



# Economic and Social Council

Provisional

13 December 2000

Original: English

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## Substantive session of 2000

### Provisional summary record of the 33rd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 20 July 2000, at 3 p.m.

*President:* Mr. Sotirov (Vice-President) . . . . . (Bulgaria)

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Non-governmental organizations

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*In the absence of Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia), Mr. Sotirov (Bulgaria), Vice-President, took the Chair.*

*The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.*

**Special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief assistance** (*continued*) (A/54/855-E/2000/44; A/55/82-E/2000/61 and A/55/90-E/2000/81; E/2000/CRP.3, E/2000/CRP.4, E/2000/CRP.5 and E/2000/NGO/1)

1. **Mr. Pramatarsky** (Bulgaria) said that the earthquakes in Kosovo and Turkey during the past year had provided examples of flexibility and rapid response, owing primarily to the strengthened leading role and coordinating functions of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Another positive development was the improvement and strengthening of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP). However, his delegation was concerned at the collision of mandates and duplication of efforts among different agencies. In order to avoid that problem, the role of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, OCHA and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) must be further strengthened; it might also be productive to establish regional unified glossary systems and to harmonize the procedural, operational and technical aspects of emergency management. Since the primary responsibility for coordinating and implementing humanitarian assistance in the wake of natural disasters lay with affected States, it was also important to strengthen national capacities, particularly those of civil institutions.

2. The safety of humanitarian personnel was a necessary precondition for effective humanitarian operations. In order to avoid tragic events such as the previous year's death of a Bulgarian staff member of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, he urged rapid implementation of the recommendations made in the report on the scope of legal protection under the Convention on the Safety of United Nations and Associated Personnel, which the General Assembly had requested the Secretary-General to prepare.

3. Regional and subregional cooperation should be strengthened at the bilateral and multilateral levels. Bulgaria had recently concluded cooperation agreements with some of its neighbours with a view to improved coordination between the political, humanitarian and human rights components of

international crisis response. He welcomed European efforts to improve reaction capacities and provide coordination for prompt response to emergencies. His Government had proposed the establishment of a regional council of heads of institutions in charge of civil protection during disasters and accidents in the countries of South-East Europe; it attached great importance to the role of technology in mitigating the effects of natural and man-made disasters and had recently deposited its instrument of ratification of the Tampere Convention with the Secretary-General.

4. **Mr. Shen Guofang** (China) said that his delegation had always advocated a neutral, unpoliticized approach to ensuring the international community's timely, coordinated response to humanitarian emergencies and to providing scientific and technological assistance to disaster-prone countries, especially in the developing world, with a view to their successful transition from relief to reconstruction and development. The gap between developed and developing countries' levels of scientific and technological development must also be acknowledged. Capacity-building in the developing and least developed countries, where most disasters took place and which lacked advanced means of communications such as Global Positioning Systems (GPS), geographic information systems (GIS), remote sensing and space technology, should play a major role in international cooperation programmes. Disaster-stricken countries could thereby be helped to prepare for possible emergencies and respond more quickly to disasters when they struck.

5. The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP), which served as an important multilateral channel for humanitarian assistance, should be further strengthened, and the security and safety of United Nations humanitarian relief personnel during complex emergencies should be addressed therein.

6. The primary responsibility for assisting internally displaced persons lay with the Governments of the countries affected. The inherent rights of such persons had not received sufficient attention, but the issue was a complex, sensitive one which the United Nations and the international community should approach with caution. Assistance should be provided only at the request, and with the full participation and cooperation, of the Governments concerned and must respect international and domestic law and the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and non-interference,

in strict compliance with the relevant provisions of the Charter of the United Nations.

7. Lastly, he urged increased funding for OCHA and humanitarian affairs in general.

8. **Mr. Akasaka** (Japan) said that technology was a positive inheritance from the past century whereas human suffering, primarily that of women and children, was a negative one. It was only natural to make use of the former to alleviate the latter.

9. Japan had proposed the launching of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR) and had been its prime contributor. A major lesson from the Decade that should be transferred to the International Strategy For Disaster Reduction (ISDR) was that prevention and rescue were inseparable and must be effectively coordinated. Geographical disadvantages made small island developing countries vulnerable to natural hazards; his Government had recently announced that it would contribute US\$ 1 million to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for a project to promote information technology in the Pacific and had dispatched a deep-sea research study vessel to Papua New Guinea in order to identify the cause of the tsunami that had damaged that country in 1998.

10. Internal displacement of civilians was not only a humanitarian issue; it also affected prospects for peace and development. The primary responsibility for assisting displaced populations lay with the Government of the country concerned; however, the international community should provide assistance at the request, or with the consent, of Governments unable to fully shoulder that responsibility and should consider doing so when the situation did not allow the Government to make such a request. The question of how to respond in such cases should not be determined by standard rules for humanitarian action or by philosophical discussions regarding justified forms of intervention.

11. His Government supported the efforts of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons and hoped that familiarity with the basic rules of humanitarian law would allow local authorities, humanitarian personnel, non-governmental organizations and displaced persons to act jointly to alleviate the latter's plight. Greater efforts must also be made to ensure the safety of humanitarian personnel. At field level, the United Nations agency or

other humanitarian organization with the highest level of expertise, experience and competence should be designated responsible. In that regard, he welcomed the willingness of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to extend protection to internally displaced persons as well as refugees. Lastly, at Headquarters level, he welcomed the IASC decision to make the Emergency Relief Coordinator responsible for enhanced accountability in international response; however, there was no need to establish a new level of bureaucracy in the name of coordination.

12. **Ms. Olowu** (Observer for Nigeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that in the light of the devastating impact of natural disasters and conflicts, it was unfortunate that most such events occurred in developing countries. Governments had the primary responsibility for providing protection and assistance to their citizens. However, given the massive social and economic problems of developing countries, the Council should call upon all States to create an enabling environment for the promotion of economic growth and sustainable development and to ensure respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, in order to promote durable peace and to prevent and mitigate humanitarian emergencies. International humanitarian response could help Governments to address not only the symptoms but also the causes of conflict in affected countries.

13. Coordination of humanitarian response was essential if assistance was to be received on time and at no extra cost. In view of the universal sympathy for the victims of earthquakes, landslides and hurricanes throughout the world, the time had come to establish appropriate modalities for transfer of the latest technology to developing countries in order to promote disaster reduction, reduce future appeals for international humanitarian assistance and benefit humanity as a whole under the Charter of the United Nations.

14. **Mr. McGill** (Canada) said that the humanitarian segment should focus on broad policy questions and be relatively informal; management of specific issues should be left to the agencies' governing boards. The usefulness of the agreed conclusions, particularly in relation to the Third Committee of the General Assembly and the various United Nations humanitarian agencies, should be carefully considered.

15. During the past year, the rapid onset of several crises had underscored the need for effective contingency planning and “surge capacity” among humanitarian agencies, the importance of agreed minimum standards and systematized arrangements for humanitarian coordination. Despite the efforts of OCHA and participating agencies to improve the quality, timeliness and transparency of the Consolidated Appeals Process, it continued to suffer from funding shortfalls. His Government would make every effort to ensure that its financial support was predictable, even and sustained at acceptable levels and urged OCHA and its partners to continue their efforts to set clearer priorities and improve transparency, financial reporting, strategic monitoring, evaluation and reporting on results.

16. His Government welcomed recent Security Council resolutions on the protection of citizens in situations of armed conflict and the completion of the optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Programmes for war-affected children must focus on families and communities in order to promote recovery and build peace.

17. Many countries still lacked an adequate framework for disaster prediction, prevention and response, and the international community should support Governments in their efforts to achieve those goals. In order to cope with the increasing number and magnitude of natural disasters and to respond effectively to the needs of vulnerable populations, cooperation both within and outside Governments must be enhanced, and efforts must be made to build on the strengths of existing multilateral, regional and local partners. Donors must focus both on the immediate impact of an emergency and on reconstruction and development programming. Disaster preparedness activities should be integrated into bilateral programmes on a routine basis and sustainable development strategies, including national development plans, should include early warning and disaster preparedness. The ISDR secretariat could play an important role in that regard; he encouraged the ISDR Task Force to create linkages with other mechanisms such as the World Bank ProVention Consortium and IASC.

18. Lack of coordination was not the only obstacle; Governments’ inability or unwillingness to provide secure access to the affected populations often limited

the international community’s capacity to respond. His Government commended the work of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons and had recently contributed political, financial and human resources in support of the latter’s mandate. However, the Special Representative’s efforts were inextricably linked to the ongoing work of intergovernmental and non-governmental agencies operating in the field, particularly the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The international community’s response should support and complement national efforts; when States did not fulfil their responsibility to guarantee the rights of internally displaced persons, more robust action might be called for. He welcomed the recent adoption by IASC of a policy paper on the protection of internally displaced persons, which provided much-needed clarity on the allocation of responsibilities.

19. The Emergency Relief Coordinator and OCHA should continue to act as the operational focal point for inter-agency assistance to, and protection of, internally displaced persons. At country level, the resident or humanitarian coordinator should have ultimate responsibility for such persons; however, IASC could identify a single lead agency to coordinate with other actors in the field and clarify protection and assistance requirements. Although the use of a protection working group to develop a country-specific plan might be the most effective approach, agencies should ensure that efforts to target the needs of the internally displaced were part of a broader response that included all affected populations.

20. **Mr. Colletta** (World Bank) said that the increase in the number and severity of complex emergencies in recent years threatened to undermine poverty eradication efforts in the developing world. Humanitarian responses to such emergencies must be coordinated, and conflict-affected countries must be supported in their transition to sustainable peace and disaster preparedness. Strategic partnerships were essential for combining humanitarian aid with efforts towards sustainable peace and development.

21. Over the last year, the World Bank had begun to redefine its role as that of a technical and financial bridge between actions to save lives and actions to ensure sustainable livelihoods. It had substantially strengthened its collaboration with all stakeholders and was focusing on improving the coordination of humanitarian responses and linking such assistance

more closely to development. It participated in several United Nations groups, including the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, and was responsible for a joint web site on global peace-building, which would serve as a gateway for information on the transition from violent conflict to sustainable peace and development. That initiative also demonstrated the Bank's conviction that technology and knowledge-sharing could make essential contributions to humanitarian and development activities.

22. In those efforts, the World Bank addressed the needs of internally displaced persons by providing development assistance to communities affected by war. Experience had shown that community-driven social and economic reintegration was a successful means of assisting displaced persons while laying the foundations for longer-term sustainable development. Confidence-building efforts were an important component of post-conflict reconstruction. Community development actions could also be undertaken in the midst of ongoing conflict. The World Bank was identifying strategic areas of intervention with a view to mitigating violent conflicts and their aftermath, and even preventing the outbreak of conflicts. That process included the building of a broadly based consensus on priorities and the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders in local development activities.

23. Two years earlier, the World Bank had established a Disaster Management Facility to provide leadership in the integration of disaster prevention and mitigation into development. Along with UNDP, the Bank was exploring the use of microfinance instruments to help the very poor manage disaster risk. It participated in the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction and in the ProVention Consortium, a global partnership for reducing disasters in developing countries and integrating disaster risk management into development.

24. The Bank's Post-Conflict Fund was a special grant mechanism for financing activities to support the transition to peace. Thus far, some 65 grants amounting to \$21 million had been awarded for the benefit of 27 countries. Priority was given to the rehabilitation of groups such as displaced families, child soldiers and widows.

25. The Bank had also drafted a new operational policy on conflict and development, which would commit the Bank to a more vigorous approach to

countries at risk of conflict, in the midst of conflict or in the post-conflict stage. Recently, its pioneering research on the links between economic factors and civil war had shown that countries which depended heavily on the export of unprocessed primary commodities were four times more likely to be plunged into civil war than countries with diversified economies. The interplay between social factors and conflict had been examined in a recent Bank publication reviewing the experiences of Cambodia, Rwanda, Guatemala and Somalia in terms of how conflict had affected social cohesion and how changes in levels and types of social capital had affected conflict. The Bank hoped that an integrated approach to economic and social issues would help reduce the risk of conflict while improving conditions during complex emergencies and post-conflict transitions.

26. **Mr. dos Santos** (Mozambique) said that he endorsed the statement made by the observer for Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The issuance of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report on assistance to Mozambique following the devastating floods (E/2000/CRP.3) and the inclusion of that topic in the Council's agenda would help to ensure that Mozambique received the continued attention of the international community.

27. As heavy rains, cyclones and drought were regular occurrences in Mozambique, the Government took measures each year to mitigate their impact. A warning on the likelihood of unusually heavy rainfall had been issued in September 1999 and a national awareness campaign had been conducted with the help of United Nations agencies. A contingency plan aimed at ensuring the availability of food, medicine and rescue and survival kits had been drawn up. However, the magnitude of the disaster had rendered those efforts meaningless.

28. When the floods had occurred, the Government had launched rescue and relief operations in coordination with the international community and civil society. A national campaign of solidarity with the victims had been launched with the active participation of national non-governmental organizations, religious institutions, the private sector and civil society at large to collect contributions in cash and in kind. The Government's limited budgetary resources had been used to fund rescue operations, strengthen the early warning system, provide humanitarian assistance and primary health care and open the first shelters for

displaced persons. Government officials at the highest levels had become involved; for example, the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Cooperation had taken over the leadership of the National Institute for Disaster Management to provide political guidance, facilitate interaction with the international community and speed up the decision-making process.

29. Mozambique was grateful for the support of the international community, and particularly for the aircraft and personnel provided by its neighbours South Africa and Malawi, which had enabled it to save more lives. The people and Government of Mozambique sincerely appreciated the international community's moral support, solidarity and friendship, as well as the human, material and financial aid it had received.

30. The United Nations system was providing valuable support to Mozambique and had helped to generate the political will needed to deal with the situation. The Organization's appointment of the first Special Humanitarian Envoy of the Secretary-General and its issuance of a number of important statements had sent bold political messages of genuine interest and had created an enabling environment for the mobilization of assistance. In addition, United Nations agencies played a leading role in mobilizing and coordinating international assistance and in preparing and implementing rescue and relief plans. The United Nations system had succeeded in Mozambique because all its components had worked together as one under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator. It had thereby avoided inter-agency competition for resources and areas of involvement and had ensured that resources and expertise were used efficiently.

31. At the International Reconstruction Conference, held in Rome on 3 and 4 May 2000, Mozambique had presented a document, prepared with United Nations assistance, on its needs in the post-emergency reconstruction phase, which would involve the resettlement of the displaced population and the rehabilitation and reconstruction of all that had been destroyed. The international response had been overwhelming in terms of the pledges made. However, Mozambique was concerned about the slow pace of disbursement. It appealed to donors to honour the commitments they had made in Rome by ensuring the timely and full disbursement of the funds.

32. National, regional and international mechanisms for the prevention and management of natural

disasters, including early warning systems, should be established or strengthened. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) was currently assessing the possibility of setting up a natural disaster prevention and management unit.

33. The media had played an important role in raising the awareness of international civil society with respect to the dire situation in Mozambique. The dramatic images they had broadcast had illustrated not only the suffering of Mozambique's people, but also their courage and determination to recover from the disaster. International solidarity would make that recovery possible.

34. **Mr. Alemán** (Observer for Ecuador) said that he fully supported the statements made by the representative of Colombia and the observer for Nigeria on behalf of the Rio Group and the Group of 77 and China, respectively. Ecuador, as a country which was highly vulnerable to various types of natural disasters, attached particular importance to the Organization's role in preventing, mitigating and reducing their effects. It therefore strongly supported the provision of timely humanitarian assistance and of support for the rehabilitation of populations and areas affected by natural disasters.

35. The international community needed a multisectoral, inter-agency mechanism, linked to the areas of environment and sustainable development, to prevent and respond to such disasters in a rapid and coordinated fashion. Natural disaster prevention was an integral part of the sustainable development strategies and national development plans of vulnerable countries, and should be a cornerstone of international disaster mitigation strategies in the twenty-first century. That need had been expressly recognized in Council resolution 1999/63 and General Assembly resolution 54/219. Activities to prevent and respond to natural disasters were by no means mutually exclusive. The United Nations system should therefore ensure the necessary coordination to avoid the duplication of effort and the dispersion of resources.

36. **Ms. Nguyen Thi Thanh Ha** (Viet Nam) said that the theme of the humanitarian affairs segment reflected the Member States' interest in using modern technologies to help alleviate the suffering caused by natural disasters and other emergencies. Her delegation fully supported the statement made by the observer for Nigeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

37. As a developing country prone to natural disasters, Viet Nam recognized the value of the Organization's coordinated assistance and of the use of technology to support efforts to prevent, mitigate and respond to natural disasters. Viet Nam was cooperating with UNDP in preparing geographic information systems (GIS)-based district hazard maps as a component of disaster management planning. Further efforts should be made to provide disaster-prone countries, especially developing ones, with technologies and training to strengthen their capacity to prevent, mitigate and respond to natural disasters.

38. Donor response to natural disasters was uneven, both geographically and sectorally, to the point where the mere provision of humanitarian assistance in response to a disaster had been hindered. Humanitarian assistance must be coordinated and provided in accordance with the guiding principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182. In addition, international humanitarian assistance should be guided by a legal framework or set of rules and procedures, which should be developed through an intergovernmental process.

39. Her delegation expressed its gratitude to all Governments, United Nations agencies, international organizations and non-governmental organizations for the humanitarian assistance they had provided to victims of natural disasters in Viet Nam over the years.

40. **Mr. Tchoulkov** (Russian Federation) said that the Secretary-General's report on strengthening the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/55/82-E/2000/61) provided high-quality information, analyses and recommendations. In view of the recent increase in the number of humanitarian emergencies, mechanisms for mitigating their consequences must be updated, although the principles governing the provision of humanitarian assistance must remain unchanged. Those principles included neutrality, humanity, impartiality, non-imposition of political conditions, respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of States and the consent of recipient countries. Any attempt to dilute those principles by introducing new elements, regardless of the humanitarian considerations on which they might be based, could hamper humanitarian cooperation by raising questions about the reasons behind it.

41. The Council's humanitarian affairs segment was a key intergovernmental instrument for coordinating the humanitarian activities of the United Nations system and should function in a pragmatic and constructive atmosphere. It should focus specifically on coordination issues, leaving political issues to the General Assembly. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee should continue to be the main mechanism for the coordination of United Nations humanitarian assistance. Information about the content and methods of its work should be transparent and provided to Member States on a regular basis.

42. He noted the improved structure, preparation and format of consolidated appeals. Multilateral assistance should complement bilateral assistance instead of competing with it. The publication of information on bilateral and other assistance in consolidated appeals would be helpful. Further efforts should be made to mobilize resources for "forgotten" emergencies.

43. The section of the Secretary-General's report that dealt with the timely issue of technology as a tool for mitigating the effects of emergencies focused primarily on the use of information, communication and space technologies at the early warning and prevention stages; little information was given on the use of rescue technologies. The United Nations should work to improve the coordination of national rescue services and the use of advanced technologies in rescue operations. To that end, it should develop a comprehensive inventory of existing technological potential at the national, regional and international levels and should make recommendations on how to enhance its effectiveness.

44. Since assistance to the victims of humanitarian emergencies was of primary importance, the Council should seek to strengthen the coordination of United Nations assistance to internally displaced persons. Such assistance should continue to be provided through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian agencies. The consent of the State of origin and nationality of such persons and the authorization of the Secretary-General were prerequisites for such activities. He supported the Inter-Agency Standing Committee's collaborative approach to that issue. National authorities had the primary responsibility for protecting and assisting internally displaced persons, and the legal protection of such persons should be ensured primarily by national legislation, together with

the relevant provisions of international law. The international community's efforts should only supplement and strengthen national efforts.

45. Assistance to internally displaced persons was a complex and sensitive issue. Efforts should focus on maximizing the use of existing potential through the coordination of the work of humanitarian agencies and the strengthening of their cooperation with States. The Russian Federation supported virtually all the recommendations on assistance to internally displaced persons contained in the Secretary-General's report.

46. **Mr. Ahmad** (Pakistan) said that the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) had taken flexible and innovative approaches in responding to humanitarian emergencies. However, its coordination efforts had been complicated by the fact that a large number of actors were now responding to such emergencies. The Secretary-General's report pointed out that the proportion of international humanitarian aid delivered through multilateral channels had declined from 45 per cent to 25 per cent between 1988 and 1998, while an increasing proportion had been delivered through bilateral channels (A/55/82-E/2000/61, para. 72). The increase in the overall level of resources for humanitarian aid was commendable, but those resources should be delivered through multilateral channels and should not result in a decline in resources for development activities, especially since overall development could enhance capacity-building.

47. Humanitarian assistance activities should be focused and apolitical. While a comprehensive approach to each situation might be desirable, the independence and impartiality of the Organization's activities could be questioned if they became too closely associated with the political process or if they included actions other than humanitarian assistance.

48. Technology was of vital assistance not only in responding effectively to emergencies, but also in prevention and mitigation efforts. Developing countries must have access to GIS, global positioning systems (GPS) and remote sensing from satellites and telecommunication networks. In general, Pakistan supported the Secretary-General's recommendations in that regard; however, the proposal concerning a convention on the deployment and utilization of international urban search and rescue teams was unclear.

49. The Governments of the countries concerned had the primary responsibility for providing assistance to internally displaced persons. International assistance to such persons could be provided only at the request of the Government concerned, and must adhere strictly to the guidelines laid down by the latter.

50. The Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) should form the overall framework for channelling humanitarian assistance from all sources in the event of humanitarian emergencies and natural disasters. The affected countries should have the primary role in designing CAPs. Unfortunately, responses to CAPs had so far proved selective and uneven, determined largely by political considerations or media attention. They should be based purely on humanitarian considerations. The needs of Africa must not be ignored for the sake of political expediency.

51. He noted the useful proposal by the Secretary-General in paragraph 16 of his report (A/55/82-E/2000/61) on the need to develop more innovative approaches to mobilizing resources for the "forgotten emergencies". The international community had virtually forgotten the emergency in Pakistan, which was host to approximately 2.6 million Afghan refugees. At one time, the total had been five million. The needs of those refugees were not being met; with the end of the cold war, the flow of aid had dried up, and the Government of Pakistan was now having to support them from its own limited resources. He called on the international community to respond to appeals for humanitarian assistance for those refugees.

52. The number of emergencies could be reduced if a long-term view were taken of the problems of underdevelopment. Economic and social development could play a role in preventing complex emergencies, and could mitigate the consequences of natural disasters.

53. **Mr. Sychov** (Observer for Belarus) said his country had provided humanitarian relief to other countries on 15 occasions since 1997 and was aware of the shortcomings in coordination and organization. It welcomed measures to reinforce the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to humanitarian emergencies and supported cooperation between the system and Member States in planning early prevention and preparedness for natural disasters. In most emergencies, neighbouring countries were best placed to provide timely assistance. Belarus had negotiated



bilateral agreements on the early prevention of emergencies and the mitigation of their consequences with Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Moldova, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan, and was negotiating a draft agreement with the United Nations on accelerating transport of relief supplies and personnel in the event of emergencies.

54. He agreed with the view already expressed that OCHA should play a leading role in coordinating international humanitarian response by building partnerships between the Governments of affected countries, humanitarian institutions and specialist companies to focus, inter alia, on encouraging the use of technology in humanitarian operations, with due regard to generally accepted principles and the rules of international law.

55. As a result of the Chernobyl disaster, over 13 per cent of the population of Belarus, or about 1,350,000 people, had been displaced. They needed new housing and jobs, special medical treatment including psychological rehabilitation, and equitable access to social services. In spite of the measures taken by the Government, there was still a need for international assistance. The Chernobyl incident was a man-made disaster which many organizations, including the United Nations, found it hard to classify. However, its consequences might well last for another 300 years and must not be ignored. He was glad to note that the consistent position adopted by OCHA on the question had resulted in many operational activities and measures to increase public awareness. UNICEF had played a praiseworthy role in that respect. In addition, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, in its *World Disaster Report 2000*, had recognized the long-term humanitarian consequences of the Chernobyl disaster for the populations of the affected countries.

56. He welcomed the growing involvement of the United Nations, specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations with the question of internally displaced persons. Legislative norms should be established to regulate the issues connected with them, and the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement should serve as a basis for such norms.

57. International cooperation was needed in building capacities, including technical capacity, to respond to emergencies, and should include the training of personnel and consultative and technical assistance to

the national agencies responsible for handling emergencies.

58. **Mr. Gamaleldin** (Observer for Egypt) recalled the guiding principles laid down in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182, which formed the basis for all humanitarian activities of the United Nations. Humanitarian assistance should be inspired by humanitarian considerations alone. The United Nations should be able to respond to humanitarian emergencies promptly and in a coordinated manner. The response of the international community should be coordinated through the Consolidated Appeal Process, which should be the central coordinating tool for all the actors involved, including the International Committee of the Red Cross and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. He commended the Red Cross organizations for their efforts and their impartiality in adhering to the Geneva Conventions. He emphasized that CAPs should be developed and implemented with the full participation of the host Government, and urged the international community to respond more actively to requests for financial contributions to the CAP. Multilateral channels for humanitarian assistance should also be strengthened. However, contributions to humanitarian assistance should not detract from resources for international development assistance.

59. Egypt echoed the appeal of countries in the South to its development partners to ensure the transfer of technology to developing countries, in order to enable them to cope with natural disasters. They should be helped to create early warning, prevention and preparedness mechanisms and capabilities. Such cooperation should include the sharing of remote sensing images, GIS data and similar technologies. Egypt also joined in condemning all attacks against humanitarian personnel. He emphasized that such personnel must fully respect the laws of host countries and international law, as well as the sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of those States.

60. Concerning the question of internally displaced persons, he noted that there were at least 25 million people in that category, presenting a challenge which must be overcome. The international community could do more for them by providing more financial resources to the countries they were in. The protection of such persons was the primary responsibility of the countries affected by internal displacement. He was

astonished that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) had adopted and implemented, without consulting Member States, a policy paper on the protection of internally displaced persons containing some questionable ideas. He urged the Emergency Relief Coordinator to take steps to ensure that Member States were informed regularly and in a timely manner about IASC activities. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement should be forwarded to Member States, together with the IASC policy paper, so that they could express their views and thereby enhance the legitimacy of the Principles.

61. **Mr. Kastberg** (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that the coordination of humanitarian assistance was vital in making effective use of scarce resources to address the needs of children and women in crisis situations. Over the past year, such crises had included floods in southern Africa and Mozambique, cyclones in Madagascar, earthquakes in Turkey and drought in about 21 countries, especially in the Horn of Africa and in Asia. There were also protracted complex emergencies in the Sudan, Angola, Afghanistan, Somalia and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Over 48 million children and women were affected by those events, and UNICEF worked to provide them with humanitarian aid and protection. Coordination through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), which included non-governmental organizations and the Red Cross movement, made it possible to assign a much better division of roles and responsibilities among United Nations and partner agencies, and to widen areas of responsibility. For instance, UNICEF had supplied humanitarian coordinators in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, and the World Food Programme had supplied them in Angola and in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Inter-agency collaboration had been strengthened in the Sudan. Terms of reference for child protection advisers in peacekeeping missions had been developed jointly by UNICEF, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Office of the Special Representative for Children in Armed Conflict. UNICEF had sent two Child Protection Advisers on missions in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Sierra Leone.

62. UNICEF was endeavouring to implement its "Peace and Security Agenda for Children", which included the objective of re-establishing education facilities as part of every recovery effort. Schools

played a vital role as community centres and as entry points for health education, psychosocial support and nutritional assistance. Three weeks after the waters subsided in Mozambique, UNICEF had been able to support the Ministry of Education in restarting schooling. The same priority had been adopted in East Timor and in Kosovo. Health and basic education had been a focus of UNICEF's work in Gode, southern Ethiopia, and took place in the feeding centres where mothers and children gathered because of the drought. UNICEF had been working to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and to reunite children with their families in the latter country and in Angola, the United Republic of Tanzania, Kosovo and East Timor. In Angola and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, UNICEF had been able to agree on the kind of support needed by country teams in order to carry out National Immunization Days against polio, and "door-to-door" immunizations had been carried out throughout the Democratic Republic of the Congo in spite of the fighting. National Immunization Days had also taken place in Afghanistan, the Sudan and Somalia.

63. In responding to natural disasters, coordinated early warnings and contingency planning measures should be continued and stepped up. The donor community should be more willing to contribute resources to the "forgotten emergencies", such as those in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Angola, as well as to those which had excited international media attention. Countries in a transition phase, such as Liberia, Mozambique and Rwanda, deserved greater attention. UNICEF would also like to see a better balance of funding between emergencies, and more flexible funding in order to provide a rapid response to changing situations and to direct assistance where it was most needed. Recalling the emphasis in the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the responsibility of all parties to ensure the provision of basic services, he urged the Council to support enhanced coordination of humanitarian assistance through IASC; to recognize the critical role of education at all times; to ensure that all peace agreements and negotiations addressed the needs of children; to call on donors to allocate resources in a timely and balanced manner; and to support measures to improve the security of humanitarian personnel.

64. **Mr. Mbuli Boliko** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) welcomed the emphasis in the Secretary-General's report (A/55/82-E/2000/61) on the role of technology in responding to emergencies, and on strengthened coordination. FAO provided relief and long-term assistance to internally displaced persons in agriculture and nutrition. Internal displacement was a cross-cutting issue, and he welcomed the proposal to create an inter-agency network to deal with it.

65. To reduce the impact of future emergencies, prevention should be given higher priority. Although the mandate of FAO lay in medium and longer-term action for development, it was increasingly involved in relief and rehabilitation work in natural disasters or complex emergencies. It endeavoured to provide food security, in line with the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the 1996 World Food Summit Plan of Action. The Strategic Framework for 2000-2015, adopted by FAO in November 1999, required the Organization to enhance its role in preparedness and to devise appropriate mechanisms for an effective and sustainable response to food and agricultural emergencies. Its Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) aimed to improve the productivity of staple foods in low-income food-deficit countries, and to alleviate the impact of disasters through better water control and intensified crop production and diversification. Prevention and mitigation of natural disasters was a high priority in the Organization's Medium-Term Plan for 2002-2007.

66. Technology, and especially information technology, could play a valuable role in dealing with disasters. The Global Information and Early Warning System provided early warnings of imminent food crises and triggered timely interventions. Since 1975, the System had developed a unique reference database containing information at the global, regional, national and local levels. An environmental database was also needed in order to provide reliable early warnings of natural disasters. Such a database would include land use data, agro-climatic data and information about vulnerable agricultural systems. FAO maintained strong links with other early warning systems and food aid organizations. It mounted joint missions with the World Food Programme to countries affected by man-made or natural disasters. It valued a system-wide approach, and collaborated actively with other agencies and with OCHA.

67. **Mr. Leus** (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that poor management was a major cause of death in emergency situations. Applied technology offered the prospect of a global leap in the coordination of crisis management: special software could facilitate the delivery of supplies, and advances in vaccines and pharmaceuticals, together with redesigned health and water infrastructures, were benefits due to technology. Communities must have the resources, however, to sustain the technologies. Moreover, sensational media reports unchecked for technical accuracy tended to exacerbate confusion in times of emergency, and to encourage inappropriate donations which then overburdened emergency systems.

68. For the international health community, war meant disease. In the east of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, only 13 per cent of the one million reported deaths had resulted from the use of weapons, the remainder being due to lack of services, extreme vulnerability and common diseases. In Burundi, the mortality rate among children under five had doubled between 1992 and 1998. In Afghanistan, the maternal mortality rate was 1,700 for every 100,000 live births. A third of the million annual deaths from malaria in Africa were in countries affected by serious conflict. In such countries, it was extremely difficult to find the resources to eradicate polio or control tuberculosis. Sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the most internally displaced persons, also had the highest numbers of HIV/AIDS cases. The elderly and very young, pregnant women and the chronically sick were especially vulnerable. As for internally displaced persons, their health was best preserved through a community-based approach. In all cases, local skills and the involvement of the host Government and of all conflicting parties were essential in order to deliver relief effectively while protecting human rights. International assistance had to fit in with national systems and infrastructures, and it should complement national capacities.

69. WHO enjoyed a special relationship with ministries of health, and was able to bring to bear upon the policies of a host Government the collective views of its member countries on health, human rights and humanitarian issues. In some areas, such as health assessment, epidemiological surveillance and disease control, it could give a lead. It could also offer advice in nutrition, immunization and reproductive health. In order to fulfil its role, it was investing an increasing share of its resources in inter-agency coordination

through the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and its subsidiary bodies. Health and survival were cross-sectoral concerns. Coordination meant recognizing and optimizing the skills and comparative advantages of all concerned. It was untrue that the capacity for rapid response existed only in some United Nations agencies and not in others, or that rapid health assessment was not an “operational” activity. WHO was also concerned at a growing tendency to concentrate on internal institutional arrangements, without seeking to involve national and local counterparts as early and as fully as possible in humanitarian action. Coordination was a product of people, not structures, and could only emerge from constant dialogue and consultation.

70. **Mr. Suh** Dae-won (Observer for the Republic of Korea) said that his delegation fully supported ongoing efforts by the United Nations to provide a better-coordinated response to natural disasters and complex emergencies. The roles of OCHA and the Emergency Relief Coordinator had become increasingly important. For OCHA to play its part effectively, however, its finances and personnel must be placed on a sound footing. Better coordination was also a key issue. Interaction among the various actors on the ground should be improved and streamlined, with OCHA as the main coordinator.

71. His delegation urged Governments and other parties in complex emergency situations to do their utmost to provide safe and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance for people in need, ensure the safe return of refugees and internally displaced persons in accordance with international standards, and allow aid workers to perform their crucial tasks efficiently, effectively and securely. Early and durable solutions must be found to deal with crises of internal displacement.

72. His delegation would welcome additional information on the difficulties encountered so far in applying special administrative rules and procedures in emergencies, and on the recommendation to create an international convention on deployment and utilization of urban search and rescue teams. Since information and communication technology could be of great assistance in disaster response, all States should cooperate to establish communication facilities, to share geographic data that could be used in emergency operations, and to ensure the standardization or complementarity of equipment.

73. Important progress had been made in developing a more holistic and strategic response to natural disasters and complex emergencies, but stronger political will was needed to provide the necessary humanitarian support, and measures should be taken to heighten international awareness of humanitarian principles. His Government would remain resolutely dedicated to the promotion of humanitarian assistance.

74. **Ms. Trone** (Observer for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the interface between population and development and humanitarian assistance had been recognized for some time. Emergency situations posed particular dangers to women, especially during pregnancy, childbirth or post-partum recovery, and they exposed women and adolescents to much greater risks of sexual exploitation, abuse and violence. Displacement owing to conflict or natural disaster contributed directly to the transmission of HIV/AIDS. UNFPA was concerned that those needs should be addressed with the same levels of priority as other aspects of emergency relief.

75. UNFPA had worked since 1994 in collaboration with national and international bodies to provide support to programme countries facing crises, and it had been an active advocate for women and youth in emergency situations. It had collaborated in the first demographic and health survey in Kosovo, the production of a Field Manual on Reproductive Health in Refugee Situations and the creation of reproductive health kits for emergency situations. It was currently involved in an advocacy programme to sensitize United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and Governments to the specific reproductive health and other needs of women during emergencies. It was also about to begin, in collaboration with other bodies, a training programme for field staff responsible for reproductive health in crisis situations.

76. The Fund’s experience in data collection, analysis and use was now actively applied in emergency needs assessments led by OCHA. In all such operations, UNFPA was guided by its specific mandate to provide people with reproductive health care in whatever situation they found themselves and to help Governments and agencies maintain or rehabilitate statistical bases needed for development planning. In the area of complex emergencies, UNFPA had developed regional and country projects in collaboration with other agencies, such as a reproductive health programme for refugees in the

United Republic of Tanzania and a sexual health awareness programme in Angola.

77. In 1999, the response to the Kosovo donor alert had allowed UNFPA to assist refugee populations in Albania and The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in many ways including the provision of reproductive health kits. UNFPA was, however, concerned that women in crisis situations often did not have access to even basic protection, health and social services and that women's and young people's needs were sometimes not given the attention they deserved by the media and the international community.

78. She hoped that the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) would continue to evolve into a practical tool for obtaining the resources needed in humanitarian crises, particularly in respect of reproductive health. She also welcomed improvements in inter-agency coordination and response and the continuing reflection on the role of OCHA.

79. UNFPA was committed to playing its role in the international community and participating in the coordination of system-wide efforts to serve the vulnerable and often forgotten people in all communities in crisis.

80. **Ms. de Lacy** (Observer for Australia) said that Australia had been a consistent advocate for coordinated response by the international community to humanitarian crises and disasters. Her delegation noted with concern that the scale and complexity of emergencies had increased in recent years, placing considerable pressure on humanitarian organizations and further highlighting the need for effective coordination. Her delegation welcomed the important role played by OCHA during the 1999 crisis in East Timor, which demonstrated the advantages of collaborative responses. However, there remained significant scope for improvement and the ongoing review of the Consolidated Appeal Process (CAP) would be pivotal in that regard.

81. There was a need for effective allocation of resources between humanitarian and disaster relief and long-term reconstruction efforts as a means of stemming continued refugee flows. Australia was actively involved in the conflict prevention and post-conflict reconstruction network, a useful forum for bilateral donors and multilateral agencies in the critical transition period.

82. The past year had seen increased focus and dialogue on the subject of internally displaced persons, and she welcomed efforts to improve the coordination and delivery of programmes in that area. Her delegation remained concerned that the needs of the internally displaced were not being met as effectively as possible. Sovereignty issues made it a sensitive subject; however, the millions of people displaced each year by disasters, violence and armed conflict deserved effective and timely assistance irrespective of whether they crossed international borders. Although the responsibility for assisting displaced people rested primarily with national Governments, it must be recognized that civil authorities were often unable to cope, and in other cases there might be no effective civil authority in place. The international community, including Governments, international agencies and non-governmental organizations must work together more effectively to meet that growing challenge. She welcomed the reviews being undertaken to ensure clearer lines of responsibility and accountability within the United Nations system in dealing with internal displacement and the increased commitment by a number of agencies to responding effectively to the needs of internally displaced persons. However, it was important that that work should not overburden the agencies or jeopardize their core work.

83. **Mr. Aguzzi** (Venezuela) said that emergencies caused by natural phenomena had increased recently, both in number and in magnitude. They included the worst flood disaster that had occurred in Venezuela in many years, in terms of loss of life and economic damage. Thousands had died, many more had disappeared, and thousands had lost their homes and belongings. His delegation was most grateful to the international community, which had responded with messages of solidarity and material and human support, contributing to the efforts of the national Government.

84. A number of lessons had been learned from those events. In order to improve the disaster management system, the authorities had set up a team of experts who would take a scientific, multidisciplinary and integrated approach to designing risk-management strategies. The Government was aware that social vulnerability factors must be incorporated into risk assessment; that effective and efficient scientific and technological alternatives must be explored, with participation by the communities concerned; that risk management must focus on prevention and mitigation

measures; that the relevant State bodies must be provided with appropriate technology; and that greater emphasis should be placed on promoting a culture of prevention among policy makers at the national, regional and local levels.

85. In Venezuela, following the rescue and assistance phase of the disaster, the authorities had immediately begun seeking long-term solutions for resettling the affected population, in some cases within the devastated areas. Rehabilitation and reconstruction work had included the implantation of risk-mitigation technology. The Government had adopted a coordinated and coherent plan of action. Various public bodies, including human rights bodies, were working together to guarantee the safety of the affected population and improve their quality of life.

86. His delegation welcomed the current efforts to coordinate humanitarian responses in emergency situations, but much remained to be done in order to achieve effective and efficient coordination, and a single model could not be used for crises of different types; each situation had its own characteristics in terms of cause, environment and other factors. That did not detract from the need to take a global and integrated approach to humanitarian emergencies; coordination and adaptability were not mutually exclusive but complementary.

87. As for internally displaced persons, although the affected State bore the primary responsibility for assisting its nationals, the international community also had a major role to play. Timely and effective international assistance could mitigate the sufferings of displaced people, facilitate their reintegration and ensure that they did not have to seek refuge in other countries, which in itself would lead to additional critical situations. It was also the State's duty to ensure that internally displaced people benefited from appropriate legal, social and economic conditions on an equal footing with the rest of the population, while it sought permanent solutions for relocating them in their places of origin or other areas of the same country.

88. **Mr. Gospodinov** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that IFRC had recently launched its Annual World Disasters Report 2000, a sad catalogue of major human tragedies. In 1999, 623 disasters had affected the lives of over 212 million people worldwide, and damage

caused by natural disasters had exceeded \$72 billion. Asia had borne the biggest share of that burden with over \$41 billion in damage, followed by Europe with losses of \$17.2 billion.

89. The figures did not always show the whole picture. In 1999 the world had lost 80 thousand people killed by earthquakes, floods or droughts; 13 million had died from preventable diseases, however, and most of them could have been saved at a cost of only \$5 per person. The 1999 death toll from infectious diseases was 160 times greater than the number killed in natural disasters such as the earthquakes in Turkey, floods in Venezuela and cyclones in India, and the situation was getting worse. The IFRC was deeply concerned that a steady decline in health spending was becoming a lethal tradition in many countries.

90. Fourteen years after the nuclear disaster at Chernobyl, nearly 3 million people lived under constant stress, wondering what would happen to them and to their children in the coming decades. Thousands had already died, and many more would do so if funding patterns were not changed. While donors were still interested in sealing the sarcophagus at Chernobyl, there was no money for medical treatment. By using only 5 per cent of the money being spent on the sarcophagus, many of the people affected could be saved. He was very grateful to OCHA and the Emergency Relief Coordinator for their continuous efforts to assist the victims of the Chernobyl disaster.

91. Much more attention must be paid to those forgotten disasters that continued to kill silently out of sight of the television cameras. IFRC would do its utmost to assist the victims, but stronger support was needed from Governments and much more must be spent on fighting preventable diseases. The time had come to combine the power of humanity with the power of technology, boosting the experience of humanitarian players with the scientific and economic might of private companies; the first steps were already being taken by the telecommunications corporation Ericsson, OCHA and IFRC.

92. The international community should consider a legal void that needed to be filled. Since 1945, an estimated 150 million people had died from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, compared with 23 million killed in wars; and yet there was still not the same level of internationally accepted legal protection for victims of natural and technological disasters and preventable

diseases as for victims of military conflicts. An international law on disaster response was needed. Humanitarian aid in times of natural and technological disasters was a basic human right, not just an act of mercy.

93. **Mr. Obasi** (Observer for the World Meteorological Organization (WMO)) said that the international community should not continue to depend solely on disaster relief. Continually improving early-warning capabilities and preparedness measures provided the tools to prevent extreme weather-related events from turning into major social and economic disasters. The recent series of catastrophic events was a reminder of the need to ensure timely warnings.

94. Advances in prediction and warning systems had proved their usefulness in a number of countries. In Bangladesh, for example, cyclones had caused 300,000 deaths in 1971, 13,000 in 1991 and 200 in 1994. The considerable decrease in the loss of life was due largely to the availability of early warnings to the inhabitants.

95. WMO was firmly committed to the objectives of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (ISDR) and to the goal of enabling vulnerable communities to become resilient to natural disasters by integrating risk prevention strategies into sustainable development activities. Active participation by the relevant United Nations agencies within the framework of the Inter-Agency Task Force for Disaster Reduction was essential to ensure the success of ISDR. The inter-agency ISDR secretariat should be adequately staffed to ensure that it could discharge its responsibilities. He regretted that the Director of the ISDR secretariat would soon relinquish his post, and he hoped that all necessary actions would be taken to ensure his early replacement.

96. There must be adequate consultation among the agencies involved in the implementation of ISDR and with the Member States concerned and periodic progress reports on the status of implementation. WMO would continue to strongly support ISDR activities; it had already accepted the role of lead agency for the ad hoc group on El Niño, climate variability and change and would make its expertise available to the ad hoc group on early warning.

97. The Council should ensure that adequate recognition was given to warning in disaster reduction as an essential preventive measure to reduce considerable requirements for relief and rehabilitation.

### **Non-governmental organizations**

98. **The President** invited the Council to begin its consideration of agenda item 12, entitled "Non-governmental organizations" in order to take action on an oral decision entitled "Resumed 2000 session of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations". The draft decision read as follows: "The Economic and Social Council decides to authorize the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations to hold a resumed 2000 session for a half day on Friday, 21 July 2000, to consider replies received from the non-governmental organizations whose consultative status was recommended for suspension."

99. *The oral draft decision was adopted.*

*The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.*