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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
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President: Mr. FULCI (Italy)
(Vice-President)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS 50/226 AND 52/12B (E/1998/61, A/53/137-E/1998/66, E/1998/81 and 91)

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (A/52/871-S/1998/318; E/1998/59, 88 and 89; E/1998/NGO/5)

- (a) SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (A/53/65-E/1998/5, E/1998/29, 34 and 63, A/53/156-E/1998/78; E/1998/NGO/1; E/CN.17/1998/5)
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- (g) POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (E/1998/25)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to begin its consideration of agenda items 8 and 13.

Mr. DESAI (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the success of efforts to restructure and revitalize the high-level segment of the Council's session offered encouragement for a similar exercise with the general segment. In particular, it was important to identify what value the segment added through its discussion of the reports of the functional commissions to the discussions already undertaken by those bodies. It was no longer sufficient for the Secretariat to furnish the Council with a simple list of items for its consideration. Rather, it should offer an analytical overview that would allow the Council to focus on areas which required its specific coordinating input. That task was particularly important since functional commissions sometimes decided to carry out very similar activities, requiring a rationalization effort by the Council. The consolidated report on the outcome of the functional commissions (E/1998/CRP.5) was an attempt to provide the general segment with such an overview, in order to support its coordination

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work.

Introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled "The causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa" (A/52/871-S/1998/318), he said that the Secretary-General had submitted the report to the Security Council in the belief that systematic discussion of peace, security and human rights issues in Africa was impossible without reference to sustainable development. The Security Council had subsequently established a working group on peace and security in that continent, while the General Assembly and the Council were to consider other dimensions of the report.

The Secretary-General's report contained a number of recommendations with regard to peace and sustainable development in Africa. In particular, the Council should consider key aspects of sustainable economic recovery in Africa, taking into account improved average growth rates as well as significant successes in particular States. It should consider the creation of a positive environment for inward investment and growth, development of marketing activities, fiscal and trade reform and closer collaboration with the private sector in Africa. With regard to social development, consideration should be given to education, health and equitable distribution issues, including promotion and protection of women's rights. All African States should be encouraged to ratify the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

There was a need to restructure international aid not only to provide more money, but also to direct it to areas of greatest impact, making greater use of existing African expertise. Consideration should be given to reduction of States' debt burdens, through conversion of all bilateral debt into grants. There was a need to afford African States better access to international markets through, inter alia, the removal of trade and non-trade barriers. Finally, more support was required for regional cooperation and for the harmonization of international and bilateral policies on development cooperation with Africa. The Secretariat had elaborated a number of proposals for mechanisms to translate those recommendations into action, which so far had been positively received.

With regard to the restructuring and revitalization of the United Nations in the economic, social and related fields, Mr. Chowdhury (Bangladesh), Vice-President of the Council, deserved very high praise for his extremely effective

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chairmanship of consultations on the implementation of the Secretary-General's reform proposals with respect to the Council. It was refreshing to see so many concrete and positive outcomes from such a process.

While it was for the General Assembly, through the Fifth Committee, to decide on the utilization of the amount of \$13,065,000 in the development account of the regular budget for the 1998/1999 biennium, the Council should consider the value and appropriateness of the proposals contained in the Secretary-General's report in that regard (E/1998/81), particularly in the light of its work on coordinated follow-up to major Conferences.

The Secretary-General's recommendations were built around the concept of networking, which sought to ensure that developing countries could benefit from globalization and avoid marginalization through more effective and aggressive use of information technology. The need to tap more into available professional expertise within developing countries had been an equally important consideration.

Information technology had already been used to support policy-making in developing countries through the elaboration of joint papers by professionals living in different developing countries. Such activities had the dual benefit of developing networks and analytical and applied skills for policy-making and making considerable savings in money and time. Similar techniques should be used also for capacity-building and capacity-building training in development issues.

The Secretary-General's recommendations, accompanied by indicative performance criteria, would be submitted to the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly, in an effort to ensure that the money in the development account was used constructively. The Council should consider the usefulness of the proposals, taking account of its role in coordinated follow-up to the major Conferences.

Mr. ATIYANTO (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 52/235 requested the Secretary-General to submit proposals on the use of funds available in section 34 of the programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999 to the relevant intergovernmental bodies not later than 31 July 1998. Paragraphs 4 and 6 of that resolution indicated that the discussion of the subject should take place in the Second and Fifth Committees of the General Assembly. Furthermore,

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objections regarding the quality of the documentation submitted pursuant to Assembly resolution 52/12B had been expressed in paragraph 1 of the resolution. In light of the foregoing, and of the fact that the General Assembly had yet to take a decision regarding the utilization of the development account, the Group of 77 and China insisted that the Council should not discuss the Secretary-General's report entitled "Utilization of the development dividend" (E/1998/81) until the Secretary-General had formally submitted it to the Second and Fifth Committees.

The issue of the utilization of the development account was a matter of great importance to all developing countries, which were committed to its establishment and were interested in its early utilization. However, its modalities and best uses required thorough discussion. The Group of 77 and China were strongly of the view that the proposed reduction in administrative costs should in no way affect the full implementation of mandated programmes and activities.

Mr. BERTUCCI (Director, Division of Public Administration and Development Management), introducing the reports submitted under sub-items (d) and (e) of agenda item 13, said that United Nations activities in the field of public administration and development had been influenced by two recent events: the resumed fiftieth session of the General Assembly, which had adopted resolution 50/225 on the subject of public administration and development, and the Secretary-General's reform measures in the economic and social fields.

Resolution 50/225 stressed the importance of public institutions and sound, efficient administrative systems to the development process and highlighted some of the characteristics required of a modern, effective and pro-active State. The need to redesign the State for economic and social development, avoiding excessive State control on the one hand and excessive passivity on the other, was the overarching theme of that resolution. Governments were being forced to adapt to trends whose impact they could not ignore, namely, globalization, progress in science and technology and the growing involvement of civil society in public affairs nationally and internationally.

The traditional control structures of the State were no longer appropriate or effective. Debureaucratization in several parts of the world went hand in hand with a new management culture of openness, initiative, diversity and frequent interface with multiple stakeholders. Governments increasingly

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relinquished the task of directly controlling production of services and goods, leaving such matters to individual initiative and market forces, while helping to steer and coordinate their efforts. Such Governments actively sought partnerships with businesses and non-governmental organizations in pursuit of economic and social development objectives.

United Nations activities had focused on providing Governments with state-of-the-art approaches to reform. The Secretary-General's report entitled "Implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/225" (A/53/173-E/1998/87) summarized the activities and division of labour between various parts of the Organization in support of that process. The report showed how rich had been the Organization's contribution to the implementation of resolution 50/225. One theme of very great concern to Member States was coordination of that effort. The measures already taken in that regard included reform of the economic and social sector, a better division of labour between Secretariat entities and funds and programmes, specific cooperative arrangements between and among agencies and the establishment of a standing consultative mechanism to coordinate the respective activities of the agencies. It was hoped that the consultative mechanism would help identify additional measures to create closer inter-agency cooperation and links.

Within the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Programme in Public Administration and Finance had focused its attention on providing services to policy-making organs, on promotion of policy dialogue between intergovernmental bodies and between intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations and on normative activities, data collection and analysis. It had also provided a forum for sharing of experiences and best practices. Public administration had contributed to the synergy between issues of social and economic development, reflecting the spirit of resolution 50/225, in which Member States had confirmed that issues of governance, public administration and institutional and management capacity were central to the development process.

Before addressing the issue of how the State should work, it was important to identify where and to what extent it should be involved. Consideration should be given to the relationship of the State with the market, with the business sector and with society as whole in the provision of goods and services, particularly social services.

The Fourteenth Meeting of the Group of Experts on the Programme, whose findings and recommendations were contained in document E/1998/77, had devoted particular attention to the relationship between public administration and key economic and social development themes. The Group had examined the relationship between public administration and implementation of the commitments made at major conferences. It had also addressed key issues in government, public administration and finance as they affected the development process. Further, it had discussed the analysis and collection of public administration and finance data for policy-making purposes.

The major conferences had provided a series of imperatives, without indicating how they should be implemented. Since the primary responsibility for implementation lay with Governments, capacity-building was a necessary pre-requisite for achieving those objectives. The Group of Experts believed that the United Nations should play a special role in that regard, focusing on management of change, institution-building and administrative reform, human resources development and information-sharing. The Group had further recommended the establishment of a global information clearing house to support a global campaign for the revitalization of institutions of governance. The United Nations should develop and maintain a global network of institutions, in order to foster links and promote cross-fertilization and synergy.

The Ad Hoc Group of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, whose report on its eighth meeting was before the Council in document E/1998/57, had a mandate to examine various aspects of international taxation, in order to provide guidance to Member States and institutions in areas of taxation policy, treaty negotiation, double taxation and tax evasion and avoidance. During the eighth meeting, in December 1997, the Group had reached broad agreement that the changing international economic environment should be reflected in tax legislation and frameworks.

In particular, the Group had recommended that bilateral tax treaties should provide for information exchange in order to counter the threats posed to tax systems by drug trafficking, smuggling and money laundering through tax havens. The ultimate objective should be to reduce the efficacy and undermine the raison d'être of tax havens. With regard to transfer pricing, the Group had recommended that the United Nations should cooperate with regional professional organizations to establish proper guidelines and strategies to address that

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practice. New financial instruments had introduced additional complexity to tax systems, necessitating simplified guidelines and legislative amendment proposals to avoid loss of revenue. The Group was cooperating with the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and others in that regard.

The work of updating the United Nations Model Double Taxation Convention drew in part on national and regional legislation, including the OECD Model Convention. The Group had established a focus group to advise it on the updating of the Convention by the end of the year.

In order to upgrade the technical skills of tax administrators from developing and transition economies, the Secretariat would organize a series of interregional workshops and seminars, to begin in 1999.

Mr. KHAN (Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the Secretary-General's report on products harmful to health and the environment (A/53/136-E/1998/78), said that the report was prepared as a triennial review of the Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale Have Been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or Not Approved by Governments, and that the List was the only document of its type that presented information on regulatory decisions taken by Governments on a range of chemical and pharmaceutical products. The number of products listed and the number of Governments reporting had grown to 700 and 94 respectively in the last combined issue of the List.

Mounting evidence of the adverse effects of the use of chemicals had been accompanied by a growing understanding that they could be used more safely by employing a life-cycle approach, using cleaner technologies and looking for safer substitutes. Of particular interest was the recently concluded negotiation on a legally binding instrument governing the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade. The Convention was expected to be signed at a diplomatic conference in Rotterdam in September 1998.

A related development was the discussion within the World Trade Organization (WTO) of the export of domestically prohibited goods. A proposal to revive the domestically prohibited goods notification system that had been in existence between 1982 and 1990 would be addressed at the next meeting of the WTO Committee on Trade and the Environment in late 1998.

The Consolidated List had long been recognized as an important and valuable

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means for Governments and consumer groups to be kept informed of hazardous products and to take the necessary policy action. Its scope and coverage should be expanded and the mandate for its continued publication strongly endorsed.

Mr. CHAMIE (Director, Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs), introducing the report of the Commission on Population and Development (E/1998/25), said that at its thirty-first session in February 1998, the Commission had adopted a resolution calling for further action by Governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to facilitate information exchange, determine causes of stagnation or increase in adult mortality in some countries and increase efforts to lower mortality and improve health.

The Commission recommended that the Council should adopt a draft resolution inviting Governments to give priority to the planning and undertaking of the next census, recommending the collection and analysis in the census of data on mortality and calling on the United Nations system and donor Governments to provide the necessary support in undertaking censuses.

In a second draft resolution, concerning preparations for the 1999 special session of the General Assembly to review and appraise the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development, the Commission recommended that the Council should request the Secretariat to prepare and disseminate a comprehensive plan for the preparatory process, indicate the number and focus of reports on that subject to be prepared for the Commission's thirty-second session and decide to extend that session's length to seven working days.

A third item for the Council's consideration and adoption was a draft decision recommending the approval of the provisional agenda for the thirty-second session of the Commission. With regard to that agenda, the Secretariat suggested the removal of the report of the ACC Task Force on Basic Social Services and proposed that two days should be devoted to the Commission's regular work and five days should be devoted to final preparations for the special session of the General Assembly.

Mr. RAVON-AKII (Observer for Vanuatu) drew attention to a letter from the Prime Minister of Vanuatu (E/1998/89) giving the Government's reasons for requesting that consideration of the classification of Vanuatu and its graduation from the list of least developed countries should be deferred until

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the year 2000. The Committee for Development Planning had not yet issued the vulnerability index, and the reform measures taken by the Government, reducing the number of ministries from 12 to 9 and instituting a package of tax and banking sector reforms had just begun to bear fruit. Moreover, Pacific island States were highly vulnerable to both economic and ecological shocks. That vulnerability was aggravated by their distance from markets, the instability of commodity prices for their limited number of exports and a fragile economic structure. For all of those reasons, his Government appealed for a deferral of its removal from the group of least developed countries.

Mr. NIKULÁSSON (Iceland) reiterated Iceland's commitment to sustainable development and its efforts to apply that principle to the use of living marine resources and renewable energy sources. Protecting the oceans from land-based pollution and the effects of climate change was essential to ensure that the harvesting of living marine resources could continue.

Particular efforts were needed to support the sustainable development of small island developing States because of the limitations of their relatively small populations and highly specialized and concentrated economies. The 1999 special session of the General Assembly should focus on the implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action. With regard to the negotiations on an international instrument concerning pollution from organic substances in the oceans, the political will existed to complete those negotiations by the year 2000, based on an approach of common but differentiated responsibility. A comprehensive review of the oceans and the utilization of living marine resources should be conducted at the forthcoming seventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, within the framework of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea. Renewable energy sources for sustainable development were another topic of great importance which should be taken up at the next conference of parties to the Kyoto protocol of the Convention on Climate Change. It was important to realize that industrial growth and sound environmental policies could be mutually reinforcing.

Mr. DOS SANTOS (Mozambique), referring to the report of the Secretary-General on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318), said that during the discussions of the report which had taken place in the Security Council, many delegations had expressed the view that some aspects of that report fell under

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the mandate of the Economic and Social Council. The Security Council had established an ad hoc working group to address the issues under its mandate, and it might be useful for the Council to follow suit. The Council should ensure the necessary coordination for actions to integrate the valuable recommendations of the Secretary-General into such existing mechanisms as the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s and the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. Of particular importance was the mobilization of resources to translate commitments by Member States into action.

Mr. ATIYANTO (Observer for Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on the report of the Committee for Development Planning (E/1998/34), said that the Group could go along with the policy recommendations regarding the response to the Asian financial crisis contained in paragraph 70. It was, however, concerned at the treatment of the issue of vulnerability and urged deferral of the removal of Vanuatu from the list of least developed countries. The Committee had not yet carried out the work on the development of a vulnerability index as requested in General Assembly resolution 52/210. The Barbados Programme of Action had recognized a vulnerability index as critical for small island developing States, yet the Committee had dismissed it as not being currently feasible. The Group of 77 and China therefore believed that no action should be taken on the classification of Vanuatu until the terms of resolution 52/210 had been fulfilled.

Mr. BOUCHER (Observer for Barbados), speaking on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), said that the States members of AOSIS associated themselves with the statement just made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The vulnerability of small island developing States had been fully recognized at global conferences and in General Assembly resolutions. How such vulnerability should be taken into account was still a subject of debate and methodological work.

The proposed graduation of Vanuatu from the list of least developed countries and the appeal submitted by the Prime Minister of Vanuatu (E/1998/89) reflected the anxiety currently felt by many small island States. AOSIS welcomed the conclusions of the ad hoc expert group (A/53/65-E/1998/5, annex) that small island States were particularly vulnerable and that analytical work on vulnerability should continue. Cooperation with other institutions was essential for ensuring broad international acceptance of the methodological

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foundations of a vulnerability index. The lessons learned by UNDP in developing the various indexes used in the Human Development Report would be useful. That ongoing technical work should be of interest for the assessment, by the Committee for Development Planning, of the operational usefulness of a vulnerability index as a criterion for the designation of least developed countries. He urged all delegations to support the draft resolution to be submitted on the subject.

Mr. HOROI (Observer for the Solomon Islands), speaking on behalf of the South Pacific Forum, said that, while the Forum appreciated the efforts of the Committee for Development Planning, it was evident that it had yet to fulfil the mandate it had received from the General Assembly. Several studies had been undertaken on the concept of a vulnerability index, and while the findings were tentative, they underscored the fact that small States faced external constraints, risks and threats that impacted on them to a degree both qualitatively and quantitatively different from other States, making them especially vulnerable. Exposure to natural disaster was an important determinant of economic activity and human welfare within a given small island State.

The Prime Minister of Vanuatu had also called for dialogue and consultation between his country and the Committee for Development Planning, and such a positive gesture should be encouraged. In conclusion, the graduation of a least developed country without the inclusion of a vulnerability index as an integral component of the criteria would be premature and incomplete.

Mr. POWLES (New Zealand) said that his delegation wished to associate itself with the statement of the Solomon Islands and to express its concern at the recommendation regarding Vanuatu. It fully supported the graduation of countries from the list of least developed countries when they had reached a sufficient level of development and welcomed such events as a demonstration that efforts of the country and its partners to improve the social and economic well-being of a country had been successful. However, there was growing evidence to suggest that vulnerability was a crucial limiting factor in the achievement of sustainable development and should be taken into account in the criteria for graduation in order to avoid unfair decisions. The recent devastation caused by a tsunami in Papua New Guinea was a tragic example of that vulnerability. Natural disasters were a fact of life for the small islands of the Pacific, and

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their fragile economies were stretched by coping with rebuilding communities and replacing lost resources year after year. His delegation was most disappointed that the Committee for Development Planning had failed to carry out the important work entrusted to it and urged the Council not to accept its recommendation but to instruct the Committee to carry out the analysis of the vulnerability index as requested by the General Assembly.

Mr. RI KWANG NAM (Democratic People's Republic of Korea), speaking on the sub-item on cartography, said that the standardization of geographical names had been widely recognized as an important issue for promoting development and cooperation in the economic, social and environmental fields. In addition, the resolution of issues surrounding geographical features common to two or more nations contributed to good neighbourly relations among States.

In that context, his delegation had raised the issue of the reference to the sea lying between the Korean peninsula and the Japanese archipelago as the Sea of Japan at the Sixth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names in 1992, which had suggested that the parties concerned should hold consultations with a view to a negotiated settlement. Regrettably, however, the Japanese authorities had not shown any willingness to negotiate and had declined to work towards a resolution of the issue at the Seventh Conference. His delegation would continue to make every effort to achieve a fair resolution of the issue of the renaming of that sea, historically known as the East Sea of Korea or the East Sea.

Ms. SOLOFA (Observer for Samoa) said that her delegation wished to add its voice in support of previous statements calling for the postponement of consideration of the decision to graduate Vanuatu from the list of least developed countries. The economic status of small island developing States should be taken into account, and the vulnerability index should be instrumental in determining indicators of the development constraints faced by those States. It was obvious that there was wide support for a deferral, and furthermore, the wish of Vanuatu for dialogue and consultation should be heeded.

Mr. CRIGHTON (Observer for Australia), speaking also on behalf of Canada, said that he supported the statement of the delegation of Vanuatu and the representations made by the Prime Minister of that country in the letter contained in document E/1998/89. He was disappointed and concerned to note that, despite widespread and authoritative recognition of the heightened

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vulnerability of small island States, the Committee for Development Planning had not submitted its views and recommendations on the usefulness of the vulnerability index as a criterion for the designation of least developed countries, as requested in General Assembly resolution 52/210, paragraph 3. That work should be completed prior to any further consideration of Vanuatu's status.

He supported the concept of graduation from the list of least developed countries, provided that the process was based on equitable and agreed criteria. He was surprised that the report of the Committee for Development Planning (E/1998/34) made no mention of the Commonwealth Secretariat's work on developing a vulnerability index. A ministerial mission of the Commonwealth Secretariat, whose report had been conveyed to the United Nations, had recommended the establishment of a joint Commonwealth/World Bank task force on the subject; the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and WTO had expressed interest in the work of such a task force.

Vanuatu, like many island developing States, was susceptible to volatility in the growth of economic output owing to forces beyond its control. A recent study of over 100 developing and island countries had found that Vanuatu's economy was the most vulnerable. The Council should not take a decision on Vanuatu's graduation until the Committee for Development Planning had submitted an assessment of the use of a vulnerability index, which should take into account the work of the Commonwealth/World Bank task force and other bodies.

Mr. WINNICK (United States of America) said that he strongly supported efforts to enhance the effectiveness of the Commission on Sustainable Development, particularly the use of interactive dialogues involving civil society, which had provided useful input for intergovernmental deliberations. With respect to the Committee for Development Planning, he welcomed the changes which had been proposed in the consultations being held pursuant to General Assembly resolution 50/227, but was disappointed that the Committee's report did not take into account the tasks assigned by the Council. He was particularly concerned about chapter II of the Committee's report because many of its conclusions were contrary to those reached at the April 1998 meeting between ministers and the heads of the Bretton Woods institutions. He questioned the report's call for the establishment of a world financial organization, since existing institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the

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Basle Committee on Banking Supervision were already performing the functions mentioned in the report. The report expressed some legitimate concerns about the impact of the Asian financial crisis, but the establishment of a new body in that field would only hamper coordination efforts.

He regretted that the report on products harmful to health and the environment (A/53/156-E/1998/78) had not been issued with more lead time. His Government had had long-standing concerns about the format, content and accuracy of the Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale Have Been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or Not Approved by Governments. However, it was pleased with the progress made in addressing concerns about pharmaceutical listings and in establishing information requirements for certain industrial chemicals and pesticides. The 1999 survey by the Department of Economic and Social Affairs should include an evaluation of the continued utility of the List in those areas, in view of the considerable overlap with the work of other bodies. Since WTO had shown very little support for the revival of the domestically prohibited goods notification system, it was inappropriate for the Secretary-General to make recommendations to WTO on the subject.

He hoped that the work of the Committee on Natural Resources and of the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development would be revitalized by the proposal that they should be merged into a single body, which should cooperate closely with the Commission on Sustainable Development. Lastly, he agreed with the representative of Mozambique that an open and dynamic economic environment, social development and respect for human rights were essential for the achievement of lasting peace in Africa. He welcomed the submission of the Secretary-General's report (A/52/871-S/1998/318) to the Council, whose subsidiary machinery had been working on those issues for many years, and looked forward to pursuing those efforts in the light of the report.

Mr. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that, as inter-agency task manager for science and education for sustainable development, UNESCO was committed to coordinating and facilitating the implementation of the relevant recommendations of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Moreover, the Commission's recommendations on strategic approaches to freshwater management were of particular relevance to the International Hydrological Programme of UNESCO,

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which would contribute actively to the implementation of those recommendations.

With respect to energy, UNESCO would participate in the ad hoc inter-agency task force on energy responsible for elaborating a common approach to the subject by United Nations agencies. Moreover, UNESCO had played a leading role in the elaboration of the World Solar Programme 1996-2005, adopted at the 1996 World Solar Summit. Countries of all regions and at all stages of economic development had proposed high-priority national projects for inclusion in the Programme.

In the field of population, UNESCO was using the guidelines for the resident coordinator system which had been developed by the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, and would cooperate with its partners in the United Nations system in ensuring the implementation of the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and in conducting the 1999 five-year review of the Programme. The basis for that cooperation was the specific mandate of UNESCO to conduct research and activities directed at encouraging responsible human behaviour in sexual life and reproduction, gender relations, family and the environment. UNESCO was particularly involved in mainstreaming population issues into educational curricula.

Mr. WEIBGEN (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that the draft convention on the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, which had been completed in march 1998, was expected to be adopted and opened for signature in September 1998. The convention was based on the PIC principle, which had been applied on a voluntary basis since 1989 through a joint FAO/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) programme. Governments had agreed to continue to apply the voluntary procedure pending the entry into force of the convention, whose secretariat would be provided by UNEP and FAO.

The joint FAO/World Health Organization (WHO) Codex Alimentarius Commission was responsible for formulating international standards and recommendations on issues related to food safety. That Commission relied on the evaluations of joint expert bodies to ensure that its work was based on sound scientific principles. Since the conclusion of the Uruguay Round, the Commission's work had taken on added significance, as Codex standards had been selected as the benchmark for quality and safety requirements for food in international trade. That area was another illustration of the validity and vitality of coordinated

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efforts as a prerequisite for success.

Mr. WEDENIG (Observer for Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that he supported the comprehensive response to Africa's development needs which the Secretary-General had envisaged in his report (A/52/871-S/1998/318). The European Union was committed to a proactive policy that focused on conflict prevention and post-conflict peace-building, using the full range of policy instruments available, including development assistance, of which the European Union was the leading source for Africa.

With respect to the report of the Committee for Development Planning (E/1998/34), the European Union agreed that the architecture of the international monetary system should be strengthened to mitigate future disturbances similar to the Asian financial crisis. However, it saw no need to establish a world financial organization, since existing structures could undertake the functions proposed for such a body. Regarding the report's suggestions for future work, he welcomed the proposal for closer linkage between the Committee's work and future discussions within the Council.

Mr. CABACTULAN (Observer for the Philippines) said that his delegation aligned itself with the statement made by the representative of Indonesia on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, particularly with respect to the report of the Committee for Development Planning as it related to the recommendation in General Assembly resolution 52/210 concerning the vulnerability index and the status of Vanuatu. He welcomed the full range of ideas put forward by the Committee with respect to the Asian financial crisis, since they would be useful for the consideration of the wider issue of governance of the international financial system. Continued dialogue on the subject would ensure comprehensive and integrated consideration of the issue of financing for development.

He fully supported the three draft decisions which the Commission on Sustainable Development had recommended for adoption by the Council (E/1998/29). With respect to the provisional agenda for the Commission's seventh session, meetings of other bodies on the themes of oceans and seas, sustainable consumption and tourism should be held well in advance of the session so that delegations would have ample time in which to review the recommendations of those meetings. Moreover, it was important that the topics discussed by the inter-sessional ad hoc working groups should be subjected to intergovernmental debate as well. Lastly, his delegation would submit a draft resolution to the

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Council on an international year of eco-tourism, which contained a request that the Commission should recommend, at its seventh session, measures and activities that would contribute to the success of that initiative.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (A/53/130; A/53/152-E/1998/71, A/53/153-E/1998/75, E/1998/76)

Mr. RODRIGUEZ PARRILLA (Acting Chairman, Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples), introducing the report contained in document E/1998/76, said that at the recent regional seminar on decolonization held in Fiji, the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories had underscored the importance of assistance and support in the transition to full self-government. The decolonization period was not yet over, and unique remedies were required to protect the inalienable rights of the people of the Territories.

The development options of small island Non-Self-Governing Territories were limited, and there was a continuing need for the support and assistance of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations.

The Special Committee had recently adopted a number of resolutions regarding the small island Non-Self-Governing Territories. A resolution on Tokelau noted the collaborative contribution of New Zealand and organizations of the United Nations system to that Territory's development and invited the administering Power and the system to continue their assistance to Tokelau's social and economic development. A resolution on New Caledonia welcomed the signing of an accord between that Territory and the Government of France and noted the accord's provisions allowing New Caledonia to become a member or associate member of certain international organizations according to their regulations.

A resolution on the ten small island Territories recognized that the specific characteristics and sentiments of their peoples required flexible and innovative approaches to the options of self-determination, referred to their particular vulnerability to natural disasters and environmental degradation, and noted with appreciation the contribution to the development of some Territories by organizations of the United Nations system and regional institutions. The

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Committee requested the administering Powers to protect and conserve the environments of the Territories under their administration, requested continued monitoring of environmental conditions in those Territories, and invited organizations of the United Nations system to initiate or continue to accelerate progress in their social and economic life. The Special Committee also called for continued development assistance to those Territories from the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations.

In the Council's discussion of the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the Specialized Agencies and the International Institutions Associated with the United Nations, he suggested that the members of the Council and the Special Committee should review and strengthen economic and social assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. The resources necessary for that task should be secured through the support of all major funding institutions in the United Nations system. The Special Committee also hoped that the administering Powers would facilitate the participation of representatives of the Territories in the relevant meetings and conferences of the specialized agencies and other organizations of the system.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN (A/53/163-E/1998/79*)

Mr. KASSANGANA (Regional Commissions, New York Office), introducing the report of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia contained in document A/53/163-E/1998/79*, said that the report covered the period from June 1997 to May 1998. During that period, the stalling of the peace process had continued to cause severe hardships to the Palestinians in the occupied territory as well as to the Arab population of the occupied Syrian Golan. Further contributing factors included the explosion of building construction in late 1997 throughout the occupied territories, Israeli policies limiting access to water, and the Israeli authorities' failure to enforce compliance with environmental regulations by Israeli industrial concerns in the occupied West Bank. Closures and the increased use of expatriate workers had aggravated the unemployment situation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, whose overall economic environment inhibited investment and growth owing to the continued ambiguity of the legal and political situation. The Arab population of the Syrian Golan also faced further deterioration in their living conditions as a result of Israeli

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settlements, restricted employment opportunities and education, and prohibitive levels of taxation in a broad range of categories.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.