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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 16 July 1999, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. VALDIVIESO (Colombia)
(Vice-President)

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COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEME: DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA: IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATED FOLLOW-UP BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF INITIATIVES ON AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT

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In the absence of Mr. Fulci (Italy), Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia),
Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

COORDINATION OF THE POLICIES AND ACTIVITIES OF THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER BODIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM RELATED TO THE FOLLOWING THEME: DEVELOPMENT OF AFRICA: IMPLEMENTATION AND COORDINATED FOLLOW-UP BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF INITIATIVES ON AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT (agenda item 4) (A/54/133-E/1999/79; E/1999/104-S/1999/754)

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the Report of the Secretary-General (A/54/133-E/1999/79), said that it provided a synthetic picture of the various initiatives aimed at coordinating and monitoring the existing mechanisms for the promotion of African development. While national and regional economies varied widely, the existing initiatives generally did not suffice to attain the sustained growth required for significant poverty relief. The 5 per cent GDP growth rate of the early 1990s after a decade of stagnation had not been sustained: the 2.5 per cent achieved in 1997-1998 signified further stagnation, with the annual population growth being virtually the same. The 6 per cent target of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa (UN-NADAF) was still far from achievement, and even further away was the 7-8 per cent calculated by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) to be necessary to attain the goal set by the World Social Summit, namely, halving poverty by 2015. The shortfall was a dramatic one, especially for sub-Saharan Africa, where over 50 per cent of the population currently lived in absolute poverty.

Domestic resource mobilization was limited by mass poverty, compounded by an unsustainable debt burden, equivalent to over 300 per cent of exports of goods and services, making financing through official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI) crucial for capacity-building. Highly relevant to the discussion were the positive developments at the G-8 Summit in Cologne as well as the adverse trends in ODA, which had been discussed by the Council during the high-level and operational activities segments.

The report gave a brief overview of economic and social measures, covering a variety of areas, relevant to the follow-up 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), which had rallied support, advocating a holistic approach to the interrelated problems confronting the continent. The executive heads of United Nations programmes and specialized agencies had brought the report to the attention of their governing bodies, thus giving the follow-up process strong intergovernmental roots; and the Council's discussion should influence further measures by the United Nations and the entire international community. That was important for two reasons: first, the Secretary-General's report should be viewed, not as an additional initiative, but as a new instrument for the harmonization of peace-building and development initiatives and of action among individual economic and social sectors. Secondly, the African countries and the international community needed a sense of "ownership" to ensure the lasting impact of the system's contribution.

The section on priorities aptly began with a reference to UN-NADAF, which remained the framework for the promotion of economic recovery and development in the 1990s. It had led to the Organization of African Unity (OAU) Cairo Agenda for Action - still the most authoritative statement on African priorities - which should be the basis for further prioritization and assessment, to which the Council was required to contribute. The report went on to review the many recent United Nations and bilateral initiatives, including the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, as they related to those two basic instruments.

He highlighted five characteristics of the Special Initiative: its field orientation; its highly effective use of the lead-agency arrangement; the stronger links it had provided between United Nations Headquarters and the region by the joint chairing of its Steering Committee by the Executive Secretary of ECA and the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); the World Bank's total engagement; and the importance for the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) that the Initiative should increasingly become the implementing arm of UN-UNDAF, offering flexible responses, and that the countries concerned should use it to meet their own priority requirements.

The Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), whose chairman would address the Council, had played a key role in the global coordination arrangements. In regional coordination, the ECA had been instrumental, as had

the inter-agency meeting convened by a 1998 decision of the Council in connection with its review of regional structures and regional reforms. It had been held at Nairobi in March 1999.

Country-level coordination of multilateral and bilateral activities was an especially important topic, one where the Council could build on its earlier discussions during the operational activities segment and the poverty alleviation and capacity-building segment.

The General Assembly's invitation - contained in resolution 53/192 - to the African countries and their partners was a very ambitious one. While the Council's response at the current session could only be a step on the way to the 2002 review and appraisal of UN-NADAF, it should, however, be a decisive step that took advantage of the Council's unique position to contribute significantly to the attainment of the objectives set by the General Assembly.

Mr. MONTHE (Cameroon), Chairman of the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC), having cited a number of instances of the key role the CPC had long played at all stages of the United Nations African development programmes, said that the Committee had always considered UN-UNDAF to be a partnership between the international community and Africa, which contained some high-priority areas for the development of the continent. He commended the use of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa as a mechanism for effectively coordinating operational activities in the field. With a view to the General Assembly's evaluation of UN-UNDAF in 2002, the various pilot institutions of the system should prepare strategies with precise objectives, deadlines, and responsibilities, action plans, and result and evaluation indicators. He thanked the Secretariat for the matrix it had issued to the agencies concerned, pursuant to the Committee's recommendation.

Resource mobilization being the key to the success of UN-UNDAF, the Committee had asked the World Bank to submit its innovative strategy, which it had begun to prepare in 1998, to the Committee at its fortieth session in 2000.

The Committee welcomed the emphasis on improved African trade competitiveness and also called for measures to facilitate market access. It had endorsed the two programmes, prepared at its recommendation by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), on the diversification of the African economies and regional cooperation and

integration. It also welcomed the Bretton Woods institutions' active participation in UN-UNDAF and the resultant strengthening of coordination with the other organizations of the United Nations system, as well as the improved collaboration between the Office of the Special Coordinator for Africa and the Least-Developed Countries (OSCAL), the ECA and the Special Initiative secretariat, in order to avoid duplication and harmonize the various national and international initiatives for Africa.

The Committee had asked the organizations involved in the Special Initiative to be represented at the highest appropriate level at its future meetings. Noting the limited geographical deployment of the Special Initiative's activities, it had also recommended financial assistance to as many African countries as possible for grass-roots activities.

Since the task, albeit enormous, had already yielded appreciable results, the Committee had requested another interim report for its fortieth session, as a token of its commitment to ensuring very positive results of the follow-up of UN-UNDAF and the General Assembly's final evaluation in 2002.

Mr. INSANALLY (Observer for Guyana), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the African peoples were increasingly marginalized in terms of global economic activities and had yet to benefit from their enormous development potential or reap the fruits of their abundant natural resources. While recent improved growth rates were encouraging, they still fell far short of the 7 per cent growth in GDP required if poverty was to be halved in 15 years' time. Social targets such as basic health, education, adequate housing, employment and reducing the HIV/AIDS pandemic among the young were equally difficult to meet. The international community must continue to be concerned about the pervasiveness of poverty throughout Africa and its devastating effects, particularly for women and children. Failure to lay the foundations for its eradication, or to promote sustained socio-economic growth for social development could not but plunge the continent into greater turmoil.

The challenges were not insurmountable. Development was primarily in the hands of the African peoples and they had set their priorities in the Cairo Agenda for Action and UN-UNDAF. However, they could not be successful without assistance from the developed world, including a reversal of the

decline in ODA; the elimination of unsustainable debt; support for indigenous economic efforts; liberalized market access; promotion of a diversified African export base; and encouragement for FDI in Africa. The highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative must be improved to give more countries access to its benefits. Unmanageable debt must be written off in the most indebted and conflict-torn countries.

While the many international and bilateral initiatives were commendable, their implementation had suffered from inadequate funding, poor coordination, and the lack of African ownership of the process. The African peoples, best placed to judge initiatives intended for their benefit, should be invited to increase their input, especially in setting priorities that reflected their specific needs. The obstacles to progress should also be identified and solutions sought to circumvent them.

Coordination arrangements required review and global and regional consolidation, an area in which the ACC could be more effective. With adequate financial support, the Special Initiative could fulfil the coordination role agreed upon at Nairobi. He urged the Bretton Woods institutions to organize their programmes with those of the United Nations system and step up their involvement in African development. All the non-system initiatives should align themselves with those of the United Nations in a concerted effort at sustainable development in Africa.

At country level, the resident coordinator system had an important role to play in harmonizing development initiatives and in promoting local ownership of programmes. African Governments, for their part, had committed themselves under the Cairo Agenda for Action and at the most recent OAU Summit Conference to creating a domestic environment conducive to economic and social progress. The international community could do no less than support those efforts.

Mr. LINDHOLM (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and the EFTA countries of Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway, said that, although economic reforms towards market economy and political reforms towards democracy had raised expectations of an African renaissance, Africa in the 1990s had been characterized by contrasting phenomena. Armed conflicts

had become still more widespread, as had overall underdevelopment and extreme poverty. In view of the increasing marginalization of many African countries within the world economy, priority should be accorded to improving market access opportunities by addressing supply-side constraints. The Union therefore considered key areas for action to include: further enforcement of a conducive investment climate through economic reform; promotion of political accountability; democratic institutions; and respect for human rights. Good governance and the rule of law were also essential to sustainable development. Greater attention should also be accorded to the HIV/AIDS problem, which had become a real development challenge.

The Union endorsed the Secretary-General's efforts to mobilize international support for African development and security. It welcomed the comprehensive and integrated approach of his report to the Security Council (A/52/871-S/1998/318) and attached great importance to its follow-up.

As mentioned in the development of Africa report (A/54/133-E/1999/79), long-term international aid programmes had not always achieved their development goals. Moreover, recent high-level forums dealing with African development had expressed concern at the potential duplication of initiatives and had called for a greater harmonization of efforts. During the current segment, the Council should seek to rank partnership priorities, to define respective responsibilities and to agree on realistic and measurable targets. It was important, also, to focus on improving existing programmes and coordination mechanisms. A review should be carried out of the various United Nations initiatives to ensure maximum efficiency and complementarity among actions at the various levels.

The international community must reach common understanding on the need to develop country-specific coordination mechanisms under the leadership of each recipient African country. Furthermore, in addition to internationally agreed development targets, more Africa-specific objectives should be established. The Cairo Agenda for Action served as a good starting point for prioritization. The Development Council of the European Union, for its part, had recently adopted a resolution aiming to increase the complementarity of European assistance in order to enhance the European contribution to overall coordination efforts.

In the spirit of true development partnership, the Union was committed to strengthening the political will of all parties and developing a mechanism for policy and operational coordination between all partners. Recipient countries should also be encouraged to elaborate medium-term development strategies to enable donors to align their activities more effectively with national priorities. Also on the subject of coordination, the Union welcomed the recent introduction by the World Bank of the Comprehensive Development Framework (CDF). Furthermore, harmonization of the different administrative and reporting requirements and programme cycles of donors would serve to reduce the burden on recipient countries. It might also be useful to organize meetings of donors, recipient Governments and civil society to discuss options for complementarity in specific fields. Above all, the national development strategies of the recipient countries must form the basis for overall coordination. The Union was therefore willing to provide support to countries for the preparation of national strategy papers.

The Union and Africa would have a unique opportunity to discuss future cooperation at the EU-Africa Summit to be held in the year 2000. The purpose of the Summit would be to reinforce partnership between the two continents, the mutual interests of which were greater than ever before.

The Union wished to renew its commitment to promoting the fulfilment of responsibilities by the international community. For poverty eradication targets to be met, it was clear that domestic as well as external resources must increase and must be used efficiently; the Union welcomed the commitments made in that regard in the ECA Ministerial Statement. Meeting such commitments would make a real difference in filling funding gaps and in achieving the growth rates needed to reduce poverty substantially. ODA was also vital, especially for the least-developed countries. All donor countries should thus be urged to meet official development assistance targets and reverse the decline in ODA. As the largest donor to African countries and the provider of more than 50 per cent of total ODA, the Union would continue to contribute actively to the creation of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa, inter alia by assisting in the creation of a stable and democratic environment, in resolving the debt burden of the heavily indebted poor countries and in helping to integrate African nations into the world economy.

Mr. KUMAMARU (Japan) said that the Tokyo Agenda for Action adopted at the second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II) emphasized African ownership, international partnership and capacity-building. The Tokyo Agenda also incorporated a number of United Nations development targets and initiatives, including the UN-NADAF. Over the coming five years, his Government would provide 90 billion yen of assistance to help establish educational facilities for 2 million children and improve the living conditions of more than 15 million people. It would also establish regional health centres in Kenya and Ghana specializing in parasitic diseases, population and HIV/AIDS. In the area of private sector development, the Government would establish an Asia Africa Investment Information and Technology Centre in Kuala Lumpur with the cooperation of Malaysia and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). It was also supporting the Governance Forum organized by UNDP, and was willing to help fund the national projects that would emerge from the process.

To ensure maximum efficiency and impact, his Government was committed to coordinating activities with all the development partners, through the resident coordinator system, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the recently devised CDF of the World Bank. Coordination mechanisms must be developed in a flexible and practical way on the basis of existing mechanisms and under the leadership of each individual African country. Only then would it be possible to ensure consistency with national development strategies and the specific situation of each country.

Ms. ECKEY (Norway) said that no other continent had experienced so many humanitarian tragedies and violent conflicts in recent years as Africa. A large majority of the least-developed countries were African and poor African nations risked further marginalization from globalization. It was crucial to break the vicious cycles of conflict and underdevelopment and to build on the recent progress achieved by many countries in the fields of democracy, the rule of law and good governance.

The clear message of the Secretary-General's report (A/52/871-S/1998/318) was that there was a need for a holistic approach when addressing the formidable challenges facing Africa. Africa's leaders must demonstrate their political will by placing the interests of their people

uppermost and by seeking peaceful solutions to conflicts. They must also demonstrate their will for social and economic development by furthering political, institutional and economic reforms and by mobilizing more domestic resources for development.

The international community, for its part, should promote a global economic environment more in keeping with Africa's development aspirations and ensure that all African nations were able to benefit from globalization. The developed countries must be encouraged to achieve the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP); Norway's contribution had been well above that target for nearly two decades, and Africa would continue to constitute a priority for Norwegian development cooperation.

His Government was prepared to cancel all bilateral official claims on all countries which had fulfilled the relevant exit solution criteria under the HIPC initiative. The recent G-8 proposals on improving the HIPC mechanism and granting additional debt relief provided a momentum which must be acted upon; a transparent, burden-sharing formula should be established to spread the costs fairly among the countries.

His delegation supported various technical cooperation efforts which sought to enable African nations to take better advantage of the global trading regime and participate more fully in the World Trade Organization (WTO). His delegation would accord high priority to the poorest countries' interests in the forthcoming round of multilateral trade negotiations. It was not necessary, however, to wait until those negotiations were completed in order to implement measures that might make a real difference to Africa. More could be done, for example, to improve the WTO dispute settlement mechanism. His delegation attached considerable importance to the review of the special and differential provisions of the WTO, including possible modifications to benefit developing countries, and improved market access for the least-developed countries. Through its generalized system of preferences (GSP), Norway already granted duty-free access to most products from such countries. His Government had also launched a comprehensive strategy to support commercial development in the South.

A stronger partnership with Africa called for more comprehensive and coordinated efforts, with the Council providing leadership in the economic and

social fields. A stronger partnership also called for greater political will, both on the part of African Governments and of the international community as a whole.

Mr. KASRI (Indonesia), having endorsed the statement made by the observer for Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the report of the Secretary-General (E/1999/79) contained recommendations on a number of core issues critical for development. With respect to trade, efforts had been made to increase market access for African exports in the framework of the WTO and the Lomé Convention. According to the Panel of High-level Personalities on African Development, convened by the Secretary-General in October 1998, high tariffs and tariff escalation must be addressed, particularly in such areas of importance to Africa as agricultural products, textiles and clothing and leather goods. He hoped that those issues could be addressed by the Council and trusted that the forthcoming ECA meeting of experts would also address them.

Financing for development in Africa had been severely affected by the negative impact of globalization on multilateral financial flows. The very small percentage of FDI that went to Africa was concentrated mainly in the energy and mineral sectors. The majority of African countries had become marginalized as far as adequate financing for development was concerned. Their need for multilateral funding through ODA had thus greatly increased.

External indebtedness was another major constraint on the revitalization of African growth and development. Despite the HIPC and other initiatives, Africa's debt continued to increase and currently amounted to over 300 per cent of its exports of goods and services. That situation was obviously unsustainable. In the circumstances, the prospects for restoring growth and development were bleak. On the positive side, however, significant efforts had been made to tackle the debt dilemma. In that context, his delegation welcomed the recent initiative of the Group of Eight which had taken a significant step towards cutting the debt burden on some of the world's poorest countries. Debt cancellation should, however, be expanded to all the poorest countries and the external debt burden on the middle and low-income countries in Africa should be reduced.

The overall rationale for enhancing the coordination and collaboration of the myriad activities of the United Nations system in Africa stemmed in

part from the ongoing United Nations reforms and in part from the urgency of the need to revitalize the continent's growth and development. The responses to that need had resulted in a broad expansion of the United Nations system's operations in Africa. His delegation attached great importance to the efforts of the ACC and the CPC to integrate the internationally agreed initiatives into national policies, enhance coordination and respond to the Secretary-General's recommendations.

At the country level, the ultimate responsibility for coordination rested with Governments but basic coordination took place mainly within the resident coordinator system. His delegation was gratified by the support extended by the ACC to the efforts of the resident coordinators, the United Nations country teams and the Bretton Woods institutions to intensify their collaboration within the framework of the System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. He noted that the Special Initiative had already made significant progress and hoped that the progress would continue. Meanwhile, the other important means of coordination outlined in the Secretary-General's report should be supported and strengthened.

Mr. CHA Young-cheol (Republic of Korea) said that the rapid process of globalization had accelerated the marginalization of Africa. Solving that problem required a strong partnership between African countries, donor Governments and the development organizations of the United Nations system. If Africa was neglected in the global development process, there would be long-term repercussions on the rest of the world.

A comprehensive and holistic approach was essential in addressing the critical issues contained in the UN-NADAF. In that regard, he stressed the need to make optimum use of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa in coordinating United Nations activities. He expressed appreciation of the important roles played, and contributions made, by ACC, CPC and the ECA Special Initiative Unit.

In recent years, there had been many successes in Africa in advancing education, averting famine, controlling disease, meeting emergency and humanitarian needs, promoting regional activities and agreements, and extending policy advice and operational activities. Nevertheless, the scale of the current efforts in no way matched the scale of Africa's problems. The

key priority areas had been well identified in the UN-NADAF, but general implementation was still lagging. Success in implementation would depend upon the efficiency of field level coordination and clear job descriptions for the relevant agencies. Further efforts should be made to harmonize the various international and bilateral initiatives on African development so as to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness.

Together with OSCAL, his Government had hosted a Forum on Asia-Africa Cooperation in Export Promotion the previous year, the purpose of which had been to seek ways of maximizing the mutual benefits of trade between the two regions. A joint UNDP-ROK High-level Forum on South-South Cooperation in Science and Technology for Sustainable Development in the Twenty-first Century was scheduled for November 1999. His Government had established a Korea-ECA Cooperation Fund in 1995, and had contributed some US\$ 1 million to it by 1998.

Mr. DEMBRI (Algeria) said that the choice of the development of Africa as the topic for the coordination segment of the Council's agenda was most gratifying and the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (A/54/133-E/1999/79) was a useful contribution to the discussion. The debate on international economic cooperation and the coordination of international efforts on behalf of African development was of special importance to Algeria, in its capacity as current President of the OAU. It would highlight the role that the Council should play in the search for better ways of realizing international development cooperation on behalf of a continent buffeted by recurring economic crises and their grave social implications.

The UN-NADAF, adopted in 1991 after wide-ranging negotiations, seemed the most appropriate framework to unite the beneficiaries and the partners in a common vision. His delegation believed that the approach thus outlined by Africa and sustained by its multilateral partners, should continue to benefit from the initial support. It should not be called into question on the pretext of helping Africa more effectively.

The main framework for United Nations intervention remained the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. It was making progress but more needed to be done to respond effectively to the priority objectives of the African countries and, in so doing, secure their full

support. It should be extended to a larger number of countries, with its field of intervention widened so as to include more closely the priorities defined by the African countries themselves.

Quite apart from the need to find additional financial resources and ways of strengthening its impact, the Special Initiative must involve the African countries themselves very closely, since it would otherwise join that long line of strategies that had been supposed to contribute to their development efforts but which, for want of associating them directly, had failed to reach their objectives.

Africa was certainly aware that the mobilization of the international community on behalf of African development owed much to the tireless efforts of the Secretary-General. In that connection, his delegation noted with satisfaction that the report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa (A/52/871-S/1998/318) put forward a line of thought likely to encourage multilateral action. The debate to which it had given rise in 1998, in both the Security Council and the General Assembly, had revealed the support it had secured among both the African countries and their partners.

African development was languishing because of inadequate financing. Whatever the effort and the will of Africa, the mobilization of domestic resources alone could not, as things stood, be sufficient. The call for external financial flows, whether public or private, was an absolute necessity.

Marginalization, often the result of globalization and the rapid changes it caused, had made the African countries even more vulnerable. Their development must be supported, therefore, so that their inclusion in the multilateral trading system would cease to be a pious hope and become a tangible reality.

Most of the African countries had themselves made substantial progress towards establishing a favourable environment for economic growth and sustainable development. They intended to pursue those multidimensional reforms but needed effective international solidarity to do so.

The many studies and reports on Africa were agreed that there had been a relative improvement in the economic and social situation. The average growth rate for the continent as a whole (3.3 per cent in 1998) had been positive for

the fourth year in a row, offering a glimpse of a real breakthrough after a period of stagnation and negative growth. The recovery was still fragile, however, and must increasingly depend on an active and structurally defined role for Africa in the international division of labour. The thirty-fifth Summit Meeting of OAU, which had recently ended in Algeria, had demonstrated Africa's determination to continue on the path of recovery.

Mr. ARDA (Turkey) said that the development of Africa was one of the most daunting challenges for the next millennium. There were various actors - the African countries, the donor community, regional and international organizations and national and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) - all with different responsibilities but important roles to play in efforts to better the conditions there. The Secretary-General's report (A/54/133-E/1999/79) was a long list of programmes, initiatives and coordination efforts by the United Nations to help Africa change its destiny.

Certain issues were vitally important for the economic performance of African countries. The primary role lay mainly with the countries themselves, especially in determining the priority areas since the individual circumstances of countries changed the order of priorities. The involvement of different administrative levels, civil society and NGOs in determining those priorities enhanced the participatory nature of development activities and thus promoted accountability and transparency. Time-bound measurable targets ensured that the goals were met. That was the difference between charity and responsible partnership in development.

Sustained economic growth and social development in Africa would ultimately benefit the international community as a whole. All nations should contribute, therefore, to solving Africa's problems. In that regard, the trust to be created by the African nations would have a positive effect. Accountability and transparency, however, applied not only to countries in need of assistance but also to the donor community and the international institutions. Enhancing the administrative capacities of Governments was crucial to the promotion of good governance, but countries suffering from extreme poverty could hardly be expected to adopt sophisticated levels of administrative reform.

Agriculture was the main income-generating economic sector in many African countries. It had been expected that the liberalization of

agriculture following the Uruguay Round would increase the developing countries' share of agricultural exports. Since, in fact, Africa's share of overall agricultural exports had declined, current market conditions, which played an important role in agricultural production, must be addressed. Unless the negative effects of the developed countries' agricultural subsidies, totalling US\$ 335 billion, three times ODA and twice FDI, were addressed, asking the African countries to diversify and improve their agricultural production was mere rhetoric.

The African countries were eager to undertake the liberalization measures stipulated in the WTO agreements. However, any pressure to undertake structural adjustment measures going beyond their Uruguay Round commitments created difficulties for them. In that context, he noted that certain central institutions, such as local marketing boards, that had once provided assistance and services to local businesses had been abolished. Delays in replacing such institutions had left a gap, further hampering the efforts of African countries to improve their export capacity.

The world was currently undergoing profound transformations. Technological advances could enable even the remotest areas to link into networks of national and international activity; genetic engineering could help to overcome hunger. At the same time, technological developments carried with them the danger of exclusion. Steps must be taken to prevent the gaps within and among countries from widening.

Without the full participation of women in the development process, its goals could not be fully achieved. Integrating a gender perspective into all initiatives was therefore essential. Equal access to education and skills development would eventually enhance the empowerment of women. In that regard, emphasis should be placed on the role of the informal sector, as creating a flexible demand for labour and as largely employing women. Its overall role in the economy of a country should not be overemphasized however.

Peace and stability were prerequisites for all development activities. His delegation thus supported the Secretary-General's plea that resources diverted to military purposes should be kept to a minimum. It should not be forgotten, however, that African Governments were not the only customers in the arms market and that only a fraction of the world's armaments were produced in Africa.

The diverse and complex initiatives cited in the Secretary-General's report and the various coordinating mechanisms established at national, regional and international levels to prevent duplication, showed that the international community was sensitive to the issue. In coordination, however, there was always room for improvement.

Ms. de WET (Observer for Namibia), having associated her delegation with the statement made by the observer for Guyana on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that, since the start of the session, the stark reality of how far behind the development of the African continent was lagging had been emphasized and re-emphasized. The current discussion was focused on the need to harmonize all the initiatives of the United Nations system to remedy that situation. The Secretary-General's report (A/54/133-E/1999/79) contained valuable information on a wide range of activities and programmes and provided an opportunity to obtain an idea of the whole picture. In addition, the country team presentations had constituted a splendid opportunity to learn how coordination worked in the field. It had also been important to hear the heads of funds and programmes commit themselves to enhancing their coordination both in the field and at their respective headquarters. The aim of coordination was to gain the greatest possible benefit from financial resources and human capacity in support of national developmental efforts in Africa and in emergency or crisis situations.

Even with the best coordination of initiatives, however, there would be little impact on the 51 per cent of the sub-Saharan population of Africa that lived in abject poverty. Financing of Africa's development was crucial. Sources of external finance, including FDI and ODA, must increase to the levels required to transform the African economies and reduce poverty. Recent indications by some donors that resources would continue to decline made it unlikely that Africa would be able to reach the goal of halving poverty by the year 2015. Resource mobilization was critical for any meaningful coordination and for the implementation of the initiatives for Africa.

Sound fiscal policies and healthy public sectors were on the increase in Africa and social and political liberalization was also taking root in many countries. Efforts to attract FDI, however, had had only limited success, despite the attractive packages of incentives offered by most countries.

The ranking of priorities should be country-driven, with country-specific national development priorities setting the agenda. The United Nations system and others must coordinate their support of those national activities in order to ensure that the various coordination mechanisms were consistent and to avoid duplication. Donor countries needed to adopt a similar approach. Much could be achieved by harmonizing and streamlining the numerous initiatives.

The international community had provided and would continue to provide genuine support for development in Africa. Her own country had benefited from and greatly appreciated such support. The time had come for a tangible commitment from all sides on behalf of Africa's recovery. She had heard that discussion was under way on a modern Marshall Plan for Kosovo: the time was long overdue for an African Marshall Plan.

In conclusion, she noted that the coordination segment was a process and not an end in itself. At the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, the Member States would meet once again to discuss African development, as a follow-up to the previous year's resolution on the causes of conflict in Africa. Her delegation stood ready to play its part and looked forward to a constructive debate and concrete action.

Mr. RYCHNER (Observer for Switzerland) said that in recent years stress had been laid on good governance, which his Government had therefore decided to integrate into its relations with its partners in order to enable disadvantaged populations to participate actively in the development process. Most of its African partners, however, faced the dilemma of urgently needing, on the one hand, to carry out macroeconomic reform involving the rationalization and more efficient use of public resources and, on the other, to provide benefits securing lasting development, universal access to basic services, particularly social services, and a more equitable division of incomes. The United Nations system could play a key role in promoting civic education at every level; he had in mind a concerted campaign by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in Africa.

Efforts to improve the situation of African women must continue, particularly in view of the expected population growth over the coming years and resultant increased urbanization of many African countries. African women

had made great advances. Two of the paths they had taken - with both national and foreign help - were micro-credit and training. The former, in particular, gave women the means to set up a steady, viable activity and enabled them to cope with the urban environment. His delegation urged the United Nations institutions to take on a coordination role in that area.

The African countries would have to strengthen their capacity in trade policy and expand their export markets at the regional and international level. The main responsibility for achieving that lay with those countries themselves, which should become more aware of the importance of neighbouring markets. High tariffs were an obstacle to the formation of larger and more competitive economic areas. A good attempt had been made, however, to improve the efficiency and transparency of customs activities, public expenditure, trade points and the quality control and certification of goods.

At the international level, his Government was aware of the risks of globalization for the African countries and supported all measures that sought to defend their interests, as in the approaching negotiations in the WTO. Most African Governments saw the private sector as playing an essential role in growth and economic development and had supported its promotion by a variety of means.

His Government had, from the outset, actively supported the HIPC initiative of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). It was an important initiative and he hoped that a large number of donor countries would participate. His Government had already been involved in debt relief and would continue to promote initiatives in that direction, including a programme to strengthen local management capacities and debt analysis for highly indebted poor countries.

His delegation welcomed the improvements in political dialogue during the preparation of the strategic country notes which defined national priorities, without as yet tackling the programme aspects. The UNDAF was most promising and his Government had helped finance its pilot phase. UNDAF should, indeed, be extended. Once operational programmes had been fully formulated, even more significant benefits should flow. The thematic groups were also a useful coordination tool and should be encouraged.

Mr. MONTEIRO (Cape Verde) said that, following the persistent underdevelopment in Africa in the 1980s, the 1990s had seen a number of

initiatives to reverse the situation. As the debates earlier in the session had shown, coordination deserved the attention paid to it inasmuch as it improved efficiency. A proper balance should, however, be maintained between the energy and resources that went into coordination and the implementation activities themselves. Nor could it be said too often that coordination within the United Nations system should form part of the general coordination carried out by the Governments concerned.

The implementation of initiatives was the matter that aroused the gravest concern. The content of the initiatives varied, but it was well known that new initiatives were introduced not in order to correct, or even to complete, the previous one but rather because the previous one had not been implemented. His delegation, for example, would be glad to revert to the "old style" UN-NADAF of 1991. If implemented by all the interested parties, it would undoubtedly have had a significant impact.

Recent events in the African economy had shown that real growth was possible. African hopes had been momentarily raised. It had become clear, however, how reliant Africa was on random factors, such as the price of raw materials, and how structural adjustment and economic and political reform could not of themselves bring about the long-awaited breakthrough. There were many obstacles to development in Africa, which together made up a vicious circle. Only national and international action taking account of all those obstacles would have any chance of breaking out of the circle for good. He took no comfort from the regular exercise of setting priorities in agendas, programmes of action and other initiatives, given that the scope and rationale of such prioritization went far beyond the needs of coordination or synergy for the activities concerned.

The priorities for Africa were well known: economic and political reform, regional cooperation, the unsustainable foreign debt, the diversification of the economy and exports, productivity growth, access to international markets, increased investment, health, education and training, adequate infrastructure and environmental protection, and so forth. The list of essential requirements could be extended and sacrificing even one of them could affect the viability of sustainable development. The key issue was political will, on the part of both the African countries and the economically developed world, so that the concept of international interdependence could

pass beyond the theoretical stage and move to practical reality. Foreign operators, in their own interest and in that of Africa, should make more use of the real - and growing - trade and investment opportunities by diversifying their operations beyond oil, mining, timber and other raw materials.

The Secretary-General's report (A/54/133-E/1999/79) described a considerable number of United Nations activities which, in the view of his delegation, had improved in quality and focus. A major objective of the activities seemed to be training, which would undoubtedly make a significant contribution to the continent's development efforts. At a time when ODA was decreasing, some significant marks of solidarity with and faith in Africa on the part of some bilateral and multilateral partners were gratifying and encouraging; he hoped they would prosper.

Africa was hamstrung by a lack of the resources required to generate resources, just when massive investment was needed. The African countries would wish to invest far more than was permitted by the financial stranglehold under which they had suffered for too long. Reactions to the foreign debt problem were typical of an attitude that could be summed up as "too little, too late". Solutions to the problem had always been limited, either in their substance or in the range of countries included. They were always put forward too late and the criteria were too restricted, with a variety of conditions that were difficult to meet. That result was that they had invariably failed, only to be followed by another inadequate scheme.

That description of the international community's response to the cancer of foreign debt in Africa was perhaps an illustration of a persistently restrictive attitude, reflecting the absence of a true belief in the concept of world interdependence. It was to the credit of the United Nations that it had taken up the issue.

Mr. MOOSE (United States of America) said that his people felt a special kinship with Africa: his country, too, had travelled the path from colonization to independence. Moreover, 33 million of his fellow citizens traced their roots to Africa and the United States had been greatly influenced by African culture and traditions.

Africa had made progress, but there were also significant challenges. Economic growth was up, but population growth and migration to cities had caused greater unemployment. School enrolment was increasing faster than in

any other part of the world, but the population was growing faster still. Grain production and agricultural exports were increasing after years of decline, but world commodity prices had fallen. Overall mortality was down, but cases of HIV/AIDS continued to increase.

The most tragic element of the uneven progression was that economic gains were being undermined by the persistence of conflict, which currently engrossed 40 per cent of the continent. Conflict was, more than any other factor, the greatest enemy of development in Africa. The Security Council had unanimously adopted a resolution encouraging African States to implement effective arms import, export and re-export controls.

In the three days allocated to ranking developmental priorities in order of importance, defining responsibilities and agreeing on targets in a complex continent, whose countries made up a quarter of the United Nations Member States, it was possible only to scratch the surface of the issue. One way to proceed would be to adopt a comprehensive approach, producing a statement of common objectives to which all could subscribe. He did not believe that the Council should attempt to put developmental priorities in order of importance. Individual countries and development agencies should prioritize, but priorities would differ according to individual circumstance and no one plan would fit all countries.

His delegation supported the recommendation that had emerged from the first annual regional coordination meeting of the United Nations system in Africa, held in March 1999, that new structures of coordination should not be created at the country level and that existing coordination arrangements should be streamlined and strengthened. In that connection, the Council should examine the duties both of OSCAL and of the Special Initiative on Africa.

The most encouraging sign of improved coordination was perhaps the increased involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions in the Special Initiative. The greater the communication between them and United Nations development organizations the greater the harmonization of projects.

The essence of partnership was that partners had a common goal that served the interests of each of them. It was in the interests of every nation, including his own, to see a prospering, educated, healthy, democratic and peaceful Africa. In March 1999, 83 ministers from 50 African nations,

together with the heads of 8 African regional organizations, had attended a meeting of the United States Partnership for Economic Growth and Opportunity in Africa, launched in 1997. The meeting had produced a blueprint for development cooperation, which had been submitted to the Council (E/1999/104-S/1999/754). The blueprint envisaged a way forward based on increased trade and investment, underwritten by increased financing for development. The need for expanded debt relief to reforming countries had been acknowledged and his country's commitment to increased relief had been pledged at the Cologne Summit.

African countries had also asked the United States to support their efforts at regional integration. In April 1999, the United States had sent a 100-person delegation from the public and private sectors to attend the United States-Southern African Development Community (SADC) forum in Botswana, which had considered a regional trade and investment framework agreement. It had been agreed that the participants would work together to counter trafficking in drugs and firearms and to coordinate efforts to combat HIV/AIDS. The Council could also contribute to increased coherence in the vast array of developmental initiatives in Africa.

Mr. ANDO (United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that UNFPA was committed to sustainable development in Africa, which could not, however, be achieved without addressing population concerns and implementing in a coordinated, integrated and comprehensive manner the Cairo Agenda for Action: Relaunching Africa's Economic and Social Development, the Declaration on Population and Development, UN-NADAF and the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. UNFPA strongly supported the efforts to establish appropriate mechanisms such as the Common Country Assessment and the UNDAF, which would contribute effectively and strategically to African development.

Reports from UNFPA's country offices in Africa confirmed that those efforts had had a positive effect on information and experience sharing, collaborative programming and, in some cases, joint activities. The new mechanisms would further the implementation of the various initiatives, which should be consolidated. Their ownership by African Governments would also facilitate their implementation.

In defining priority issues for African development, it was important to emphasize the importance of the links between population, reproductive health, sustainable growth and sustainable development. When making national development plans, therefore, African Governments should take into account the commitments that they had made at the International Conference on Population and Development. UNFPA had increased its allocation to Africa over the past few years to enable it to deal with population and reproductive health issues.

UNFPA would continue to work closely with Governments and other donors. The first annual regional coordination meeting of the United Nations system in Africa had agreed that the Special Initiative would provisionally constitute the mechanism for coordinating United Nations system work in Africa; and, as the lead agency for the population component of the Special Initiative, UNFPA had been working closely with United Nations agencies and national Governments.

Sustainable development and the African renaissance could be achieved only if there was peace on the continent. United Nations agencies would need to collaborate with regional and subregional institutions to ensure that such peace became a reality. He hoped that donors would increase their contributions to UNFPA, enabling it to play its critical role in ensuring the sustainable development of the African continent.

Mr. KOUSARI (United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)) said that Africa was a major focus of UNCTAD's work, in both the analytical and technical assistance fields. Half of its 1998 Trade and Development Report had been devoted to Africa. One of the major development problems in Africa was the low level of savings and investment. The economy had grown faster than the population in 1998, owing to higher commodity prices, better governance and more favourable weather conditions. With savings as low as 16 to 18 per cent, however, it would be difficult to put growth on a sustainable footing, because savings were insufficient to build or maintain the human or capital infrastructure.

One reason therefor was the very heavy debt burden. UNCTAD had therefore proposed the establishment of an independent panel of experts, appointed by both creditors and debtors, to look at the sustainability of the debt, with a view to writing off unsustainable debts. He welcomed the outcome

of the Cologne economic summit but progress would nevertheless be too slow to put Africa on the path to growth and development or to achieve the target of halving poverty by 2015. UNCTAD worked closely with other agencies, including the WTO and the International Trade Centre; with UNDP and the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), it had carried out an analysis of the potential for FDI in Africa, which would be available shortly.

The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.