft resolution on science and technology for development (A/C.2/52/L.3)

2. Mr. Mwakapugi (United Republic of Tanzania) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, which looked forward to an interesting discussion of the draft during informal consultations.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 and resumed at 11.05 a.m.

Agenda item 100: Training and research: United Nations Institute for Training and Research
(A/52/367, A/52/492)

3. Mr. Boisard (Executive Director, United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)) said that, in the five years since its restructuring began, UNITAR programmes had reached nearly 4,000 people annually, its finances had remained fragile but steady and interest in its programmes among Member States had definitely grown. However, due to lack of resources, its current programmes, met only a tiny fraction of the needs expressed .

4. The Institute had designed its programmes around two main principles. First, improving professional capacity and transfer of technology was part of the development process in recipient countries, and as such should respond to their specific needs. Second, training should offer knowledge and skills enabling its beneficiaries better to fulfil their responsibilities, and should be part of the fabric of national sustainable development strategies.

5. Training programmes were usually held in the requesting country or region and were often prepared jointly with the recipients. Beneficiaries, donors, UNITAR itself and sometimes external evaluators conducted evaluations of results. New initiatives were launched through national or regional pilot projects, and that experience helped to develop and improve the programmes. In addition, the Institute had established an extensive network of contacts with the specialized agencies and institutions of the United Nations system. In addition to the wide variety of teaching materials it produced, UNITAR was actively engaged in promoting inter-institutional cooperation. Most of its programmes were jointly sponsored with several other institutions within or outside the United Nations system.

6. While many countries had asked UNITAR to expand its programmes, it did not have the necessary funds to do so. If it was to reach its full potential, donors must recognize the positive changes which had taken place, and contribute accordingly. UNITAR was entirely dependent on voluntary contributions and received no funds from the regular budget.

7. Mr. Sabar (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of Mr. Kamal, Chairman of the Board of Trustees of UNITAR, said that the restructuring and relocation of the Institute in compliance with General Assembly resolution 47/227 had been an unqualified success. That was evident from the report of the Board of Auditors (A/52/5/Add.4) and the report of the Board of Trustees (A/52/367). The report of the Secretary-General (A/52/492) had also praised the Institute for its recently expanded network, its cost-effective programmes and its contributions to United Nations training activities as a whole.

8. All UNITAR training programmes were now joint ventures with one or several agencies within or outside the United Nations system. Such inter-institutional cooperation added value to the Institute's cost-efficient training programmes. It was now functioning without financial assistance, under the leadership of competent and devoted staff. The Board of Auditors had noted that UNITAR had established a clearly defined programme of assistance with clearly defined objectives, including expected outputs and milestones. It had welcomed the Institute's detailed plans for its programmes on pollutant release, transfer registers and national action plans. New approaches to its work, including stakeholder participation, implementation of programmes by national or regional actors and the use of multiplying approaches had yielded extra value for donors' money. Administratively lean, UNITAR was now able to execute tasks with relatively few bureaucratic delays.

9. The United Nations Staff College and UNITAR had complementary mandates: while UNITAR programmes were for Member States, the College was to provide training to United Nations staff members. Close cooperation between the two institutions should be promoted. In addition to the training programmes it offered, UNITAR could act as a partner to United Nations agencies sponsoring research, particularly in the fields of international affairs, sustainable development and capacity-building.

10. Due to insufficient resources the Institutes's capacity to develop new programmes was limited, and it had had to reject a number of requests. The General Fund, whose "fragility" had been highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/492, para. 9) was particularly in need of resources. The Secretary-General had also noted that, exceptionally, voluntary contributions from developing countries exceeded those from developed countries. He appealed to all Member States which had benefited from UNITAR, particularly industrialized Member States, to increase their voluntary contributions to the General Fund.

11. Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) said that his delegation welcomed the positive results achieved by the measures to increase the efficiency of UNITAR activities. UNITAR training programmes offered in New York should take into account the restructuring of information systems brought about by the Secretary-General's reforms; for example, they could be coordinated more closely with the training in the use of computer technology offered by the Department of Public Information.

12. Coordinating of training was of paramount importance from the point of view of the development of a comprehensive United Nations training programme, using Internet and video-conferencing capabilities. Special training for Permanent Missions in the use of video technology would also be useful.

13. The Russian Federation was interested in establishing closer cooperation between UNITAR and its own institutes specializing in international relations. In the context of sustainable development issues, the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences wished to explore the possibility of an international training and research centre to promote environmentally sound technologies.

14. Ms. Bai Yongjie (China) noted that the mandate of UNITAR was now focused on training and that the demand for training continued to increase. She welcomed the efforts that UNITAR had made to coordinate its work with that of other agencies in the United Nations system. Its experience and expertise, gained over many years in such areas as international relations and sustainable development, should be put to the best possible use. Her delegation endorsed the

recommendation of the Board of Trustees that UNITAR should be considered as an executing agent or partner by the agencies and bodies of the United Nations system in training-related programmes. Since the establishment of the New York liaison office, multilateral training activities in New York had been strengthened.

15. The ability of UNITAR to develop and implement projects was directly related to the availability of financial support. Her delegation hoped that all countries would respond to the appeal for increased contributions to UNITAR.

16. Mr. Ojimba (Nigeria) expressed his appreciation for the information contained in the report of the Board of Trustees (A/52/367, annex) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/52/492). As a member of the UNITAR Board of Trustees, he could assure the Committee that the recently completed restructuring exercise had not been easy. The Board of Trustees had ensured that the Executive Director of UNITAR complied with the letter and spirit of General Assembly resolution 47/227.

17. The Institute had demonstrated its capacity to contribute to training and research in the United Nations system. It was now time for Member States, particularly the developed countries, to help strengthen the Institute by providing financial support. Effective cooperation between UNITAR and programmes and the funds, particularly the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), would ensure that in-house training and expertise-building within the United Nations system replaced the systematic recruitment of private consultants who were generally from the industrialized countries.

18. His delegation welcomed the decision of the Secretary-General to appoint the Executive Director of UNITAR as an ex officio member of the Advisory Board of the United Nations Staff College project and hoped that it would help enhance cooperation between the two institutions.

19. UNITAR designed its training programmes to meet the training needs of developing countries. Despite the fact that its work programme and activities were seriously hampered by inadequate resources, UNITAR was required to pay a fee to the United Nations for the use of seminar rooms and conference services. It was also charged rent in New York and in Geneva. Member States paid contributions to the Organization so that the latter could provide them with necessary services; UNITAR was part of the United Nations system. Those charges to UNITAR were therefore inappropriate.

20. As the Secretary-General had indicated in his report (A/52/492, para. 9), voluntary contributions to UNITAR from

the developing countries exceeded those from the developed countries. Nigeria made annual contributions to the General Fund and urged all Member States, particularly the developed countries, to do likewise.

21. Mr. Graff (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associate countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that the late issuance of the documents relating to the item was regrettable. It was particularly regrettable that the report of the Joint Inspection Unit had not been available before the Committee's discussion, as it would have formed the basis for ensuring that there was no duplication in United Nations training activities.

22. In an increasingly interdependent world, where information was essential, the participants in United Nations training activities must work together to target their activities more precisely. The European Union welcomed the restructuring of UNITAR, which had strengthened its cooperation with the agencies and bodies of the United Nations system. It welcomed, in particular, the linkages between UNITAR and the United Nations Staff College (report of the Secretary-General (A/52/492, para.7), which also received support from the European Union. That should eliminate duplication and ensure the more effective allocation of training resources. The European Union also noted the opening of the UNITAR liaison office in New York and the development of its activities.

23. The decentralized implementation of the Institute's programmes in cooperation with local, national and regional actors would help to target activities in areas where UNITAR had comparative advantages. With the elimination of research activities that were not directly related to training, UNITAR would be free to focus on areas within its terms of reference while the United Nations University expanded its own activities.

24. The European Union encouraged UNITAR to continue its streamlining measures in order to enhance its effectiveness in the areas of training and long-term capacity building. Sound financial management was necessary in order to ensure programme continuity.

25. The European Union looked forward to the recommendations of the Secretary-General concerning the rationalization of the activities of the United Nations research institutes and their related bodies and projects, which were to be considered by the General Assembly within the context of the proposals of the Secretary-General for reform.

26. Mr. Glanzer (Austria) took the Chair.

27. Mr. Beti (Observer for Switzerland) said that UNITAR had a growing role to play in the implementation of training programmes, particularly in Member States. Its training courses contributed to peacekeeping and conflict prevention and to the achievement of sustainable ecological, economic and social development. He particularly praised the Institute's principle of involving both beneficiaries and donors in designing its activities.

28. The Institute's General Fund was currently too depleted to support the development of new programmes and the sharing of experience with other institutions. His delegation therefore welcomed the General Assembly's appeal to Member States to make additional voluntary contributions to the General Fund of the restructured Institute. Switzerland, which was one of the five largest contributors to both the UNITAR General Fund and the financing of its projects, would continue to support the Institute.

29. Mr. Kondo (Japan) expressed his delegation's full support for the report of the Board of Trustees (A/52/367, annex). Since the transfer of UNITAR headquarters to Geneva, the Institute had been able to implement measures that were urgently necessary to improve its functioning.

30. The Institute's central role in the training of new human resources must be recognized. To that end, it must reorganize and enhance its training programme. Japan would continue to provide it with all possible support. Recently, Japan had contributed \$50,000 to the Fellowship Programme in International Affairs Management for the training of young diplomats from various countries. The first session of the programme had been extremely successful. His delegation hoped that Member States, particularly those Member States which had suspended their financial contributions prior to the transfer of UNITAR to Geneva, would reconsider their positions.

31. Ms. Hawkins (Australia), speaking on behalf of Ms. Wensley, Vice-Chairman of the UNITAR Board of Trustees, endorsed the comments made by the representative of Pakistan, on behalf of the Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Her delegation attached great importance to the work of UNITAR. It supported the Institute's active process of reform and restructuring, which had made it cost-efficient and responsive to the needs of Member States, and would continue to support its activities.

32. Mr. Talbot (Guyana) said that, as indicated in documents A/52/367 and A/52/492, the restructuring of UNITAR had been a great success. His delegation believed that the impact of the Institute's work, particularly the opening of its New York liaison office, had been tangible and positive in many ways. He expressed appreciation for the

work of UNITAR and supported its strengthening. His delegation shared the concerns voiced by others over the inadequacy of resources and strongly appealed for greater financial and other support for the work of UNITAR.

33. Mr. Merouane (Algeria) welcomed the Institute's successful restructuring exercise and the dynamism of its New York liaison office. UNITAR had managed to realize impressive achievements in a short time. He noted that had Mr. Boisard's presentation included figures Member States would have had a more complete idea of the financial difficulties confronting the Institute. UNITAR could count on Algeria's support.

34. Mr. Boisard (Executive Director, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research) said that he would transmit Committee members' remarks to the dedicated UNITAR staff, both in Geneva and New York, and to the members of the Board of Trustees.

35. Now that its credibility had been restored, the Institute must be given the resources it needed in order to carry out its work. UNITAR itself had demonstrated that financing was not an insoluble problem, even in an unfavourable international economic situation: for five years, it had managed to mobilize the necessary funds to function. The problem was that although there was money in the Special Purpose Grants Fund, the General Fund showed a shortfall. In the light of the Institute's achievements in recent years, he urgently appealed to all Member States to reconsider their positions with regard to the General Fund.

Other matters

36. The Chairman recalled that, at the 15th meeting, he had stated that the Observer for Palestine did not have a right of reply. The Spanish interpretation had led him to understand that the Observer for Palestine was invoking rule 115 of the Rules of Procedure of the General Assembly. He had subsequently been informed that the Observer for Palestine could make a "statement in reply" in accordance with the established practice of the General Assembly, and he apologized for the misunderstanding.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.