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Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 9 March 2000, at 3.30 p.m.

President: Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.40 p.m.

The situation in Mozambique

1. **Mr. dos Santos** (Mozambique) said that torrential rains followed by cyclone Eline had resulted in the worst flooding in Mozambique in 50 years. Preliminary figures showed that about 900 people had died, 900,000 were in desperate need of emergency relief and 2 million had been left without shelter, food, clean water and health care. The Government of Mozambique had taken measures to address the situation by launching a nationwide campaign to collect donations in cash and in kind. It had also dispatched senior cabinet ministers to the affected areas to evaluate the extent of the damage and oversee relief operations.

2. With the generous help of neighbouring countries, the Government of Mozambique had conducted the first relief operations to save lives and alleviate the suffering of the victims. On 10 February 2000, it had launched its first international emergency appeal for humanitarian assistance amounting to \$2.7 million to mitigate the effects of the floods, based on an initial assessment of 150,000 people affected. On 23 February, in the wake of cyclone Eline, it had launched its second appeal for \$65 million, based on an initial number of 300,000 people affected. On 3 March, a ministerial meeting of the four most severely affected countries in southern Africa, namely, Botswana, Mozambique, South Africa and Zimbabwe, had been held in Pretoria. At the meeting, the affected countries had pledged to continue to coordinate their efforts to deal with natural disasters, and had decided to develop a regional action plan and recommend the establishment of a Southern African Development Community Disaster Management Unit.

3. The disaster had had an adverse impact on the economic, social and humanitarian situation in Mozambique. Many people had been exposed to water-borne diseases, particularly cholera and malaria. That situation needed to be addressed as a matter of urgency. The disaster was undermining the remarkable socio-economic progress that had been achieved over the past five years and would lead to food-security problems and loss of income. Another area of concern was the danger of landmines, since the flood waters had dredged up and shifted minefields. There would therefore be a considerable need for flood-related mine

action to ensure the safe resettlement of displaced persons. The Government of Mozambique was currently working together with the United Nations Mine Action Service to address the problem.

4. The Government of Mozambique was grateful to the international community for its generous assistance in helping it to deal with the catastrophe. However, in order to ensure steady recovery and normalization, humanitarian assistance must be complemented by medium- and long-term rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts and programmes. The emergency-relief programmes being carried out in Mozambique were based on coordination among the Government, the donor community, the United Nations and non-governmental organizations. Such coordination had resulted in the development of a general approach that comprised emergency rescue operations and identification of basic needs; stabilization of the conditions of the rescued population; resettlement of displaced populations and emergency rehabilitation of essential infrastructure; and recovery and long-term reconstruction. A joint technical team had been established to prepare a report to be submitted to the International Donors Conference to assist Mozambique in its rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

5. The United Nations system should continue to play its leading role in the mobilization and coordination of international assistance to Mozambique, and the Economic and Social Council should support the draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique that would soon be considered by the General Assembly.

6. **Mr. Tsui** (Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said that, five days after the first heavy rains, a coordination and assessment team had been dispatched to Mozambique. An appeal for international assistance had been issued on 23 February 2000 for a total of \$65 million, of which the United Nations requirements had been \$13.6 million. The Secretary-General had appointed a special humanitarian envoy to support the Government and the country team in coordinating international humanitarian assistance in Mozambique. The Special Envoy had travelled to Mozambique immediately after a meeting with donors in Geneva on 29 February, at which more than \$13 million, in addition to in-kind contributions, had been pledged. The Office for the

Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had sent a second team to Mozambique on 28 February.

7. Cyclone Eline had caused widespread loss of life and damage to property in the provinces of Gaza, Inhambane, Maputo, Manica and Sofala. Some 250,000 displaced persons were currently living in 74 camps. In all, 700,000 people had been targeted for food aid over the next six months. With the support of the United Nations and the international community, the Government of Mozambique had focused its efforts on saving the lives of people marooned by the floods. The immediate challenge had been to mobilize the necessary air transport for the rescue operation. The World Food Programme (WFP) had been assigned the leading role in providing logistical support to the Government.

8. The immediate rescue operation was drawing to a close and efforts had to be concentrated on addressing the needs of the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons for food, medicine, shelter and health services. Such needs were being addressed by the relevant United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations by sector. The United Nations continued to support operations and facilitate the effective distribution of humanitarian supplies. There was an urgent need to assist the Government in its efforts to prevent people from returning to their villages prematurely, address the issue of dislodged mines and ensure that relief efforts would be followed by commensurate support for rehabilitation and reconstruction.

9. He welcomed the assistance provided by Mozambique's neighbours and countries and individuals around the world. Private citizens had contributed a total of \$108 million, which did not include contributions in kind and technical assistance. The United Nations was preparing, in cooperation with the Government of Mozambique, a six-month transitional appeal that would provide a framework for ongoing emergency operations and immediate rehabilitation, including the reconstruction of key access roads and social-service facilities.

10. Several other countries in southern Africa had also been affected by rains and subsequent flooding, and weather conditions and water levels in Madagascar, Zimbabwe and South Africa were of concern. In Zimbabwe, the Government and the United Nations system were appealing for \$21.2 million to

assist 500,000 people. In Madagascar, according to preliminary information, floods had affected some 560,000 people. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs was releasing an initial grant of \$50,000 to assist with the coordination and assessment efforts; an appeal for funds would be launched shortly.

11. **Ms. Hammam** (World Food Programme) said that, since Mozambique was a major regional hub for WFP, the Programme had been able to respond almost immediately to the devastation caused by the early torrential rains. Direct distribution of food had begun on 7 February 2000, even before the Government had launched its appeal for assistance. Gaza, Maputo and Inhambane had been the most affected provinces. Roads, homes and bridges had been destroyed, electricity supplies had been disrupted and towns had been left without clean water. On 17 February, WFP had released funds to cover immediate emergency needs and, by 24 February, after cyclone Eline had struck, had launched an international appeal for \$4 million for food and food-related costs and \$2.8 million for air operations.

12. For the first time in WFP history, logistics equipment, including aircraft, had been used for search-and-rescue operations. Those air operations had been conducted with the cooperation of the South African National Defence Force. WFP had called for a second phase of that operation for a six-month period beginning in mid-March.

13. Much of the reconstruction work being carried out was to facilitate the movement of humanitarian assistance and allow access to the people in need. In that regard, WFP had appealed for \$4 million to reconstruct the roads required for the transport of humanitarian supplies and an additional \$3 million for the continuation of air operations.

14. **Mr. Alipui** (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that, since UNICEF had been present in Mozambique for more than 20 years, it had been able to assist the Government of Mozambique in conducting rapid needs assessments and planning relief activities. The Fund's main strategy had been to help strengthen the Government's coordination capacity. UNICEF had released \$400,000 from its Emergency Programme Fund and had diverted over \$400,000 from the regular country programme to meet immediate relief needs. The presence of the Executive Director of UNICEF in the region at the time of the floods had

helped to mobilize United Nations agencies. The Government of Mozambique was to be commended for playing a leading role in the relief effort.

15. In the immediate aftermath of the floods, UNICEF had focused on critical life-saving activities in the areas of disease control, sanitation, water purification and nutrition. Some 40 tons of essential medical supplies had been airlifted to Maputo. Teams of UNICEF staff and Government officials had been transported by helicopter to coordinate the distribution of those supplies and support the local and provincial authorities. Chlorine and other water-treatment equipment, as well as generators to power cold chain systems, had been sent to affected areas, and public-hygiene education was being conducted. In addition, a major vaccination campaign against measles, meningitis and tetanus had been planned. UNICEF was also working with its partners to assess the problem of dislodged landmines.

16. According to UNICEF estimates, some 180,000 of the 900,000 flood victims were children under five and there were as many as 1,000 unaccompanied children. UNICEF was seeking to ensure that those children were cared for and reunited with their families. Major concerns were the rising incidence of malaria and diarrhoea, shortages of staple foods and the plight of the thousands of stranded children.

17. UNICEF had appealed for \$2,300,866 and, as at 29 February, had received \$1,561,517 which left a shortfall of \$739,349. Additional resources were desperately needed, both in the short term to meet the needs of people living in camps and in the long term to rebuild infrastructure in preparation for the return of displaced persons to their homes.

18. **Mr. Janneh** (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the Programme was working closely with other United Nations agencies and Mozambique's National Institute for Disaster Management to provide assistance to the communities affected by the recent floods. It had allocated \$100,000 of emergency funds for the establishment of a coordination centre, which was monitoring the implementation of relief activities and reporting on contributions. In addition, a special emergency team had been dispatched to Mozambique to strengthen the capacity of the UNDP country office.

19. The Programme was supporting the efforts of the Government of Mozambique to mobilize resources.

Some partners had already channelled their contributions through UNDP, including the Government of Italy, which had given \$2.5 million. UNDP looked forward to the forthcoming international donors conference, which should be followed by further consultations on long-term development perspectives.

20. Regarding the contribution of Italy, \$1.8 million would be used to integrate disadvantaged groups, including women, children, young people, older and disabled persons, into the development process by providing them with income-generating activities, and \$500,000 would be spent on purchasing seeds for farmers in the inundated central and southern provinces. UNDP would also assist in the rebuilding of small-scale economic infrastructure and conduct campaigns to raise public awareness of the danger posed by dislodged landmines.

21. **Mr. Monteiro** (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the tragedy that had struck Mozambique would severely slow that country's remarkable progress, which had made it one of Africa's success stories. The European Union stood ready to support Mozambique's efforts to deal with the human and economic consequences of the disaster. In 2000, the European Community would increase its development assistance to Mozambique to 150 million euros.

22. Effective coordination between the Mozambican authorities and donors would be necessary, both during the current phase of emergency relief and subsequently, to ensure a smooth transition to rehabilitation and reconstruction. The European Union was pleased to note that, with the arrival of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination Team, the United Nations agencies had already put in place the necessary coordination mechanisms. The presence of the Secretary-General's Special Humanitarian Envoy had contributed to the effectiveness of those mechanisms.

23. **Mr. Osio** (Observer for Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, commended the response of donors, in particular the European Union, and United Nations agencies to the disaster in Mozambique and expressed the hope that the international community would heed the appeal of the representative of Mozambique. He was pleased to note that the General Assembly would have before it at its

next meeting a draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique and that the Economic and Social Council would consider the issue at its substantive session of 2000. It was heartening that, for the first time, the Assembly, the Economic and Social Council and the Security Council had been united in their response to a natural disaster.

24. **Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil) said that Brazilians had a strong sense of solidarity with Mozambicans, with whom they shared a common language, history and cultural heritage. As an immediate contribution to the emergency relief effort, the Government of Brazil had organized an airlift of 10 tons of medical supplies. Brazil was one of the sponsors of the draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique that would shortly be considered by the General Assembly.

25. Substantial and continued international assistance would be needed to enable Mozambique to deal with both the short- and long-term human and material consequences of the floods, and it was essential that adequate resources should be provided, either bilaterally or through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and international humanitarian organizations. The Council had a special role to play in improving inter-agency coordination and supporting initiatives undertaken by the relevant United Nations agencies. His delegation hoped that more briefings would be organized and reports prepared on the international community's assistance to Mozambique.

26. **Mr. Francese** (Italy) said that his delegation endorsed the statement made by Portugal on behalf of the European Union. The Government of Italy had responded promptly to the appeals launched by the United Nations and the Government of Mozambique in the wake of the recent floods by organizing two flights to deliver relief supplies and providing three cholera emergency kits through the World Health Organization. It had put together a package of assistance measures worth approximately \$5 million. Half of that amount had been provided to UNDP to fund a 12-month programme of relief and development activities in the health and social sectors and in agriculture. The remaining half would be disbursed bilaterally in support of early reconstruction initiatives. Those emergency contributions were in addition to development programmes already planned for 2000 as part of Italy's long-term cooperation with Mozambique.

27. Italy was contributing 12 per cent of the emergency relief being provided by the European Community Humanitarian Office. It was also contributing to European Union development cooperation programmes in Mozambique. Since relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development generally overlapped, there was need for a comprehensive approach to both natural disasters and complex emergencies. Italy had called for an international conference, to be organized by UNDP, to assist the Government of Mozambique in its rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts.

28. **Mr. Mutaboba** (Rwanda) said that his delegation shared the views expressed by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. No effort should be spared to relieve the suffering of the people of Mozambique in their hour of need.

29. **Mr. Vermeulen** (Observer for South Africa) said that coordination of relief activities should be planned in advance of disasters and in consultation with the Governments concerned. The donor community should not deliver aid to affected countries without first notifying the Governments concerned, and it should make no distinction between humanitarian aid and disaster relief, on the one hand, and assistance for reconstruction and development, on the other. South Africa welcomed the proposal to hold an international donors conference for Mozambique and hoped that the international community would respond generously.

30. **Ms. Chassoul** (Costa Rica) said that the Government and people of Costa Rica had been deeply moved by the tragedy that had befallen the people of Mozambique. Costa Rica's own experience had taught it that international cooperation was indispensable for alleviating the impact of such disasters on developing countries. While immediate assistance was needed to prevent greater loss of life and physical destruction, cooperation was also needed in the post-crisis period to rebuild the national economy, repair infrastructure and, most importantly, rebuild lives. She therefore supported the appeal to international donors to assist the people of Mozambique.

31. **Mr. Belinga-Eboutou** (Cameroon) said that disaster had struck a least developed country that was just emerging from a long and painful civil war. Mozambique faced the daunting challenge of national reconstruction and the safe disposal of the landmines dislodged by the floods. The response to the appeal

made by the Government of Mozambique was therefore very gratifying and showed that the international community was standing together with the people of Mozambique in its hour of need. An item on the coordination of assistance to Mozambique should be included in the agenda of the Council's next meeting.

32. **Ms. Ashipala-Musavyi** (Observer for Namibia) said that long-term aid was essential to Mozambique's recovery. Her delegation looked forward to the General Assembly's adoption of a draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique. Given the scale of the tragedy, the draft resolution should include an appeal for the cancellation of Mozambique's debt.

33. **Mr. Kääriäinen** (Observer for Finland), updating the report on contributions prepared by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, said that Finland had contributed an additional sum of \$1.15 million, which would be disbursed through WFP.

34. **Mr. Da Gama** (Guinea-Bissau) said that Guinea-Bissau shared close historical and cultural ties with Mozambique and would do everything in its power to help it overcome the consequences of the unprecedented tragedy. The international community must step up its efforts to provide emergency relief, including assistance in disposing the landmines dislodged by the floods.

35. **Ms. Aftab** (Pakistan) said that her delegation fully supported the statement made by the representative of Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and wished to extend its heartfelt sympathy to the Government and people of Mozambique. Pakistan supported the efforts being made to assist Mozambique in dealing with the effects of the tragedy.

36. **Mr. Manongi** (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) welcomed the efforts being made to help the people of Mozambique cope with the disaster. He supported the proposal made by the representative of Namibia that the draft resolution on assistance to Mozambique should contain a special appeal to the Member States concerned to forgive Mozambique's debt.

37. **Mr. Leao Monteiro** (Observer for Cape Verde) said that the briefing by the Government of Mozambique and the United Nations programmes and agencies had been highly useful. The international community was providing effective assistance to the Government of Mozambique in dealing with the most

pressing needs of its people. The main challenge would be to sustain that effort beyond immediate relief to long-term aid. The situation in Mozambique offered an opportunity to improve on the model for disaster assistance. His delegation supported the proposal of the representative of Namibia that the issue of debt cancellation should be included in the draft resolution to be considered by the General Assembly.

38. **Mr. Mérouane** (Algeria) commended the efforts of the international community and the assistance already provided by many countries. His delegation supported the proposal of Namibia concerning debt cancellation.

39. **Mr. Robertson** (New Zealand), said that long-term assistance to Mozambique would be very important. New Zealand was contributing \$200,000 through UNICEF for the replacement of educational materials and equipment and a further \$100,000 for mine clearance. New Zealand recognized the importance of debt cancellation for countries in Mozambique's situation and was contributing \$6 million to the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Trust Fund.

40. **Mr. Pal** (India) said that his delegation wished to commend the Government of Mozambique for the effective way that it was addressing the problems of relief and rehabilitation. India had contributed medicines and would consult with the Government of Mozambique to see what more could be done.

41. **Mr. Al-Dosari** (Bahrain) thanked the President for convening the meeting to promote coordination of humanitarian assistance to Mozambique and hoped that it would inspire Member States to make greater efforts to alleviate the sufferings of the people of Mozambique. The Council should consider, together with United Nations programmes and specialized agencies, ways of mitigating the impact of such natural disasters and preventing unnecessary loss of life and damage to property.

42. **Ms. McAskie** (Emergency Relief Coordinator a.i.) said that the international community's response to Mozambique's difficult situation had been very gratifying. She was pleased to hear that the contributions report was already out of date and that there had been many non-traditional donors.

43. Despite a second wave of disasters, the situation appeared to be stabilizing. The United Nations system

stood ready to help in every possible way in Mozambique's reconstruction efforts. The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs would continue to produce reports and was prepared to brief interested Governments either formally or informally. It was particularly tragic that the disaster had hit Mozambique just as it was emerging from long years of conflict.

44. Many delegations had mentioned the importance of preventing disasters. A distinction should be drawn between natural disasters, which could not be prevented, and their effects, which could be mitigated through capacity-building, training, construction and a whole range of preventive measures described in the new international strategy for disaster reduction, which had been prepared as part of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction.

45. **The President** read out a statement in which, on behalf of the Council, he extended heartfelt sympathy to the Government and people of Mozambique for the horrific loss of life and property that had resulted from the floods, paid tribute to their untiring efforts to respond to the devastation and endorsed their appeal for assistance. He expressed appreciation to the international community for its support to Mozambique and called on all Governments in a position to do so to intensify their assistance to the Government of Mozambique. He commended the efforts of United Nations bodies and agencies, other international and regional organizations and the private sector and called upon them to accelerate and coordinate their efforts to provide a continuum of relief and assistance. The Council would address the issue of coordination of humanitarian and disaster relief assistance of the United Nations to Mozambique in the humanitarian segment of its substantive session in 2000.

46. He took it that the Council agreed that he should transmit his statement to the Government of Mozambique and through it to the people of Mozambique.

47. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.