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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 20 July 1999, at 10.00 a.m.

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

CONTENTS

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 (continued)

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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 10.15 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) (continued) (A/54/133-E/1999/79; E/1999/104-S/1999/754)

Panel on poverty eradication and sustainable human development

The PRESIDENT, said that, on the threshold of the new millennium, the African continent faced the difficult challenge of improving its social and economic situation. Africa was the only region where the poverty rate and the absolute figures for poverty had increased between the mid-1970s and the mid-1990s. In the year 2000, more than half the population of Africa would be living in poverty. Africa was the only region in which primary and secondary school enrolment had declined since 1980. In most African countries, the adult literacy rate was less than 50 per cent and enrolment in secondary education was between 7 and 20 per cent.

HIV/AIDS had become a disastrous epidemic and posed a fundamental threat to the working population. Medium- and long-term production growth was gravely endangered. Two-thirds of the persons infected by the virus lived in Africa and the disease was expected to reduce average life expectancy there by 17 years.

It was also estimated that more than 20,000 well-trained professionals had left the continent every year since the mid-1980s, in search of better prospects and earnings. Persuading them to return, or even retaining those who were still there was a monumental task.

In view of the actual and potential contribution of women to development, ways must be sought of eliminating all forms of discrimination against women and of creating a more favourable environment for their participation in development at all levels. Education and training and a greater awareness of the capacity of women were some of the many possibilities in that connection.

Accelerating the rate of economic growth was essential if the vicious circle of poverty was to be broken. In that context, close and particular

attention should be paid to international trade and investment flows, as well as to the declining trend in official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment (FDI).

Capacity in the private sector must be encouraged, particularly in order to promote exports. South-South cooperation within Africa and with other developing regions was promising. Broadened and deepened wherever possible, South-South cooperation could play a central role, and three-way cooperation with the developed countries should also offer excellent possibilities.

The members of the panel would take up those and other important questions of concern to Africa. In particular, they would give their views on how the organizations of the United Nations system were responding to the report of the Secretary-General, as well as on the efforts they were making to coordinate and harmonize the various international and bilateral initiatives on behalf of Africa. With due attention given to harmonization and coordination, the United Nations system could make a major contribution to the development of the African continent.

Ms. AWORI (Assistant Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the sombre background sketched out by the President in his introductory remarks would help to give the discussion the necessary sense of urgency.

Coordination was particularly important to Africa because resources were dwindling, making it all the more important to rationalize the use of what was available and enhance the goals of operational activities for development, especially with regard to poverty eradication and the evergrowing number of emergency or crisis situations in Africa. As the President had pointed out, the coordination issue must be considered in relation to Africa's priority concerns: external debt, declining ODA and FDI, trade, agriculture, industrial technology transfer, regional cooperation and integration and, in particular, conflict or crisis situations. No matter how great the coordination within the system, however, the direction and leadership of coordination was in the last analysis in the hands of the countries. It was important for the agencies of the system to remember that fact, to make space therefor and so to organize themselves that the countries were able to take over the leadership and had the capacity to do so.

Coordination was a priority issue for UNDP, in particular, because it had been made responsible for centralizing the new approach embodied in the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. The previous Administrator of UNDP had spent much time and effort trying to ensure that the members of the United Nations development group worked efficiently, effectively and in close synergy. He had insisted that the resident coordinators should make coordination a priority, almost at the expense of UNDP's own work. The results of those efforts were beginning to be seen.

In preparing her presentation, she had found many new and exciting instances of coordination. 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) had been of great assistance in further sharpening the United Nations focus on Africa and his emphasis on the linkage between peace and sustainable development had provided new areas for inter-agency coordination with the political arm of the United Nations. Follow-up to the report had started and UNDP, in particular, was engaged in implementing its recommendations in the areas of post-conflict peace-building and sustainable development. For example, a joint mission, consisting of a number of United Nations agencies, including UNDP, and the Department of Political Affairs, had recently visited Sierra Leone to consider how work could begin on a strategic framework for that country.

A Joint Reintegration Unit had been established in Rwanda to support a sustainable progression from emergency and relief activities to rehabilitation and reconstruction, and so on to development. It had proved a very interesting experience that might have to be replicated in other countries in crisis. The Unit's function was to promote the joint planning and coordination of reintegration programmes and projects. Much had been said about the gap between relief and rehabilitation and the Unit's work was designed to ensure that that gap did not occur. The Joint Reintegration Unit would shortly expand its activities to include the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which had been providing technical assistance as associate members since 1998. There were plans to increase participation further in 1999. The joint reintegration programme was a good example of the kind of collaboration for peace and rehabilitation that was needed.

In the area of peace-building, UNDP cooperation with the Department of Political Affairs had resulted in support for the regional small arms moratorium in West Africa. A major trust fund had been established that had led to all the members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) signing a Small Arms Agreement. In Burundi, UNDP had worked, with the participation of the World Bank and other agencies, to support the peace process through the establishment of a trust fund to enable the people of Burundi to move safely through the peacemaking process. That was another noteworthy example of collaboration in the area of peace and conflict resolution.

Coordination among the United Nations agencies took place under the umbrella of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa. UNDP and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) were the co-chairs of the Special Initiative and UNDP attached great importance to that role and to the support it had to give to all the other agencies involved to ensure that they carried out their obligations. The Council had undoubtedly been told about the various thematic groups or clusters created under the Special Initiative and about the meeting at Nairobi at which she had stressed the need for coherence among United Nations programmes in Africa. Efforts had been made since then by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) to encourage the lead agencies for the various cluster groups to prepare programmes having clear targets and goals and a system for monitoring achievements and mobilizing resources.

Turning to the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the resident coordinator process, she said that that instrument, approved by the Council, had matured considerably during 1998. Agencies had worked hard in the field to complete the pilot phase of the UNDAF and many more countries had become subjects of the common country assessments (CCAs) which could help to give them a common vision and a common path towards development. At the country level, coordination had been secured through the CCA/UNDAF process and the resident coordinator system. Of the original 18 UNDAF pilot countries, 10 were in Africa. Furthermore, of the 44 African countries, 41 had already made CCAs. In the next phase, starting in May 1999, another 10 countries of the region would undertake UNDAFs and it was expected that, by the year 2002, all the African countries would have begun an UNDAF.

The UNDAF was valuable even in countries with special circumstances as a means of ensuring the transition from recovery to development. The CCA was a valuable coordination tool in its own right because it enabled all the actors of the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions, to come together on the issue of indicators and substantive analyses of the country's development situation. It was thus a way of ensuring a common vision of development among all the development aid actors.

The UNDAF process had been considerably assisted by the legislative support received from General Assembly resolution 53/192 and the acceptance of the UNDAF by the agencies of the broader United Nations system. Some of the technical agencies had initially been left out. They had pressed to become involved, and were currently part of the system. The only problem that had arisen was with those agencies that were not represented in the field, and a way had to be found of enabling them to participate more effectively.

As for coordination with the bilateral institutions and other multilateral institutions, UNDP had established a very good system with the European Union. A steering committee had been set up to harmonize approaches and find ways of working together on the major issues of governance, trade and the like. The Steering Committee had sent out letters to all representatives in the field encouraging them to work together. The relationship was growing and some joint work was being done, for example, on a governance forum.

With regard to coordination with the Bretton Woods institutions, a special effort was being made to harmonize approaches. Some of the serious differences with regard to approaches had, in the past, been played out in public in a way that did not please either side. Regular meetings were currently held each quarter to iron out differences and establish modalities for collaboration. UNDP contributed to the Consultative Group Meetings by helping to prepare the social sector inputs.

Opportunities existed for greater cooperation regarding bilateral initiatives but more political will was needed. UNDP had enjoyed opportunities to cooperate with the United States in its work in Africa, particularly in the area of capital markets and strengthening the financial sector, as well as on governance. It would like to cooperate more closely

with Sweden and Norway in their initiatives for private sector development in Africa and, in general, would encourage bilateral donors to move towards greater cooperation with the United Nation system.

UNDP was already cooperating with France in a project to assist some of the French-speaking African countries to harmonize their legal systems in respect of trade and customs formalities. It was also participating in the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) initiative in Mali, which had proved a very interesting and important experience. UNDP was also very much involved in supporting a Japanese bilateral initiative for Africa concerning South-South technical assistance.

In its efforts to coordinate with the private sector, UNDP had gone outside the United Nations family with a view to seeing how the private sector could be more engaged in supplying basic development needs, since it was clear that the African public sector would not be able to provide the basic infrastructure that was needed. It was important to ensure that the private sector was reminded of the need for good corporate citizenship and environmental management.

UNDP was currently engaged in cooperating with the International Labour Organization (ILO) in respect of youth. Young people were Africa's future and were vitally important not only for development but also for peace and stability. It was important that they should be engaged in productive activities and UNDP was collaborating with ILO to that end. There was as yet no partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) to engage them in organizing their reproductive lives, but it was hoped that such collaboration would be established in due course.

She would leave a detailed survey of the HIV/AIDS situation to the Executive Director of UNAIDS. It sufficed to say that UNDP had spent some US\$ 22 million on AIDS in Africa and its offices there took the issue most seriously, for it impinged on all other aspects of life. For example, the movement of soldiers across the continent had had a marked effect on accelerating the rate of the disease's spread.

She urged the Council to keep the Special Initiative for Africa on its agenda and to monitor it constantly. Coordination was needed not only to manage resources better but also to ensure that a real partnership with African countries could be established and that the resources promised

them could be mobilized. She also urged bilateral agencies to support the lead agencies which gave priority to Africa. Urgency was the watchword.

Dr. PIOT (Executive Director, Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)) said that, as had been recognized by all those associated with Africa, the AIDS epidemic was the greatest threat to the continent's development. AIDS affected every country in the world, but sub-Saharan Africa most of all. The statistics were shocking. At least 9 million Africans had already died of AIDS, which had overtaken malaria to become the primary cause of death. In 1998 alone, 2 million had died. Over 22 million persons were currently living with HIV or AIDS. Almost 8 million African children under the age of 14 had lost their mothers or both parents to the epidemic. In many communities there was not a family that had not lost someone to AIDS and many households were headed by a child. Life expectancy - one of the main development indicators - was declining. A child born within the next five years in one of the most severely affected countries could expect to live to 47, as against 60 if it had not been for AIDS. Lastly, the hard-won gains in the field of health had been wiped out: child mortality had doubled or tripled.

Many in Africa still saw AIDS as a health problem, but it was more than that. It had an impact on the whole development agenda. It led to significant losses of income: a third of the rural households affected by AIDS experienced a 50 per cent reduction in agricultural output. It also affected education: in households where a person had died of AIDS, spending on schooling for children was halved. Children's loss of education and of adults to care for them resulted in social problems, as well as implications for competitiveness, since knowledge was such an important factor.

Another consequence of the epidemic was the high expenditure on health. In Zimbabwe, for instance, half the in-patients in hospitals were there because of AIDS-related illness. By 2005, it was estimated that the basic treatment costs - not including the expensive therapies used in high-income countries - would amount to over 60 per cent of the Government's health budget. In Kenya the cost would be over 50 per cent.

The social costs were high, too: the sparse middle class was being wiped out. Teachers were dying: in Côte d'Ivoire - not one of the most affected countries - one teacher died every school day. The implications for

development were horrific. Members of the security forces, too, were dying of AIDS. That had grave implications for security, whether or not in conflict situations.

The private sector also felt the impact of AIDS. It could reduce company profits by up to 20 per cent. Africa needed to attain and sustain an average growth rate of 7 per cent to halve poverty by 2015. The World Bank had, however, conservatively estimated that countries with a high HIV prevalence would lose 1 per cent per capita growth annually. In Kenya, for example, the cumulative expected loss was 15 per cent over the next decade.

Sustainable development was, of course, also set back by conflict; and the organized violence associated with it helped AIDS do its murderous work. Without peace there could be no health; without health there would be no development; and without development there would be no peace. Conflict situations - and their consequences - increased the potential for the spread of the HIV infection.

The situation was serious but not hopeless. Two African countries - Senegal and Uganda - had shown that a combination of strong political support, broad institutional participation and carefully selected programme interventions could actually lead to a decline in the number of new HIV infections and improved care for those who were ill.

The Council had set up UNAIDS to help coordinate the response to AIDS throughout the world. Africa, with 70 per cent of those infected with AIDS but only 10 per cent of the world's population, was naturally a priority for the United Nations efforts. The key to a sustained response to the pandemic was a broad-based and coordinated response, bringing together Governments, multilateral and bilateral partners and civil society. UNAIDS was uniquely placed to facilitate that coordination.

It was gratifying that the sponsors of UNAIDS, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Bank, the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) had all significantly increased their resources and efforts, particularly in Africa. Under the resident coordinator, the thematic groups on HIV/AIDS had a key role to play. Where they functioned well - which was

not everywhere - they had expanded to include representatives of other United Nations agencies and of Governments. In some cases they included non-governmental organizations (NGOs), bilateral agencies and representatives of people living with AIDS.

In addition to Governments, community groups and local governments should be given the tools to manage the AIDS epidemic. Civil society had already shown its resilience. That must be replicated on a national scale. The various sectors must reinforce one another to create a genuine multisectoral response: not only the health sector but also transport, defence, local government and, above all, education. The United Nations initiative on girls' education, currently being developed under the leadership of UNICEF, provided an opportunity not to be missed. Schools represented a major potential resource for prevention education and reducing social stigma. They also had an important role to play in mitigating the impact of AIDS.

Countries must decide what they wanted. Political leaders had some potentially unpopular decisions to make regarding life skills or sex education. They could, however, create an environment where increasing numbers of individuals would want to know their status and act on it without fear of discrimination or exploitation. Religious organizations, the media and community leaders should be invited to join them in concerted action to reduce the stigma of AIDS. UNAIDS enjoyed good collaboration with Muslim, Christian and Buddhist groups.

More resources were essential. A study had shown that, in 1996, only US\$ 165 million had been spent on HIV/AIDS activities in 25 sub-Saharan African countries and only \$15 million had come from national sources. National Governments must devote more of their own resources and seek to broaden their partnership base.

Coordination was not an end in itself; it must focus on results. It had not always been easy to coordinate within the United Nations system on AIDS, but progress had been made with the first ever unified budget and work plan in the United Nations system devised by UNAIDS, integrating the efforts of the Secretariat and the Sponsors. More attention should be paid to the links between AIDS and other issues, such as conflict situations, refugees and reconstruction, both through the work of UNAIDS with international organizations and at the country level.

An adequate response to AIDS depended on a number of factors: contributions from substantially more partners; national and institutional strategic plans establishing clear priorities for action at the community level; more financial resources at the country level; and intensified political and policy advocacy at all levels. Despite the growing devastation produced by the disease, however, he had become more optimistic over the past year: the international concern and momentum for action was such that he believed that the spread of HIV could be slowed and eventually controlled in Africa and throughout the rest of the world.

Mr. GRAISSE (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that, whereas many of the persons present would have known someone who had died of AIDS, few would have had any personal contact with famine. They would, however, have seen some intolerable pictures of hunger on television. Some lives had been saved, but it was not known how many. And the financial cost was very high: in southern Sudan, in the summer of 1998, US\$ 1 million a day, and perhaps the same amount shortly afterwards in Angola, or in Ethiopia, where the devastating drought risked bringing new catastrophic consequences, or in many other parts of Africa, where natural disasters occurred with increasing regularity and ferocity. The donor community usually rallied round, but at a terrible cost in both money and lives: 10 WFP staff members had lost their lives in Africa in 1998, most of them brutally murdered. The tally to date for 1999 was three. The cost was, of course, highest of all for the poor victims of silent emergencies, who did not benefit from assistance.

In the early 1990s, WFP had spent 20 per cent of its resources on emergencies and 80 per cent on development. Emergencies currently accounted for 80 per cent. The amount of food aid had increased: WFP had raised \$1.7 billion in cash and commodities in 1998. Africa still received over 50 per cent of WFP resources, despite major natural disasters in Asia; and WFP had fed 20 million Africans. If it had been spared the costs of emergency efforts, however, many more resources would have been available for activities with sustainable benefits. As it was, WFP focused its development resources on the poorest people in the poorest areas of the poorest countries. There had been some successes and it had been possible to close down WFP programmes in some countries because they were no longer needed.

Malnourished women gave birth to babies whose start in life was already compromised by their small size and weight. It was not only AIDS that was transmitted from one generation to the next; the same was true of hunger and its consequences. The priority of WFP was therefore to support people at times in their lives when their food needs were critical. It was a prerequisite for subsequent sustainable human development.

Some Governments had questioned the validity of food aid for development. The WFP Executive Board had therefore undertaken a massive review of the issue and had concluded that food aid could not solve problems by itself, except in emergencies. WFP was therefore restricting its activities to the areas of greatest need. He recalled one country - not in Africa - where WFP had once run a massive school feeding programme. The result had been that teachers had found themselves not with a class of 50 children to teach but with 150 to feed. That mistake, due to overenthusiasm, would not be repeated: such programmes were set up only if they tipped the balance in favour of parents sending their children - especially girls - to school. Indeed, an extra incentive might be offered by giving the girl some vegetable oil, for example, to take home.

Where development was concerned, WFP would work in future only in conjunction with a partner, usually an organization of the United Nations system, most specifically UNDP, UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, FAO or the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD). That entailed collaboration in the fullest sense of the word.

Mr. TOIVIAINEN (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that, among the many and various problems facing Africa, the most glaring was the gap between actual economic growth and that needed for poverty reduction. He asked how ODA should be focused to achieve more than mere growth so as to enhance the African countries' coordination capacity and save meagre resources. Secondly, he asked what could be done to ensure the best possible results from the Conference on AIDS that was to be held at Lusaka in September 1999.

Mr. BAHAMONDES (Canada) stressed the importance of monitoring the progress of United Nations initiatives on Africa and asked whether they might not feasibly be rationalized under one umbrella.

Mr. KUMAMARU (Japan) asked the UNDP Assistant Administrator to describe the role played by the specialized agencies, host countries and other players in the elaboration and review of coordination mechanisms such as the CCA.

Mr. LEGGERI (Italy), asked whether breastfeeding needed to be curbed in view of the reported risk of HIV/AIDS transmission from mother to child. He also wished to know what role was being played by WFP in shifting the emphasis from overseas shipments of food aid to the local purchase of food, and whether WFP was investing in storage facilities and rural access roads so as to reduce post-harvest losses. His delegation attached great importance to international support for regional and subregional cooperation in Africa.

Mr. GOFFIN (Belgium) stressed that food aid alone would not suffice; it must be accompanied by development activities. In that context, he wondered whether WFP should not be transformed into an integrated programme along the lines of UNAIDS. It would seem that WFP had lost some of its "essence" with regard to development.

Ms. CASSAM (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO saw the family as being the most important of human resources and the unit upon which all societies were based. Ideas regarding African development that had been held for 40 years had suddenly become untenable because the family itself was being destroyed in Africa. The international community should ask itself how the bizarre concept of 7 per cent economic growth could be achieved in a situation that was mined with economic disasters.

Financial constraints on African countries had led to a massive drain on education and health budgets. Not only did schools lack the necessary resources, but the teachers were dying of HIV/AIDS. The havoc caused by the virus should be put in its proper perspective and considered in relation to the Cologne debt initiative. The highly indebted poor countries (HIPC) should be asked to produce statistics on the impact of HIV/AIDS on families, social structures, education and health. Africa was being destroyed by a number of interrelated phenomena, and coordination must not be perceived merely in terms of a linking of institutional mandates.

Mr. BRESLER (United States of America) said he welcomed the progress achieved in the system-wide coordination efforts. The most pressing issue facing the system, however, was the evident need for increased resources. Delegations should all do their best to convince their respective legislators to remedy that situation.

Mr. NAHAYO (Observer for Burundi), having expressed his appreciation of the United Nations assistance to his country, without which Burundi would have been in a far worse predicament, asked whether the panellists could suggest ways of ensuring that ongoing interventions actually achieved the economic and social development for which they were designed. HIV/AIDS had left many African children orphaned and, given the deplorable socio-economic environment, they, too, risked falling prey to the virus. Could coordinated projects help Africa to escape from that vicious circle?

Ms. FAHLÉN (Observer for Sweden) asked the UNDP Assistant Administrator and the Executive Director of UNAIDS what action could be taken by the United Nations system in the field of youth and development.

Mr. NANJIRA (World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) said that insufficient recognition was accorded to the efforts of African countries. In that connection, it was worth examining how the concept that Africans were simply sitting around waiting for assistance could be combated. The world's media failed to report on the events shaping the continent, focusing on Africa only in times of crisis. Whereas 10 deaths elsewhere were given extensive coverage, the media ignored the thousands of deaths in Africa every day. He wondered what the reasons were for such unbalanced reporting.

Mr. GRAISSE (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)), replying to a question by the representative of Italy, said that in 1963, the prime role of WFP had been to move food surpluses from a donor country to a recipient one. The current situation was that more than half of the agency's resources were received in cash. In 1998, WFP had purchased some US\$ 66 million-worth of local cereals and other foodstuffs. Its aim was to purchase locally wherever possible. The million tonnes of cereals provided by the United States of America the previous year had, however, been most welcome. WFP also sought to promote the use of local carriers and to utilize African transport capacities elsewhere. For example, a South African company ran WFP's daily flights from Rome to Pristina.

With regard to regional and subregional cooperation, WFP had worked closely with the South African Development Community (SADC) in preparing for possible drought in southern Africa in the wake of El Niño. As it happened, the drought had not been as serious as expected and it had been possible to relocate food rapidly to Kenya, Somalia and Tanzania, which had been affected by their worst floods in decades.

The press did, indeed, appear to be more interested in the inefficiency or corrupt activities of particular government officials than in more positive news. However, the media did provide sufficient coverage when needed. During the previous year's crisis in Sudan, daily reports by the BBC and CNN had contributed massively to mobilizing the necessary donor support.

WFP traditionally cooperated with other agencies even in the absence of any formal mechanism. Virtually all projects were prepared with the cooperation of UNESCO, sometimes with UNDP financing. The programme on women and children's nutrition, for example, involved the cooperation of UNICEF and WHO.

The perception among certain donors that WFP had lost something of its "essence" was based on a misconception which WFP had been studying for some time. By focusing on certain priority domains, the food-aid-for-development projects could be given the prominence they deserved.

Dr. PIOT (Executive Director, Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)), said that capacity-building must be a top priority for long-term investment in development. Unfortunately, short-term priorities, which were the norm and of immediate utility, hindered sustainable development. It was vital to focus on social capital, its sustainability, and ways of reaching communities. HIV/AIDS had been a touchstone for disclosing many societal problems. Investment in and support for social adjustment policies should be stepped up, as investment in growth or reaction to emergencies alone would not provide lasting solutions.

In an effort to determine how debt-relief resources could be channelled into local support of HIV/AIDS activities, talks had begun before the G-8 Summit in Cologne with UNDP, the World Bank and the treasury departments of major bilateral donors, the latter being a major component of the UNAIDS

partnership. Plans were well advanced in Zambia, with a view to providing concrete recommendations for presentation to the regional Conference on AIDS, which it would host at Lusaka in September 1999.

In that connection, he explained to the observer for Finland, that an annual regional conference on AIDS had been held in Africa for the past 15 years with the support of the United Nations system, and especially of UNDP, which had been instrumental in their preparation. Those conferences focused on two main ideas, namely, the link between AIDS and development and the reframing of the AIDS debate to stress that it was not just the concern of the small constituency of medical professionals.

Many African heads of States would be participating in the Conference, which would provide an opportunity for ensuring that the impact was felt in the countries concerned, in terms of the best forms of investment for HIV prevention and care. A process was also being promoted through the United Nations thematic groups on HIV/AIDS in all African countries to prepare for the Conference and its follow-up, especially with regard to policy.

In reply to the question by the representative of Italy concerning the complex problem of breastfeeding as a source of HIV transmission, he said that, before the AIDS epidemic, breastfeeding had been one of the best and cheapest public-health interventions and had saved the lives of millions of children. It was, alas, true that the HIV virus could be transmitted from mother to child through breastfeeding, thus making something free and nutritious highly problematic. Clearly, breastfeeding by non-infected mothers and in low HIV-incidence regions should continue. However, pilot projects had been launched with UNICEF and FAO, particularly in Africa, to ensure that an increasing number of babies did not start life with AIDS, as over half a million had in Africa in 1998.

The fact that the vast majority of infected women were unaware of their plight called for counselling and testing facilities, also a complex business owing to the enormous stigma that still attached to HIV infection; ensuring the availability of drugs for interrupting mother-to-child transmission; and safe alternatives to breastfeeding, as much an economic as a cultural issue: economic, because substitutes were expensive; cultural, because in societies where breastfeeding was the norm, a woman resorting to substitutes would be

immediately identified as HIV-infected. He hoped that UNAIDS' work on the problem with a number of partners would, in a few years, reduce the number of children born with HIV or infected through breastfeeding.

Lastly, regarding the new generation's place in development, he said it was certainly a priority group for work on AIDS, since over 50 per cent of all new HIV infections currently occurred among young people aged 15 to 24. At the most recent meeting of the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, the Board had approved a specific seven-point strategy for working with youth on HIV, and the world AIDS campaign had, for the past two years, been focused on young people. In terms of the resources of the United Nations system, thematically speaking a large proportion went to youth programmes, through UNICEF, UNESCO, UNFPA, UNAIDS, the World Bank and UNDP. It was UNAIDS' ambition to work with mainstream youth organizations, which were an invaluable resource. It was not sufficient to develop programmes for young people, they themselves had to be the main actors.

Ms. AWORI (Assistant Administrator, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said she agreed with the observer for Finland that capacity-building in its broadest sense was an area on which ODA should focus. It required mammoth resources and effort and, while many Governments were taking it seriously, they still lacked the support they deserved. She also agreed with the representative of Canada that coherence needed to be given to the various initiatives for Africa. There was a need to address the idea of enhancing the visibility of any one particular initiative which, in fact, obstructed effective joint action.

Myriad opportunities existed for synergy between the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa and the Tokyo International Conferences on African Development (TICAD), since the same countries were involved in both and advanced the same ideas. UNDP was considering the possibility of their working together instead of under separate programmes, a proposal it would be making to Japan at their forthcoming talks. The very effective UN-UNDAF process should be kept alive and continuation of the Special Initiative process encouraged. UNDP would do everything possible to ensure that the agencies produced results. As repeatedly stated, coordination was not an end in itself: Africa needed results.

No single format had been used in the CCAs. The guidelines had been finalized and transmitted to the field offices only in 1999 and had been based on previous experiences. They had, however, benefited from the participation of Governments, civil society and the World Bank. A comprehensive assessment of the CCA/UNDAF process would be undertaken for the next triennial review in 2001, in collaboration with the various stakeholders. The mechanisms were still in their early stages, and although they had been received with great enthusiasm, they must be kept on track. UNDP would provide the Council with an annual update thereof.

To the question regarding support for regional and subregional programmes, she said that UNDP did support various subregional groupings, such as ECOWAS, as well as the ECA and OAU. However, such work needed vast resources which UNDP did not possess. One solution would be to invite donors to make further contributions to local initiatives, as had been done in the past.

One original regional initiative in which several countries had joined was the Africa Governance Forum process, which had been welcomed by Governments. Following the first Forum, the Government of Norway had contributed US\$ 10 million, later replenished by a further US\$ 3 million, all of which had been spent. She urged those present to contribute to the funding, with a view to helping African countries address their own problems in their own way, rather than have exogenous solutions imposed on them.

Turning to debt service and AIDS, she said that ways must be found for debt relief resources to be used for social sector development. In reply to the observer for Burundi, she said that much UNDP action resulted in real growth, but it believed in growth with equity, and the fate of the proceeds of growth was even more important. Attempts were being made to increase broad-based productivity and enhance entrepreneurship.

While many Governments were concerned with short-term structural planning, UNDP advised them to adopt long-term strategic planning and helped them do so. Many partners were helping Africa with the paramount task of long-term planning. For instance, the Africa Governance Forum might not be a direct investment, but it would make for productivity. African countries must

guard against the possibility that, in the absence of an adequate enabling environment, their nationals might be tempted to seek an environment where they could be productive elsewhere.

Taking the gloomy picture of sub-Saharan Africa as an indictment of its work, UNDP had decided to adopt a different approach, and instead of reconvening its traditional partners, had held a meeting with the churches, farmers' associations, traditional leaders, and youth - a major source of untapped potential. At the meeting, a youth representative had mentioned that many letters to the United Nations went unanswered, whereupon the then Administrator had pledged that UNDP would work closely with young people. It could probably count on UNESCO assistance in its support for youth organizations.

To give Africans a boost for the new millennium, there should be a change in the vocabulary of development, which intimated that they were mere beneficiaries and ignored the magnitude of their input. The sacrifices made by Africans themselves must be acknowledged, as the OAU Summit in Algiers had done. She cited a number of instances of assistance from one African country to another in development projects, and a meeting was to be held at Timbuktu in December to consider the media image of Africa.

The African context was a discouraging one and required renewed efforts and a promotion of African initiatives, of the willingness of the agencies and Member States to collaborate, and of such new instruments as CCA/UNDAF. As the representative of the United States had said, many more resources were needed for coordinated efforts. Given the response to Kosovo, the Africans would find it hard to believe that the resources did not exist. More should be done to help Africa and to highlight the self-help activities of Africans.

The meeting rose at 12.45 p.m.