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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 10 July 1998, at 3 p.m.

President:

Mr. OLHAYE
(Vice-President)

(Djibouti)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT
COOPERATION

- (c) REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME/UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND, THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND AND THE WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME (continued) (DP/1998/12 and Corr.1 and 2, DP/1998/13, DP/1998/16 and Corr.1, DP/1998/28, E/1998/45, E/1998/35 (Part I), E/1998/L.11, E/1998/16, E/1998/37 (Supplement No. 17), E/1998/62 and E/1998/70)

Mr. TOMASI (France) said that his delegation shared the view that reform was not an end in itself but rather a means of increasing the effectiveness of the United Nations system and programme outputs. Throughout the debate, his delegation had been struck by the numerous and varying expectations of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). For its part, it believed that UNDAF should result not only in enhanced coordination of the activities of the agencies, funds and programmes but also in more meaningful follow-up to the major conferences, increased effectiveness and visibility of the United Nations system and greater attention to gender-specific questions.

In that connection, he wished to know whether any information could be provided on the initial results of UNDAF in the pilot countries, namely, the extent to which the process had lived up to expectations, genuinely involved the agencies and resulted in a sharing of analyses, ideas and experiences. He also inquired about the impact of UNDAF on programming in the pilot countries, noting the importance attached to the linkage between the two by both the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and his own delegation. It would be useful to know whether there was a clear vision at Headquarters on how UNDAF should be applied to the programming exercise.

Noting Ms. Sadik's remarks about joint activities by various agencies, funds and programmes, he requested the views of the United Nations Development Group on whether the UNDAF process should lead to an increase in common programmes. His delegation believed that common programmes of the agencies,

funds and programmes could play a catalytic role in the handling of cross-cutting issues, particularly institutional capacity-building, which was vital to sustainable development. While donors had indicated that common programming would be accorded priority, their approaches at the field level were very diverse and, at times, conflicting. Accordingly, thought might be given as to how the common programming of the United Nations specialized agencies could help to ensure common programming among donors.

Mr. MARCH (Observer for Australia) praised the debate for its openness and candour. Given the feminization of poverty and the role of women in meeting development challenges, he wished to know what additional efforts the Council could make to assist the funds and programmes in strengthening their mainstreaming efforts and highlighting their gender-specific activities. Noting Ms. Sadik's remarks with regard to the costs of implementing UNDAF and certain strains at the country level, he urged the funds and programmes to be bold in their rationalization and streamlining of the process. All in all, he welcomed the conduct of joint evaluations and hoped they would be intensified, despite the efforts and problems involved.

Mr. YUAN Lunxiang (China) requested a more in-depth explanation of the phrase "result-based management and budgeting of development resources". Had that ostensibly pioneering concept been applied in the past? Noting the efforts of the United Nations Development Group, in collaboration with the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), to design evaluation indicators, he inquired whether steps were being taken to ensure the active participation of developing countries in that process.

Mr. KÄÄRIÄINEN (Finland) recommended exercising extreme caution in evaluating the recently launched UNDAF process. It was particularly important to avoid the facile conclusion that UNDAF was merely a compilation of ongoing programmes and projects. He agreed with Ms. Sadik that the real effectiveness of UNDAF would not become apparent until the next programming period.

The complementarity of UNDAF and World Bank development assistance frameworks, including structural adjustment, the country assistance strategy and programmes for the heavily indebted poor countries, must be explored. He hoped that the UNDAF process would also help to reduce programmes and projects on national ownership to a manageable number. Noting the linkage between financing

and evaluation, he asked whether the executive heads of the agencies, funds and programmes planned to increase independent external impact evaluations of their activities, and whether they planned to take further measures to ensure national ownership and local participation in their programmes.

Mr. KHARE (India) said that his delegation recognized the need for reform and fully agreed with both the Secretary-General and the UNDP Administrator that the impact of reform measures on the everyday life of the poorest and most vulnerable groups must be evaluated. Those measures must protect the diversity and uniqueness of the agencies, funds and programmes while bringing about improvements through a common approach. In that context, he stressed the importance of cost-efficiency and savings. Noting that many programme countries were already providing premises to the funds and programmes free of charge, he expressed the hope that no additional financial burden would be placed on the beneficiary countries.

His delegation was concerned by the overall decrease in official development assistance and its reduced contribution to United Nations funds and programmes. It was disappointing that the significant reforms implemented by the funds and programmes since the adoption of General Assembly resolution 48/162 had not yet increased their available resources. That situation must be rectified at the earliest possible date. To that end, India had already increased its contribution to a number of funds and programmes by making its payment in dollars. In 1998 alone, it had entailed an additional burden of \$250,000 in order to honour its pledge to UNDP, owing to exchange rate differentials.

Referring to the consolidated list of issues relating to the coordination of operational activities (E/1998/CRP.3), he expressed concern that periodic meetings of the bureaux of the executive boards of the funds and programmes would not produce the desired legislative oversight or coherent policy guidance. His delegation agreed with the representatives of Finland and Japan that it was premature to evaluate the UNDAF process. The process must be approved by the Governments concerned in order to ensure national ownership. Cooperation and collaboration among the agencies, funds and programmes must safeguard the advantages of the United Nations system, including its multilateral character, neutrality, universality, impartiality and the grant nature of its funds. Since the priorities of developing countries might differ, total harmonization of

UNDAF and the World Bank country assistance strategies should not be sought. Lastly, his delegation agreed that programme countries should be involved in the development of evaluation indicators. It hoped that certain intangible elements, such as value-added and the catalytic role of the United Nations, would not be overlooked in the effort to quantify results. In conclusion, he asked why the UNFPA list of issues in the consolidated statement was different from that attached to Ms. Sadik's statement.

Mr. SPETH (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) replying to the representative of the Russian Federation, said that UNDP was attempting to shift to after-the-fact, results-based and holistic monitoring of performance rather than emphasizing inputs at the beginning of the programming process. He agreed that the effectiveness of UNDAF should not be prejudged. Indeed, the results of the evaluation might be disappointing if the standards were applied, but that was part of the learning experience. The attitude of the resident coordinators and representatives involved in the evaluation was generally positive. He also agreed that UNDAF could be a vehicle for involving the donor community, which shared the objectives of the United Nations. He supported the comments of the representative of India concerning the risk of close harmonization of UNDAF with the programmes of the Bretton Woods institutions, whose focus might be radically different. Ultimately, the process could not move forward without the approval of programme countries; in that sense, national ownership was vital to sustainability and success.

Implementation of the suggestions put forward to the Council concerning gender mainstreaming would be helpful to the funds and programmes. In UNDP, for example, it might obviate the need for advisory notes and similar procedures. To that end, the linkage between UNDAF and the programming process must be established at the outset.

The developing countries had already participated in the design of indicators, which were based on the outcome of major conferences and their follow-up. He could assure the representative of China that that dialogue would continue. No one was truly certain of the meaning of "results-based" budgeting; therefore, the approach had not been fully adopted. The funds and programmes were committed to developing indicators in order to build awareness of their activities. Every effort would be made to incorporate intangible factors in those measurements. With regard to national ownership, he noted that the most

successful projects - for example, a recent informatics and telecommunications project in Brazil - had included a significant contribution of resources and staff by the programme countries themselves.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund) said that a number of organizations were already implementing joint activities in the fields of census-taking, health and education; perhaps other potential areas of cooperation, such as training or financial monitoring, would be identified by the UNDAFs. UNDAFs had had varying success in coordinating programmes depending on the countries; it was still too early to measure the full potential of the Framework.

The establishment of common instruments and approaches by the Council would assist the funds and programmes in their gender mainstreaming efforts. The assignment of additional women specialists to the field would ensure a systematic approach to gender issues.

Turning to the question of indicators, she said that genuine national ownership must involve input from programme countries with regard to their development goals. She agreed that the United Nations and Bretton Woods development assistance programme should not be harmonized, in view of their differing criteria for selection: whereas the United Nations system focused on the poorest countries in absolute terms, the World Bank, as a lending institution, had to take into account their ability to repay. The joint United Nations/DAC indicators had emerged from the major conferences and therefore reflected the goals agreed to by the international community. UNFPA had already agreed on certain thresholds and selection criteria within the context of those indicators. A more open airing of views concerning the indicators might ensure stronger country involvement in the process.

Independent external evaluations would be most useful if they were done on a thematic basis for discussion in thematic groups at the country level. The list of issues attached to her statement was indeed a first version which had been amended for the publication of document E/1998/CRP.3.

Replying to the point raised by the representative of the Russian Federation on what management and administrative changes would take place at UNFPA when full decentralization came into effect, she commented that, at that time, headquarters would oversee outcomes instead of monitoring processes.

Regarding results-based budgeting, agencies had tended to measure inputs rather than impact and results; now they were trying to measure the change in indicators. One of the challenges that had to be addressed was how to measure the qualitative and quantitative changes on a year-to-year basis. Although advice on results-based budgeting had been sought, it appeared that there was very little experience on which to draw.

Ms. SEQUEIRA (World Food Programme) said that she supported Dr. Sadik's comments on the question of gender mainstreaming. She informed the representative of Finland that an increasing number of impact evaluations would be undertaken jointly with other donors and while those would not constitute independent, external evaluations, they were a change from entirely internal evaluations. In reply to the question of results-based budgeting, she noted that the WFP budget differed from that of other organizations as it was based on the volume of food available at any time. The representative of India had mentioned that the joint agency meetings did not seem particularly productive; perhaps members could suggest other ways to increase communication at the level of the Governments represented on the different Boards.

Mr. VAHER (United Nations Children's Fund) said that she agreed with the comments of the representatives of France and Finland, although she felt that the agencies were not unwilling to share what they were learning about the UNDAF process. In January, the Boards of UNDP, UNFPA and UNICEF had met with the representatives of the three programmes from Viet Nam to discuss the process thus far. The document on the UNDAF pilot phase, which had been distributed, was an attempt to bring delegates up to date. The forthcoming evaluation was an assessment of the pilot phase to analyse how the Framework had been designed and managed and how it could be improved at the global and country levels; also, how it had made a difference to the way the United Nations worked at the country level. Hopefully there had been significant improvements. However, the Framework should not be judged too soon; there were still concerns about the country ownership issue and it was hoped that a better mechanism could be developed from experience.

With regard to results-based budgeting, UNICEF had found that setting time-bound goals and objectives had been useful in determining results. All the specialized agencies of the United Nations wanted to have quality programmes, but the United Nations budget was posts-focused and greater flexibility would be

useful with disbursements being based on the possibility of producing results. Gender mainstreaming must continue to flow through the country programmes and good feedback was needed from the missions in the field.

Mr. CAVALCANTE (Brazil) recommended that UNDAF progress reports should be issued periodically, possibly on a monthly basis. He asked what concrete steps were being taken to ensure that national institutions were involved in the elaboration of UNDAF and whether there would be a review process by national institutions. He also wished to know what follow-up of the UNDAF process was envisaged at the country level to encourage accountability. National execution and national ownership needed to be promoted; therefore national governments had to take part in the process.

Country strategy notes (CSN) should continue to be prepared on a voluntary basis to avoid the shortcomings in the CSN process mentioned in the Secretary-General's report. UNDAF could be a very useful tool to promote coordination in the field.

In the view of his delegation, the United Nations system and Member States should examine the issue of indicators and there should be a debate on the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences. Over the next few years, indicators should be developed in a coordinated fashion drawing on information from funds and programmes.

Mr. ZARIE ZARE (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) referred to the crisis in South-East Asia that had affected the economies of the developing countries. With their principal exports declining, the ability of those countries to follow-up on the major United Nations conferences could be curtailed. He asked whether there was a coordinated framework and mechanism to improve the situation of the poor, especially women and children, and offset the negative impact of the crisis, in particular, in the least developed countries.

Mr. ABDALLA (Observer for the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that human capital was vital to economic growth and the developing world had shown a high return on investments in education. He called on the developed countries to commit resources to the development agencies of the United Nations system.

He pointed out that resident coordinators should support Governments in their national plans and priorities, and should not identify with the donor community. Moreover, United Nations assistance should be extended according to national government priorities, not according to those of the United Nations

system. There should be a re-examination of the UNDAF system versus the country strategy notes (CSN) with a view to rationalizing a cooperation framework with ownership vested in Governments.

Mr. KUNDA (Zambia) said that Zambia was keeping an open mind about the UNDAF pilot phase that would soon be brought into the mainstream, as it appreciated the importance of coordination. To use the country strategy notes (CSN), which had proved time-consuming and demanding to prepare, as a basis for UNDAF, however, would entail further consultations and he feared that the process would overwhelm inexperienced workers in countries like Zambia where human resources were scarce and 10 years of development initiatives could be swallowed up in the streamlining processes. He therefore asked whether a time-frame had been established for UNDAF and how ownership would be guaranteed and maintained.

Mr. ESCANERO (Mexico) said that in recent years the World Food Programme (WFP) had evolved in a way which did not always respect the spirit in which it had been established. While emergency aid was of utmost importance, the development aspect should not be sacrificed. His delegation was concerned about the growing tendency for developed countries to reduce their contributions to international cooperation. A further concern was the fact that WFP did not have a universally representative body in which all its member States participated. Similarly, neither the Economic and Social Council nor the Board of the United Nations Organization for Food and Agriculture (FAO) reflected the full membership of the United Nations and FAO.

The delegates of the Latin American and Caribbean Group had therefore proposed that an intergovernmental consultation be convened with the participation of all the Member States of the United Nations and FAO to evaluate the achievements, progress and challenges facing WFP and to discuss its future activities. Such a meeting would also be able to examine the supply of and demand for food aid, formulate proposals to improve multilateral, bilateral and non-governmental food aid policies and programmes and produce concrete proposals to facilitate the active participation of all Member States of the United Nations system in WFP activities.

Mr. Park YONG-MIN (Republic of Korea) fully supported the decentralization process and the delegation of authority, the objective being to enhance field-level coordination and to increase responsiveness. However,

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Headquarters' role as a high-level facilitator and coordinator continued to be important; otherwise, the common denominator of operational activities could become regionally compartmentalized instead of being shared. Good record-keeping in the field was important to ensure that lessons were learned from past experience and there was room for technical support services.

The International Vaccine Institute had been established in 1997 and his delegation invited members of the Council to consider membership. He would appreciate further comment from the executive heads of the funds and programmes on how to revitalize the Institute's future activities.

Coordination between humanitarian and development activities was becoming increasingly important; and his delegation would appreciate further explanation regarding coordination between the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) and the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs.

He concluded his remarks by expressing his delegation's deep concern for the declining level of core resources.

Mr. LUNDBORG (Sweden) emphasized that UNDAF was now a fact: four different funds or programmes were collaborating throughout the world. With regard to the World Food Programme, he requested a briefing on activities at headquarters in Rome. He also asked what had been done to follow-up on the Secretary-General's report on Africa, how any follow-up had been integrated into other initiatives in Africa and the relationship between all initiatives to the UNDAF process. It was important for the United Nations system to deal with each issue in an integrated manner.

He also wished to know if UNDG had done a follow-up on the twentieth special session of the General Assembly held in June and devoted to countering the world drug problem. He wanted to know whether the United Nations system would respond to the event or leave the response to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme in Vienna.

Mr. PÉREZ-SEGNINI (Observer for Venezuela) suggested one way of increasing financial backing for UNDAF was to integrate the private sector and civil society by means of pilot projects.

Mr. SPETH (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) stressed that the framework process must be undertaken in full consultation with Governments and with their approval and ownership in order to be successful, but

noted that the resulting documents, unlike the country strategy notes, were not government documents.

In response to the question from Iran concerning the Asian financial crisis and its effects on human resource development in the developing countries, he said that, unfortunately, no comprehensive plan had been worked out and only national actions had been undertaken, as well as some regional actions in cooperation with UNCTAD. Indeed, he regretted the absence of any standing forum of manageable size and democratic representation to consider the rules for the international community in an era of increasing globalization.

There was a major effort under way to support the Secretary-General's report on conflict in Africa. Each executive committee was developing a response plan and would coordinate with other executive committees in areas of overlap. The plans were being integrated under the leadership of the Deputy Secretary-General and would be taken up with the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) in October. The UNDAF coordinators were working to integrate the Special Initiative on Africa into the United Nations system and the third African Governance Forum, to be held in Mali in 1999, had as its theme "Conflict and governance".

No special actions had as yet been undertaken as a result of the special session on narcotic drugs but UNDP would participate in the follow-up. In response to the question from Venezuela, he stated that private sector support was very much desired, pilot projects would certainly be appropriate, and there had already been significant interest shown by the private sector.

Ms. SADIK (Executive Director, United Nations Population Fund) said that proper use of the UNDAF process certainly implied involving national institutions, monitoring and follow-up, and indicators should be examined in an open forum, perhaps the Economic and Social Council. She also fully agreed with the comment by the representative of Libya that the needs of the country must have priority and added that part of the process should be an invitation to donors to participate. With regard to the training programme at the International Centre for Advanced Technical and Vocational Training in Turin, she said that a re-evaluation and re-assessment was being undertaken by the new Director. She agreed with the representative of Zambia that implementation must begin as soon as possible, rather than waiting years to complete the process and implementation had in fact begun. She stressed the need for national ownership.

In reply to the representative of Sweden, she said that follow-up to the United Nations International Drug Control Programme was still being examined and she suggested that the various agencies could perhaps divide up responsibilities on that issue. In response to the question from Iran concerning the crisis in Asia, she noted that UNFPA was in the process of collecting studies on the impact of that crisis in the social sector and had also commissioned a study on health and family planning and other services which would be available at the end of September and which would be shared with her colleagues. She urged all donors to follow the examples of India and Japan, and to take into account exchange rate fluctuations when making their contributions, adjusting those amounts accordingly in order to guarantee predictable and reliable funding when converted into United States dollars.

Ms. BERTINI (Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that follow-up to UNDCP was not really a priority in the areas for which her programme had responsibility. With regard to the situation in Africa, she said that as more reports became available, it would become clear that coordination with other groups and agencies and follow-up to the Secretary-General's report on Africa were well under way. In response to the question from Mexico, she pointed out that the Board had been discussing the question of food aid for development and future directions for the World Food Programme. The Board had decided to review the situation with regional groups and would report to the Bureau at the end of July.

Ms. BELLAMY (Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund) in response to the representative of Korea said that greater coordination was necessary in the area of immunization of children. Coverage had reached 80 per cent but the remaining 20 per cent might well prove just as challenging. Follow-up to the special session on drugs would be undertaken as an outcome of high-level consultations with the World Health Organization involving issues dealing with adolescence. She stressed that UNDAF was not a programme but a planning framework. Its purpose was to create real coordination within the United Nations system in each country and country programmes for which the country itself had ownership but were approved by the Executive Board.

Nevertheless, a key issue in the assessment of the pilot process must be the degree of participation by the country, and that vary from country to country. UNDAF was responsible for preparing the country strategy note but she

stressed again that UNDAF was a framework concerning actions which needed to be undertaken, not a specific programme.

Mr. SPETH (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that UNDG was working with the World Bank to prepare the report requested by the Council on the relationship and partnership between the United Nations system and the World Bank, and that report would soon be available for discussion at the general segment of the meeting. That partnership was indicative of the high level of cooperation which existed between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions.

The meeting was suspended at 5.05 p.m. and resumed at 5.20 p.m.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that the report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) contained in document E/1998/45 highlighted the Programme's work to develop a more coherent, coordinated and focused approach to the programmes and plans of action arising out of the various international conferences, the priorities mandated by the General Assembly and by the Economic and Social Council as well as to the resident coordinator system and the ambitious plan of action developed by UNDG. Steps were being taken to widen the pool of possible candidates for resident coordinator, to improve methods of appraisal of candidates and to make progress on common actions.

A working group of the Executive Board had been studying the question of funding and should be able to report by the September meeting of the Board, with recommendations which would ensure adequate resources. He supported most of the points raised in document E/1998/CRP.1 concerning key issues and their oversight by the Economic and Social Council and said that the preparation of a consolidated list of issues (E/1998/CRP.3) had been a constructive process. He was, however, of the opinion that one report needed to be prepared by UNDG under the aegis of the Secretary-General because of the large number of common issues to be dealt with by UNDAF and the United Nation houses.

With regard to the question of the timing of the Board's annual session, he felt no change was necessary since the Executive Board had considered its response to the Council during its second session in April. During the special session of the Council on conference follow-up, he had mentioned that the Council might wish to provide some guidance to the Executive Boards on how to

deal with issues arising from conferences not only vertically, but also horizontally.

He was grateful to the Executive Board for providing sufficient funding and guidance to guarantee the independence of the evaluation office, which would report to the Board at its annual session.

UNDP was continuing its efforts in the area of South-South cooperation. The triennial comprehensive policy review seemed to indicate that performance had been rather uneven and there was therefore a need to develop new and innovative measures to address the issues of absorptive capacity and the impact of programmes.

Mr. SCRUGGS (United Nations Population Fund) said that great progress had been made in the past two years in United Nations operational activities. The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), which aimed at goal-oriented collaboration and programmatic coherence and entailed close consultations with Governments, was the centrepiece for optimizing United Nations development efforts at the country level. The joint session of the UNICEF and UNDP/UNFPA Executive Boards had been an overwhelming success and had led to an informal joint session to discuss further a number of issues that had been raised. Many of those issues had been discussed in the Council at the previous meeting.

The UNFPA Executive Board had provided considerable support and direction in the area of national capacity-building. A study of ways to increase absorptive capacity and resource utilization in country programmes had identified a set of issues that were particularly relevant to development cooperation and required collaborative efforts by all development partners. They included limited management capacity in programme countries, limited human resources and infrastructure, civil service reform and decentralization, and funding for the social sector. UNFPA had brought the results of that study to the attention of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), which had placed it on its agenda. It was hoped that the Group's review of the study would lead to common responses to important issues, such as the need to streamline practices concerning salary support for national staff and identify possibilities for collaboration.

The Executive Board had committed itself to adopting a decision in 1998 on a sustainable funding strategy to enable the Fund to play a central role in the

follow-up to the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD). An inter-sessional meeting held in May had been instrumental in focusing the discussion of that item at the Board's annual session on three key issues: predictability of resources, volume of resources, and timely payment of contributions. Donors and programme countries alike had strongly supported the work of UNFPA and the need to place funding on a predictable, assured and continuous basis. Many had encouraged the Fund to continue to seek innovative ways to expand its resource base, including reaching out to private and non-governmental sectors. Some delegations had announced increases in their contributions, and several top donors had challenged other donors, especially those that seemed to be under-performing, to assume their responsibility in burden-sharing.

Programme performance and effectiveness appeared to be the most critical factor for delegations in increasing resources to UNFPA. In accordance with decisions taken in 1995 and 1996, the Executive Board had endorsed the Fund's new resource allocation system and approved the distribution of the relative shares of resources to the different categories of countries, thus providing UNFPA with the framework needed to combine clear substantive programming with appropriate levels of resource allocation. It was hoped that the Board's decision on the funding strategy would ensure that the Fund had the resource base to meet the ever-increasing needs of countries for assistance as they implemented the ICPD Programme of Action.

Mr. VAHER (United Nations Children's Fund) said that there had been major changes in the past few years with regard to the nature of operations and collaboration and coordination in the field. Many important issues for consideration had already been dealt with at the previous meeting, including UNDAF, common premises and common services. There were additional documents on the work of the funds and programmes, in particular the consolidated list of issues relating to the coordination of operational activities (E/1998/CRP.3) and the triennial policy review. The degree of collaboration that had taken place between the drafters of those documents and other UNDG partners had been extraordinary, indicating a new level of collaboration at headquarters. The Executive Directors were looking forward to receiving guidance on reporting, particularly with regard to content and direction.

Ms. SEQUEIRA (World Food Programme) said that WFP had prepared a total of 31 country strategy outlines and 12 country programmes by the end of 1997. It had fully participated in the pilot UNDAF exercise. In terms of operational matters, the Executive Board had advised the Programme to implement development activities in support of humanitarian operations, which established a firm foundation for recovery and rehabilitation. With respect to targeting, the Board had placed emphasis on ensuring that only the most vulnerable population groups in the poorest countries benefited from WFP assistance. The Programme's vulnerability mapping capacity had been strengthened in collaboration with FAO, WHO, UNDP and UNICEF. In carrying out evaluations, greater emphasis had been placed on gender, a people-centred approach and enhanced community participation. More evaluations were being conducted in collaboration with bilateral donors, non-governmental organizations and agency partners.

In following up the major United Nations conferences, WFP was committed to the themes and actions underscored at the World Summit on Social Development, and the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Food Summit.

The Programme's emergency work in 1997 had focused on operations in conflict situations, reaching a total of 4.2 million refugees and 14.9 million internally displaced persons. There had been a dramatic increase in the number of beneficiaries suffering from drought and floods, particularly in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. With regard to accountability, the Programme's general and financial regulations had been endorsed by the Executive Board, the FAO Conference and the General Assembly. The current review of the Programme's resource and long-term financing policies would be completed by the end of the year.

Ms. BOLLMANN (United States of America) said that, while there might not be complete agreement on all the recommendations put forward by the funds and programmes in the consolidated list, its compilation represented a significant step towards highlighting issues of concern that might require attention and action. There was broad agreement that the Council should further rationalize the reporting requirements of the Executive Boards in order to enhance its ability to coordinate and direct policy and oversee operational activities. Her delegation looked forward to working constructively with other delegations to arrive at a reasonable approach to the annual reporting requirements under that agenda item.

Ms. WÖRGETTER (Observer for Austria) said that her delegation also supported the need to rationalize the reporting requirements of the Executive Boards. She inquired whether it had been difficult to compile the consolidated list of issues, whether the funds and programmes considered it a worthwhile exercise and whether the list could replace any of the reports submitted by the funds and programmes to the Council. It would also be interesting to have further information on the follow-up to the major United Nations conferences, particularly those that did not specifically relate to the individual mandates of the funds and programmes. She inquired, for example, whether reports to the Executive Boards would deal with such follow-up so that the Boards could give guidance in that regard.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) noted with satisfaction that the work done on the consolidated list had evoked a positive response on the part of delegations. It had been a worthwhile exercise because it had identified more clearly the issues on which the Council could focus. If that type of information was more useful to the Council, the reports from the funds and programmes could follow that approach, which was more issue-oriented, rather than describing what was being done in each individual agency.

UNDP was committed to a thematic cross-cutting approach in its follow-up to the major conferences. The ACC had set up three task forces on an enabling environment, sustainable livelihoods and human services and needs in order to deal with such follow-up in a consolidated manner based on a cross-cutting approach aimed at identifying action to be taken at the field level. There was more reporting on actions taken or to be taken in response to the totality of mandates set forth by the conferences. Most of that work was conducted at the country level by country teams with thematic groups that dealt with particular areas such as poverty alleviation, sustainable development and sustainable livelihoods.

Mr. SCRUGGS (United Nations Population Fund) underscored the very high level of coordination by the funds and programmes in drawing up the consolidated list in a system-wide effort to follow-up all the major conferences. The funds and programmes stood ready to provide all necessary assistance to the Council to meet its analytical requirements.

Mr. VAHER (United Nations Children's Fund) said that, although the Fund had generally followed the old approach in reporting on its follow-up to specific conferences, it was embarking on a cross-cutting approach in accordance with the guidelines laid down by the ACC task forces with poverty eradication being the overarching requirement. The aim would be to integrate work on the follow-up to the international conferences into the country-specific support for Governments. That amounted to a major change in the way in which the Fund was carrying out the programmatic aspect of its work.

The consolidated list of issues was a major step forward in reporting in a more integrated and collaborative manner. While there was still a need for reports on follow-up by individual funds and programmes, it was also important to address the issue of how UNDG as a whole was responding in implementing the entire range of action plans that emerged from the conferences.

Ms. SEQUEIRA (World Food Programme) said that, at its annual session, WFP had reported specifically on its follow-up to the World Food Summit. It had not, however, ignored the other conferences that were of direct concern to WFP: the Fourth World Conference on Women and the World Summit on Social Development. The Executive Board closely controlled the manner in which the Programme was following up those conferences.

Mr. BAHAMONDES (Canada) said that the consolidated list of issues was a step in the right direction. It would be important to formalize the process of reporting to the Council in a manner that reinforced the individual roles of the Executive Boards and strengthened the Council's guidance role. While the consolidated list was an additional tool for discussing content, there was still a need for individual reporting by each institution. In that connection, he agreed very much with the observations made by the representative of UNICEF. According to section 3.2 of the consolidated list, although the funds and programmes had made considerable progress in decentralization, progress had not been commensurate in the broader United Nations system at the country level, particularly the specialized agencies. He inquired whether that was really the case and whether there was a degree of harmonization in decentralization that allowed for decision-making in the field, including budget decentralization. His delegation would also appreciate further information on decentralization by the World Bank and how that might alter the nature of cooperation between the Bank and UNDG member organizations.

Mr. ROHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that he agreed that it was difficult to see how the consolidated list could replace reports by individual funds and programmes. It was an immense challenge to prepare reports on the follow-up to the major conferences in order to enable decision-makers to evaluate progress. His delegation would be curious to see how the work conducted by ACC would continue in the consolidated follow-up to the major conferences.

Ms. SUZUKI (Japan) said that she agreed that the purpose of the consolidated list of issues was to provide overall information on work by the funds and programmes. At the same time, the annual reports by those institutions were very useful tools enabling the Council to see what was being done in terms of individual mandates. The consolidated list, therefore, should not be a substitute for those reports.

Mr. AHMED (Associate Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that, in terms of decentralization, UNDP was moving forward with full delegation of authority to most of its country offices. When the World Bank opened many more offices in the field and shifted some operations from Washington to those offices, there would be greater possibilities for sustained interaction with their personnel, thus promoting greater synergy with them over a period of time. In general, the work by the funds and programmes at the country level would be facilitated by greater decentralization and delegation of authority by the World Bank.

Mr. SCRUGGS (United Nations Population Fund) in response to the comment from the representative of Canada concerning reporting and results and content versus process, said that the Economic and Social Council could perhaps take up the question of indicators since they basically arose as the result of the programmes of action decided upon at international conferences. With regard to decentralization, he stressed that UNFPA programmes were almost totally decentralized to the field once the concept of the country programme had been approved at headquarters. Funding and process were negotiated by the Government and the country representative and he pointed out that it would be a positive step if the World Bank decentralized at least part of its funding process.

In response to the comment from the representative of Switzerland concerning follow-up to conferences, he said that despite the specific interests of the various programmes, all were working together. He suggested that the

Council might reduce the number of reports to be prepared, thus improving the quality of the analysis in the reports, especially for the smaller organizations.

Mr. VAHER (United Nations Children's Fund) said that the degree of decentralization and delegation of authority might depend on the nature and structure of the various programmes and agencies. UNICEF had had a country-based approach for the past 30 years and recently the regional offices had been given responsibility for quality control and review of country programmes. The regional directors were members of the global and regional management teams and were therefore a direct link between headquarters and the country management structure. Technical functions had been transferred from headquarters to the regional offices and all management, technical support and review functions would be transferred to the field to the extent possible.

There should be no change in the relationship with the World Bank as a result of the World Bank's increased decentralization since UNICEF had always worked on a country programme basis; negotiations between the two organizations would be conducted by representatives in the field. Nevertheless, headquarters still reviewed financial procedures, ensured that approved programmes were in keeping with the specific nature of UNICEF and acted as a mediator to resolve problems which arose at the local level because of the two organizations' different approaches to such matters as procurement procedures, currency exchange and accountability.

Ms. SEQUEIRA (World Food Programme) said that 71 per cent of staff had been decentralized to the field and two regional bureaux would also be decentralized by September 1998. Country programmes were approved by the Executive Board but representatives in the field already had authority to approve activities within those programmes. The budget process had not yet been fully decentralized since that would be a more gradual process which required sufficient financial expertise at the country level to guarantee accountability.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.