



Economic and Social Council

Provisional

4 January 2001

Original: English

Resumed substantive session for 2000

Provisional summary record of the 47th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 30 October 2000, at 10 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia)

Contents

Meeting with the Executive Heads of the Rome-based agencies on the theme
“Eliminating Hunger in the New Millennium”

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza.

00-71674 (E)



The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Meeting with the Executive Heads of the Rome-based agencies on the theme “Eliminating Hunger in the New Millennium”

1. **The President**, noting that that was the first time the Council had ever held a meeting with the Executive Heads of the three specialized agencies based in Rome, said that the intention was to build on the successful pattern of dialogues held between the Council and the Bretton Woods institutions and to ensure regular exchanges with the heads of specialized agencies on specific themes.

2. He recalled that at the recent Millennium Summit heads of State and Government had undertaken to reduce by half the proportion of people suffering from hunger by 2015, and to take special measures to tackle the problem in Africa. The main underlying cause of hunger was the failure to achieve sustainable, people-centred development. Eliminating hunger posed an enormous challenge and would require not only improvements in agriculture, expansion of markets and good governance but also renewed solidarity and coordination on the part of the international community.

3. **Mr. Holkeri** (President of the General Assembly) said that hunger was an expression of the unequal distribution of resources. The poorest one fifth of the world’s population received only about 1 per cent of global income, while the richest one fifth received 86 per cent. The wealthiest 5 per cent accounted for some 45 per cent of meat and fish consumption. Women produced most of the food in the world, but ate the least. Women in rural areas were the most disadvantaged in that respect. While the proportion of people who were hungry had decreased in the past 50 years, the absolute number of hungry people had increased. The goal of eradicating hunger and undernourishment had been set by the World Food Congress back in 1963 and had been reiterated at the World Food Summit in 1996. The eradication of hunger was an issue of political commitment.

4. Currently, world food production was reportedly sufficient to feed the world’s population but that might not always be the case. Growth of agricultural crop and livestock production in the developing countries was slowing and worldwide fishing catch had declined. That might be attributable, in part, to the regional

effects of El Niño, but it could also indicate that production had peaked. Millions of Africans would require food assistance in 2000 and 2001 owing either to droughts and floods or to long-standing conflicts and civil strife. From 1990 to 1997, the 12 countries most affected by conflict had experienced primary production losses of some 40 per cent, and their infrastructure, transport and distribution systems had been severely damaged or disrupted.

5. In times of economic growth more people were able to buy food. While the African economy had on the whole grown by 3.1 to 3.4 per cent in recent years, it would have to grow twice as fast if significant headway were to be made in alleviating poverty and hunger. Many African countries were still very dependent on exports of raw materials and commodities, including agricultural goods, which were subject to price fluctuations. The World Food Summit Plan of Action of 1996 had focused on developing social safety nets, creating employment opportunities and increasing primary food production capacity. Within countries, inequities in food availability could be mitigated by suitably designed economic policies and the promotion of rural development that fully utilized local social capital, rather than relying on direct State intervention. To be successful, that would require a healthy and transparent relationship between the State and local Governments, as local ownership of the process would be vital.

6. World food insecurity was attributable in part to the inability of rural consumers to support small-holder farms. Production at such farms was frequently hampered by a lack of investment. While microcredits had helped the poor in certain situations, most recipients were not farmers, but families with small, income-generating businesses such as cottage industries, and microcredits could, if poorly implemented, worsen the lot of the poor by leaving them in debt.

7. **Ms. Fréchette** (Deputy Secretary-General) said that hunger was not simply a sectoral concern, but rather an issue of central political, social and moral import. The fight against hunger must be fought on a broad front. Over 800 million people went hungry every day including one in three in sub-Saharan Africa. Losses in productivity and health problems made hunger not just an individual tragedy, but an economic handicap for entire communities, and indeed nations. Eradicating hunger was therefore a key element in the

effort of the United Nations to promote lasting peace and sustainable development, and one which had received support at the Millennium Summit.

8. The current meeting rightly focused on the special needs of Africa, and especially those areas where drought was undermining food security. It would make a useful contribution to the high-level segment of the Council's next substantive session, which would focus on sustainable development on that continent. It could help build a strong consensus on ways to address inequity and to wage an all-out war on hunger, and could also help forge new partnerships among United Nations agencies, Governments, civil society and private enterprise that would be needed to ensure success.

9. **Mr. Diouf** (Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that the subject under discussion, "Eliminating Hunger in the New Millennium", was a matter of life and death for millions of people. The immediate objective set in 1996 by the World Food Summit of halving the number of undernourished people by 2015 was far from being reached; some 826 million people — 792 million of whom lived in the developing world — remained chronically undernourished. While South Asia had the largest number of undernourished people, the proportion of the population affected was highest in sub-Saharan Africa, where the absolute number was already twice as high as 30 years before. Clearly, large-scale action was urgently required.

10. The three Rome-based agencies shared a common goal, and had distinct but complementary mandates. They regularly coordinated their activities at all levels at headquarters and in the field through the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) network and the resident coordinator system, and cooperated among themselves and with other bodies to improve food security. For example, FAO worked with IFAD to help member countries prepare investment projects and with WFP to assess emergency food needs.

11. FAO raised awareness of current and long-term issues and ensured that the Governments of developing countries were well-informed so that they could participate in multilateral trade negotiations on agriculture, which were of crucial importance. Its Committee on World Food Security monitored progress in the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan

of Action, and submitted regular reports to the Economic and Social Council. The Codex Alimentarius programme implemented by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO) established food safety standards, and FAO assisted developing countries, those in transition and regional economic associations in drawing up agricultural development and food security strategies. The FAO Special Programme for Food Security was demonstrating in over 60 low-income, food-deficit countries ways to incorporate simple but sustainable changes in technology which increased production, incomes and access to food.

12. Some 70 per cent of people suffering from food insecurity lived in rural areas. Agricultural development was thus crucial to the eradication of the problem. That was particularly true in the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, which were greatly dependent on agriculture. Moreover, while food insecurity and poverty were growing fastest in the towns, those problems were nurtured by rural deprivation. Rural development was the proactive answer to excessive rural-urban migration.

13. Yet agricultural and rural development were not being given the priority they deserved. Investment was insufficient, and external transfers towards agricultural development were declining. The FAO Special Programme for Food Security must be given increased financial support. In the context of globalization, trade and finance must contribute to food security and poverty alleviation. It was especially important to reverse the downward trend in investment for food security in areas where the number of food emergencies seemed to be increasing. Relief efforts must be accompanied by long-term investments for food production and distribution capable of kick-starting rehabilitation and development. Such strategies played an important role in preventing food emergencies, including those caused by conflict. The importance of achieving lasting food security must be recognized by the entire United Nations system. The role of the Economic and Social Council was essential in that endeavour.

14. *A video showing the activities of FAO in the Horn of Africa was projected.*

15. **Mr. Al-Sultan** (President, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)) said that, on the basis of its experience, IFAD had come to the conclusion that the rural poor held the key to a world

free of hunger, and that the collective role of the institutions concerned was to unleash that potential by focusing more official development assistance (ODA) on rural poverty, by empowering the poor to seize opportunities, by improving their access to productive assets, pro-poor technology and markets, and by addressing the devastating impact of AIDS in Africa and around the world.

16. While progress had been made in the fight against hunger, in the past decade progress in agricultural production had stalled. One alarming symptom of the problem in Africa was the prevalence of underweight pre-school children. Whereas that prevalence was set to decline in developing countries overall by 2005, in Africa it was expected to increase by nearly 3 per cent. That projection was unacceptable. Progress against hunger in Africa and worldwide could be restored by refocusing resources, policies and projects on the areas where they had the most impact, and those were the rural areas.

17. Some 60 per cent of those who were undernourished were rural people living in environmentally sensitive areas with low agricultural productivity. Given the high correlation between hunger and poverty, it was necessary to focus on the areas where the bulk of the poor lived; nearly 75 per cent of the really poor lived in the rural areas. Because the rural and urban poor both relied on food staples, addressing rural poverty could have security benefits that were felt well beyond the rural areas and it could also speed up economic growth which was the key ingredient for success. Investments in rural areas could reduce vulnerability to droughts and disasters which often triggered food crises. Investments in rural and agricultural development were also vital to preparing farmers to meet the food needs of future generations.

18. Soil fertility, already low in many parts of the world, was declining. An area the size of Ireland was lost every year to desertification. It was a particular threat to food security in Africa, where most people earned their living from subsistence agriculture and pastoralism and where 73 per cent of all drylands were affected by desertification. It was necessary to invest in Africa's smallholder farmers in order to preserve the fragile soil upon which food production depended. However, while all areas of development had felt the effects of declining ODA resources, aid to agriculture had particularly suffered. In real terms it had fallen by almost 50 per cent between 1986 and 1996. That trend

must be reversed. One option for channelling more resources towards areas of crucial importance for hunger alleviation was debt relief, and in that connection he acknowledged the generous initiative of the Government of Italy to exchange debt owed to Italy into local funds which, with the support of IFAD, FAO and WFP, were to be used for poverty alleviation, social services and environmental protection.

19. Renewed resources must be accompanied by policies and projects that empowered the rural poor. The latter must participate in project design and implementation. Rather than telling the rural poor what they should have, institutions should respond to what they determined that they needed. More than 90 per cent of IFAD's programmes now had participatory elements, and it was clear that such demand-driven projects were more likely to meet real needs and provide real support.

20. Despite the critical role they played in feeding their families, women did not enjoy equal access to productive assets. Gender approaches must be mainstreamed into development interventions. IFAD was proud to be working with the WFP and FAO, and other intergovernmental and civil society organizations, to empower poor women and men through the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty.

21. In many developing countries, access to land, water, credit and savings was the only way to develop sustainable livelihoods. The Global Mechanism of the United Nations Convention on desertification was vital in ensuring that the rural poor in drylands were able to preserve their resources and ensure that they and their children had access to land and water resources in the future. He urged all countries to ensure that adequate resources were available to achieve the Convention's objectives.

22. Technology could play a role in increasing the benefits which the poor received from assets provided that it addressed their needs. Rarely did private research address the staple crops upon which the poor relied. The rural poor must be helped to define, shape and articulate their own demand for technology, and be empowered to use it to the full. Investment in building human capacity was essential.

23. The rural poor must also have opportunities to market their products. In order for the poorer countries to take part in the international trade system it was necessary to negotiate for more open markets, to call

for special terms for developing country applicants, at least for an interim period, to give them time to raise their production to international levels and then to compete fairly, and to promote market integration among developing countries.

24. Poverty and hunger could not be addressed without referring to AIDS, which was devastating farm households which relied on physical labour. In Africa alone, there were 1,700 new infections of AIDS every day. The death of an adult also led to a loss of the income needed to buy agricultural inputs, tools and essential foodstuffs. More needed to be done to strengthen the ability of communities and families to cope with the effects of AIDS.

25. Ending hunger was an ambitious goal; it would only be achieved through partnership. Each element in the United Nations system had its own role to play and its own unique contribution to make. IFAD's comparative advantage stemmed from its role as the only United Nations institution that focused exclusively on hunger and poverty in rural communities.

26. **Ms. Bertini** (Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)) said that ending hunger worldwide required both long- and short-term solutions. The cost of dealing with hunger was minimal when compared to the benefits. The single most important factor in ending hunger worldwide was women, for it was they who grew, shopped for and prepared the food and they who fetched the water. As had been pointed out, though women grew most of the food in the world, they ate the least of it, because they fed their husbands and their children first, and only if there was food left did they feed themselves. A woman who did not have enough to eat when she was pregnant gave birth to a smaller baby which was more susceptible to disease and more likely to die of it. A breastfeeding mother who was hungry did not produce enough milk for her child.

27. According to FAO, 80 per cent of the farmers in Africa were women, and nothing was more important for those seeking to end hunger than to talk to women in order to find out what they needed. Women in developing countries frequently asked to be given the opportunity to grow food, and they always pointed out that when food came into the household it was they who controlled it, whereas if cash came into the household it was the man's job to control it. The longer-term benefit of investing in and supporting

women derived from the fact that women were the fabric of life in their communities. If they were more educated then they made different decisions about their lives: with basic education they had more job opportunities, they often decided to have fewer children, and they were more able to participate in the economic opportunities that came their way. Efforts must be made to ensure that girls, as well as boys, had the energy to go to school. When children were fed at school, attendance rates soared and the time children spent in school increased. Food could be used as a way of getting girls to attend school and to stay in school; where girls were given a can of cooking oil after they had been at school for one month, they tended to stay in school for another month.

28. The work of involving women, on which the three Rome-based agencies were working closely together, went beyond mainstreaming. It was the only way to end hunger worldwide. If women were involved as beneficiaries, participants and decision makers, it would be women who would carry the world towards the ending of hunger.

29. **Mr. Francese** (Italy) said that every opportunity should be taken to emphasize the fact that the fight against hunger and the promotion of sustainable development in rural areas should be at the core of any integrated strategy to eradicate poverty. Achievement of the World Food Summit objectives depended on greater coordination and cooperation within the United Nations system and the creation of a global partnership. He wished to know what progress had so far been made to enhance cooperation between the three Rome-based agencies, especially at field level and in the context of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF). In particular, he wondered whether IFAD had tested any new forms of collaboration with civil society and the private sector, and how FAO intended to contribute to the United Nations initiatives to benefit developing countries' plans for 2001, specifically with regard to the high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development and the Third United Nations Conference on Least Developed Countries.

30. His delegation agreed with the analysis made by the Director General of FAO regarding the obstacles that existed to food security. It endorsed his appeal for an increase in funding for the FAO Special Programme on Food Security and asked for more information about the growing number of cases in which developing

countries financed implementation of the Special Programme with their own funds.

31. Finally, noting that Italy supported the work of WFP in the Horn of Africa, he asked the Executive Director whether that work might be a part of an integrated approach which paid equal attention to economic, political, humanitarian, military and regional aspects. In Italy's view the complex situation in the region required an integrated approach that went beyond national perspectives, and solution of the region's problems lay in effective regional cooperation.

32. **Mr. Mutaboba** (Rwanda) agreed with Ms. Bertini that it had been a mistake to exclude women and asked how women and the relevant United Nations agencies could now be empowered to address the issue of food security more effectively, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. He also wondered whether the Council or the Rome-based agencies could convince donors who provided short-term emergency relief to make long-term investments in the agricultural sector. He also suggested that a more active exchange of experiences would be beneficial. Lastly, he commented that Ethiopia and other countries in the Horn of Africa had very fertile land but lacked the proper technology to exploit it fully.

33. **Mr. Tomasi** (France) agreed that the international community was not according sufficient priority to agricultural development, particularly since some 70 per cent of the population of developing countries lived in rural areas and agriculture was central to those countries' gross domestic product, balance of trade and employment patterns. He was struck that the economic and social debates at United Nations Headquarters focused more on macroeconomic issues than on sectoral policy issues; the one sectoral issue which had been discussed had been industrial development rather than agriculture. He wondered whether the visibility of the activities of the Rome-based agencies could be increased through the forthcoming high-level international intergovernmental consideration of financing for development or the Third United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries, and asked whether the three heads of the Rome-based agencies could establish the linkage and complementarity between long-term and short-term emergency assistance.

34. **Mr. Khare** (India) said that, since the increase in its food production in the mid-1960s (Green

Revolution), India had not known famine or any type of food emergency that had required international assistance. The cornerstone of its success had been empowerment of agricultural producers. At the same time, greater community participation had led to increased yields that would guard against future deficiencies in micronutrients and protein. He believed that biotechnology must be tailored to the needs of developing countries, particularly the most impoverished segments of the population, and that it must be used safely. In that context, he wondered whether FAO would be taking further action to promote the development of new varieties of products to ensure against nutritional or protein deficiency and to promote the transfer of technology to developing countries.

35. As had been repeatedly pointed out, the agricultural trade of low-income countries was completely destroyed by the domestic subsidies offered in many developed countries, and by a tendency to commercialize agriculture, to the detriment of the poor and vulnerable who required targeted action, subsidies and food assistance. He enquired about the position the Rome-based agencies would take in the agricultural negotiations of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Lastly, he would appreciate information on the efforts of WFP to promote healthy diets which would obviate the need for children to take dietary supplements.

36. **Mr. Mbayu** (Cameroon) asked whether the Council had a role to play in enhancing coordination of food security initiatives and what specific action it could take. He wondered what precautions WFP would take in order to ensure that emergency food relief did not alter the diets of its recipients in a manner that was unsustainable, or create imbalances or inflate prices in transferring excess food from one country to another. Lastly, he hoped that the emphasis on emergency food deliveries to post-conflict areas was not marginalizing those countries which were not engaged in conflict and enquired how a stronger food base could contribute to conflict prevention.

37. **Mr. Binswanger** (World Bank) noted that, ironically, most impoverished and hungry people lived in the rural areas where food was grown. Since the World Food Summit held three years earlier, there was a general consensus that rural growth was dependent on agricultural growth, since even non-farm sectors in the rural areas were closely tied to agriculture; that the means to ensure rural growth was through the

empowerment of communities, decentralization, participation and an increased role for women; and that there must be an appropriate mix of safety net interventions with sustainable growth initiatives. There was also general agreement on the need for favourable agricultural policies and developing country access to the markets of States members of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) which were crucial to agricultural growth; investment in infrastructure, health and education; appropriate coordination at the national, subregional and global levels and partnerships, such as the one among the World Bank, FAO and IFAD. Since country-driven development was now central to the work of many donor countries and institutions, including the World Bank, significant additional resources were expected to be available for community programmes in rural areas.

38. The World Bank had reformed its procedures in order to channel resources more easily to communities for low-cost water, harvesting and irrigation projects eligible for funding from the FAO Special Programme for Food Security. The World Bank was the chief donor for agricultural research and extension programmes, which were increasingly demand-driven and decentralized and might include, for example, proposals by producer organizations. The World Bank continued to be a major force for the regional integration of agricultural marketing and agricultural policy reforms. The President of the World Bank, was calling for the opening of OECD markets to the developing world.

39. Despite the consensus about what needed to be done, however, official development assistance for agriculture had been sharply declining and it was difficult even to maintain funding for the international agricultural research system. Governments were not reallocating resources to compensate for the decrease in funding nor even requesting major support for agriculture and elimination of hunger. The budget and staffing resources of the major agencies involved in agricultural development, such as FAO, IFAD and the World Bank, had shrunk. In the case of the World Bank, that decrease had been 30 per cent in the three years since the World Food Summit; as a result, the Bank had been unable even to provide assistance to the Horn of Africa.

40. He therefore welcomed the Council's initiative to consider hunger, including the role of agriculture and hoped that it would attract support from the major

donors. Coordination must also be enhanced at the country level within the FAO theme groups. The World Bank, FAO and others could help reform funding mechanisms for the international agricultural research system.

41. **Mr. Le Hoai Trung** (Viet Nam) said that his delegation welcomed the establishment of the Popular Coalition to Eradicate Hunger and Poverty and had been impressed by the reports of the specialized agencies on their efforts in that area. His country had enjoyed excellent cooperation with the Rome-based agencies. In the past decade, it had become the second largest exporter of rice and other agricultural resources. The agencies might consider Viet Nam and other countries in their future strategies for consolidating gains and ensuring their sustainability, since Viet Nam and many countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America were still subject to unprecedented crises and, in some cases, the effects of economic transition.

42. He called for enhancing technical cooperation among developing countries, which could be extremely beneficial. Viet Nam, for example, had benefited from African technicians' expertise in cotton growing. Lastly, he wished to thank FAO for its trilateral cooperation arrangement with his country and a number of African countries.

43. **Mr. Eldahry** (Saudi Arabia) inquired about efforts to improve techniques of water source management, which was the core of agricultural, particularly food, production. Noting that some sub-Saharan African countries spent less than 2 per cent of government resources on water source management, he wondered how governmental capacity with regard to water supply and resource management could be strengthened.

44. **Mr. Shen Guofang** (China) said that 800 million people were victims of hunger in the contemporary world, 70 per cent of them in rural areas. In geographical terms, the largest undernourished population was in Africa. Poverty brought on by conflict had seriously hampered Africa's economic development, and as a result, distorted the world economic balance.

45. China had recently sponsored a China-Africa Forum on Hunger at the ministerial level, whose outcomes included regular training for African agricultural personnel in order to help them develop small hydropower stations and assistance in digging

deep wells in drought areas as a solution to irrigation problems. China had cancelled the debt of the African countries and provided additional financial support, mainly for food production. Detailed plans had been elaborated at the Forum and arrangements had been made for joint monitoring of food production projects by China and African countries.

46. In the past 20 years, a miracle had been worked in China, the developing country with the largest population in the world: the Government had been able to ensure that 200 million people in the rural areas had food and clothing. In the process, it had accumulated useful experience which it would be pleased to share with other countries through symposiums like the China-Africa Forum. Beyond that, however, financial support was necessary for the development of the food processing industries of developing countries, and in order to afford them wider market access. One effective tool to that end was microcredit, which had been successfully used in China and many other parts of the world. In the China-Africa programme, microcredit would be used to train agricultural personnel, carry out research and development, improve farming technology, build hydropower stations in order to resolve irrigation problems and help impoverished areas establish relations with coastal regions in order to gain access to markets for agricultural production. He wished to know whether the Rome-based agencies had any new ideas or suggestions concerning microcredit and how they viewed it.

47. **Mr. Diouf** (Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization), replying to the question from the representative of Italy about cooperation at field level, said that, following the World Food Summit, ACC had established a committee consisting of representatives of all United Nations agencies and the Bretton Woods institutions in the different member countries. Its task was inter alia to ensure follow-up of both the Rome Declaration and the Plan of Action, to work with the resident coordinator in any given country, to establish activities of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and to monitor progress at the local level, focusing on food insecurity and vulnerability information. With regard to current initiatives, the input of the different United Nations system partners to the high-level intergovernmental event on financing for development and the United Nations Conference on the Least

Developed Countries had been discussed at a recent ACC meeting. The Special Programme for Food Security, which worked directly with the rural poor, was now operating in 61 countries around the world. Developing countries had contributed 70 million out of 170 million dollars, and if the South-South cooperation had been evaluated using the normal costs on the international market, the contribution from the developing countries would have been even greater.

48. Replying to the question from the representative of Rwanda, he said that it was certainly a great challenge to convince different partners to invest in agriculture. Yet the food problem had to be solved first, and in a sustainable way. Otherwise, assistance in other areas such as education, health, the right to vote, or freedom of expression was of no value.

49. With regard to technology and the exchange of information, the FAO web site offered all the experience of the SPFS and in particular its success stories relating to water resource management, crop productivity, and diversification into animal production, fisheries and aquaculture. Those stories were aimed at government policy makers, workers in extension services and researchers, to help them design programmes for the rural poor. In response to the comment from the representative of France concerning the linkage between short- and long-term activities, he said that FAO was working with its partners in WFP and IFAD, as well as with the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, to ensure a continuum of activities in problem areas. Once an emergency relief programme was initiated, they would proceed to planning for medium and long-term needs and would then work more directly with their financial partners.

50. The representative of India had commented on the role of FAO in promoting the transfer of technology. FAO worked very closely with the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research and recently had decided to host the secretariat of the international agricultural research system in FAO. In countries where there were national centres of agricultural research, FAO ensured that there was an exchange of experiences between the organization and those centres.

51. In connection with agricultural trade, FAO had set up a web site focusing on the issue of agricultural trade and the Marrakech Agreement and, together with its partners, had launched a training programme for

future participants in the trade negotiations for people from developing countries or countries with transitional economies.

52. Replying to the question of the representative of Cameroon about the Council's role in policy coordination for the Rome-based agencies, he said that those agencies should be responsible for such coordination, as their governing bodies usually consisted of the same representatives. However, the Council could ensure adequate interface between the Rome-based agencies and the rest of the development community and ensure that the fundamental problems of poverty as identified by the Millennium Summit and the World Food Summit would be a priority in policy orientation and in debate.

53. In connection with official development assistance and the needs of the developing countries, and in relation to the share going to agriculture, FAO was trying to maintain a balance between post-conflict and other activities in the Special Programme for Food Security. In the Horn of Africa, there was water management on only 1 per cent of the arable land, and the rest was dependent on the vagaries of the climate. In the whole of the African continent, the corresponding figure was 7 per cent, compared to 38 per cent in Asia, and 50 per cent in China. There could be no green revolution in Africa until there was more water management.

54. Noting that Viet Nam and China had been among the first countries to support South-South cooperation, he said that Viet Nam had just agreed to provide up to 100 experts and technicians per country in three African countries and one Asian country. China would be providing 1,000 people, and India 800, and other developing countries were also contributing. The experts would cost only 600-700 dollars per month instead of the usual 12,000-15,000 dollars per month paid for international experts. He noted that China was feeding 22 per cent of the world's population on only 7 per cent of the arable land, as well as contributing generously to South-South cooperation with Africa.

55. **Mr. Rahmtalla** (Sudan) welcomed the news that famine had been averted in the Horn of Africa, and that food security issues were being addressed. He asked what role the inter-agency task force envisaged for the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in the matter. His country would be hosting the IGAD Summit in November, and the participating Heads of

States and Government should at least be aware of the latest developments.

56. **Mr. Kelly** (United Kingdom) said that his country, as a firm supporter of the work of the three Rome-based agencies, was currently working to help them develop more focused programmes and policies. It was important that the Council be aware of the challenges that the United Nations agencies were facing in their work and of the very good job that the agency heads were doing. Closer cooperation at field level, where appropriate, would give added value to their work. Council members could keep closely involved in that work through their missions to the Rome-based agencies.

57. As FAO had only modest financial resources, the decline in resources available for agriculture made it very important to consider other donors, as well as how those resources might be best applied. He noted the reference made to innovative funding mechanisms and noted with interest the comments made by the representative of the World Bank. He wondered how the heads of the agencies saw those innovative mechanisms taking shape, and what their views were. How did they see the World Bank becoming re-engaged in the sector?

58. **Mr. Al-Sultan** (President, International Fund for Agricultural Development), in response to the question about the Fund's work with communities and non-governmental organizations, said that the key word was participation: working with the communities, and group formation. The women's groups had proved the most productive, and were therefore the most significant in that regard.

59. There was a lot of work going on in terms of partnerships with the private sector for obtaining project inputs, and finding out how to bring better seeds and better know-how to the farmers. The private sector was also opening up in terms of markets. If farmers were producing date palm, investment by the private sector was needed to process that palm into oil. Markets could also be created. With purchases guaranteed by the private sector, a market could be set up and, within two or three years, be run entirely by the private sector. There were many innovative mechanisms that could be used for such partnerships.

60. Regarding the comment by the representative of Rwanda concerning working with donors, he said that although agency heads spend a lot of time talking to

donors, donor support in terms of ODA and in terms of investment in the agricultural sector continued to decline.

61. With regard to short- and long-term coordination, he said that all three agencies had been able to work together in a number of countries and produce a plan of action in which each one had a clear role. The short-term emergency needs would be covered by the agency best able to fulfil that role. Then the longer-term development aspects were considered, and other organizations such as the World Bank would be brought into the plan.

62. There was tremendous potential, particularly in African countries, for using technologies already available, but investment was essential. It had to be appropriate and safe technology that would meet the needs of the poorest, producing the types of crops that the poor people ate, and in the areas where they lived.

63. With regard to trade barriers and the poor, a key aspect was once again access to markets and making sure that there was a level playing-field for small farmers.

64. Finally, in relation to microcredit, IFAD had acquired considerable experience in that area and had learned about the many possible models around the world for microcredit organizations; there were now microcredit components in almost all IFAD projects. It was very important to support local initiatives. He stressed that the microcredit organization must reach the poorest people, must be sustainable, and most important of all, must be linked to current financial systems.

65. **Ms. Bertini** (Executive Director, World Food Programme), replying to the representative of India, said that dietary supplementation was becoming more and more important for the work of the Programme. It was critically important to ensure that the food provided was fortified with the necessary nutrients.

66. In response to the questions from the representative of Cameroon, she said that although WFP tried to be very sensitive about bringing in suitable food that would not create dependence on unsustainable products, there would occasionally be only one kind of food available. She noted that, in the Liberia/Sierra Leone region, due to the frequent thefts, the Programme had switched from rice to bulgur wheat

which, though equally valuable to the hungry, was less popular and therefore did not get stolen.

67. The World Food Programme was the largest procurer of food in Africa. All procurement took place by international tender, and thus did not interfere with the marketplace. Much of the food was purchased within the region; that supported the agricultural markets, cut down on transport costs, provided communities with familiar foods and usually ensured more rapid delivery.

68. Maintaining a balance when supporting countries in conflict was always a problem, particularly in long-term refugee situations, where the host communities often poor themselves, would ask why they were not receiving the same help as the refugees. There was no satisfactory solution to that problem.

69. Regarding the question raised by the representative of Italy concerning field coordination, she said that 50 of the 81 country offices of the World Food Programme had joint activities of some kind with FAO and IFAD. That same representative had asked about enhancing regional coordination in the Horn of Africa. Regional humanitarian coordination had worked extremely well. Now that there were other international entities involved, the Council might wish to give some direction on coordination.

70. Regarding the broader question concerning what the Council could do in relation to women she said that the agencies that reported to or through the Council could perhaps submit specific reports, stating the proportion of resources and programming devoted specifically to women. The Council could also make recommendations to beneficiary countries about what was expected. For instance, if eight out of ten farmers were women, then why were almost all the extension workers men? Nothing could be accomplished unless there were more women, especially in local governments and in extension work in agriculture.

71. Several representatives had asked about work with donors, which also related to the question from France about the relation between short- and long-term activities. All the agencies must do better at showing what a difference it made to invest over the longer term. During her visit to the Horn of Africa she had seen water purification projects that were run by Oxfam, a non-governmental organization. The health impact on the community was substantial, but the cost was minimal.

72. It was true that the World Food Programme had been fortunate that donors had been responsive to emergency needs. If donors could be equally responsive to requests for seeds by FAO, and requests for other basic inputs, over the long term less money would be needed for food contributions.

73. There had also been a question about what the Council could do to coordinate the agencies. She pointed out that only the WFP was required to report to the Council, but representatives who felt that the Council should play a role could find ways to use their influence to make sure that the entire United Nations system was doing everything that it could do to contribute to ending world hunger, and that all the beneficiary and donor countries were playing their part as well.

74. **Mr. Wales** (International Labour Organization), speaking on behalf of the Director-General of the International Labour Organization, and in response to the question from the representative of the Sudan, said that IGAD had been involved in the work of the task force from the very beginning.

75. **The President** drew attention to his summary of the day's discussions which had been circulated to participants. He expressed appreciation to the representatives of the Rome-based agencies for their participation, noting that the meeting had been a significant first step towards cooperation between those agencies and the Council.

The meeting rose at 1.20 p.m.