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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 21st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 10 July 2001, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. NIEHAUS (Costa Rica)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Belinya-Eboubou (Cameroon) Mr. Niehaus (Costa Rica),
Vice-President, took the Chair

The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

OPERATIONAL ACITIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (continued)

- (a) FOLLOW-UP TO POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE COUNCIL (continued) (E/2001/66)
- (b) REPORTS OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARDS OF THE UNITED NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME/UNITED NATIONS POPULATION FUND,
THE UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND AND THE WORLD FOOD
PROGRAMME (E/2001/10, E/2001/20, E/2001/34 (Part I), E/2001/47,
E/2001/L.12, DP/2001/11, DP/2001/23)
- (c) ECONOMIC AND TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES (TCDC/12/5)

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Interagency Affairs) said that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs was participating in the discussion of operational activities from three different perspectives: as the substantive secretariat of the Economic and Social Council and the entity responsible for the preparation of the triennial reviews of operational development activities in the United Nations system; as the United Nations representative in the Administrative Coordination Committee and other interagency forums where the preparation and the follow-up to those reviews were also pursued; and as a key operational development partner of the funds and programmes and operational agencies of the United Nations both at the global and country levels; his statement was primarily in the last-mentioned capacity.

A central element of the Secretary-General's reform programme in 1998 had been the merger into the Department of data-gathering and analysis capabilities, policy coordination and intergovernmental support responsibilities and technical cooperation capacities. Constant interaction among the tasks in those three areas gave the Department an exceptional comparative advantage in technical cooperation. Its ability progressively to deepen that integration would enable it specifically to achieve the objectives which the global conferences and the Millennium Declaration had identified as development and poverty eradication goals.

The operational activities of the Department were all relevant to the follow-up of those global conferences at the country level and the specific fields addressed by its technical cooperation activities all related to key components of national capacity building to further the goals of the Millennium Declaration. Those fields were population policies, research and training, collecting, analysing and disseminating statistics, poverty monitoring and assessments, social assessment tools and methods, formulating environmentally sustainable development policies, particularly in water and energy, formulating gender awareness policies, reforming the public sector and launching decentralization strategies.

The Department's technical cooperation programme thus occupied a central position in the United Nations system. In imparting new directions to the programme, the Department combined innovation with tradition, in both content and modalities; in other words, it was concerned to continue to practise the major technical cooperation principles which had always been those of the United Nations, while innovation was driven by globalization.

In order to help countries to seize the new opportunities of globalization and close the digital divide, the Department was endeavouring to exploit to the full the new information and communications technologies and strengthen interactions among all the technical cooperation fields it covered, so as to generate mutually reinforcing responses to the challenges of globalization and the complex interrelations it had brought about. That meant that those technologies were increasingly integrated into the objectives of its projects and advisory services and efficiently used by it to perform its technical cooperation activities. As examples, he referred to two population research projects, "Demoneta", covering West Africa, and "Demonetasia", covering Asia, and to "UNPAN", which related to public administration. The Department was currently launching a new online technical cooperation programme, "IntegraNet", which was designed to create a broad virtual network of policymakers and other stakeholders in an increasingly interdependent world in order to incorporate growth and equity in economic, social and environmental policies for the achievement of national development objectives.

The Department would duly take into consideration all the comments made by the members of the Council during the discussion they had had with the Secretariat heads of the main funds and programmes of the United Nations system and their dialogue with the country teams.

Ms. BARRINGTON (Observer for Ireland) noted that Mr. Civili had not mentioned “partnership”, although the Department surely had relations of that kind with other United Nations bodies, particularly at the financial level.

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Interagency Affairs) said that the pursuit of partnerships and their consolidation was central to the new directions the Department was giving to technical cooperation, at all levels, both within the Secretariat and with United Nations funds and programmes. The Department had appointed an adviser in Geneva with special responsibility for intensifying relations with the regional commissions. If he had not used the term “partnership”, it had been to give more weight to the idea of “integration.” As the Department moved along the road to integration, it would be in a better position to extend the method adopted to the system as a whole. A financial partnership naturally existed with UNDP, international donors, some government-financed funds, such as those of Italy and the Netherlands, and bilateral donors.

Mr. HIRATA (Japan) said his Government was convinced that South-South cooperation was one of the most effective ways of promoting development through the transfer of know-how and technology adapted to the economic, social and cultural conditions of the beneficiary country. Japan had been actively supporting that form of cooperation for many years, as the annual \$4.5 million envelope for UNDP projects showed. The Japanese Government’s programme of financial and technical assistance focused primarily on cooperation with Asia and Africa. In Kuala Lumpur in 1999, for instance, Japan had organized a meeting of 230 Asian and African entrepreneurs, in collaboration with Malaysia, enabling them to make business contacts and conclude contracts. Another meeting of the same kind was to be held in South Africa in 2001, made possible by a financial contribution of some \$1.5 million from his Government. Japan had also contributed to an Afro-Asian research project on the hybridization of varieties of rice from the two continents (NERICA project). The Japanese Government, with its \$3 million contribution, was the main donor to that project, which was intended to help small farmers improve their yield. The Japanese Government was firmly resolved to continue to contribute to the promotion of South-South cooperation and to the relevant activities of the United Nations system.

Mr. Cha Young CHEOL (Republic of Korea) welcomed the growth of interest in technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) and South-South cooperation, which were excellent means of encouraging the growth of developing countries and ensuring their genuine participation in the new international economic order. The revolution brought about by information and communications technologies had changed not only ways of life, but also forms of international cooperation in the areas of science and technology. His Government was convinced of the importance of developing human resources and had launched a number of cooperation initiatives with the countries of the South, in particular, technical training programmes, from which 1,400 interns from 116 countries had been able to benefit in 1999, exchanges of experts and various studies and research projects on development issues. In collaboration with UNDP, the Korean Government had also hosted a forum in Seoul in February 2000 on South-South cooperation in science and technology, one objective of which was to establish a technical cooperation network among developing countries.

Mr. BISHNOI (Observer for India) asked how the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the funds and programmes of the United Nations system shared technical cooperation tasks while ensuring that there was no duplication.

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Interagency Affairs) said that there was no overlapping of activities since the Department's role differed fundamentally from that of the United Nations funds and programmes; it rather resembled those of the specialized agencies, which each had its own sphere of competence. Some overlapping with UNDP probably existed, but the Department and the Programme were careful to be in constant contact to rule out any duplication of their capacity-strengthening activities. Generally speaking, the funds and programmes of the United Nations system took advantage of the Department's competence, in which they found some resources, but did not try to reproduce them in any way.

Ms. BA-N'DAW (Director, Special Unit for TCDC), introducing the report of the High-level Committee on Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC/12/5), said that the participants in the twelfth session of the Committee had welcomed the significant increase in the number of developing countries that were taking a lead role in designing, managing, financing and implementing technical and economic cooperation programmes among developing countries. There had been a consensus that countries in the South had a vast

reservoir of resources that could be mobilized for helping themselves and other developing countries to achieve the goals set by the Millennium Summit. They had also stressed that subregional, regional and interregional cooperation offered many developing countries a more viable strategy for attaining the goal of integrating into the new global economy. They had welcomed the increase in the number of donor countries supporting South-South cooperation initiatives, especially in such areas as human resources development, joint research and development for poverty eradication and knowledge networking through regional institutions and centres of excellence in the South. They had also observed that a South-South initiative designed by the developing countries themselves and anchored in a well-established subregional or regional institution would be more likely to interest donors and produce tangible results.

Building on the positive progress made, the High-level Committee had urged the international community to intensify its efforts to support South-South cooperation initiatives that were designed to benefit especially the least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, transit countries and small island developing States. The Committee had also stated that South-South cooperation could contribute significantly to achieving food security, improving health and education systems, reducing the digital divide, preserving energy and protecting the environment, among other priority areas. It had requested the United Nations development agencies to take concrete steps to integrate the modalities of TCDC systematically into their regular cooperation programmes. As the UNDP Administrator had said, “If the motto of South-South cooperation was ‘building bridges across the South’, today we must move beyond to build new South-South superhighways” of the twenty-first century.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 and resumed at 11.20 a.m.

Draft resolution entitled “Triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development of the United Nations system” (E/2001/L.17)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider the draft resolution he was submitting in his capacity as Vice-President, on the basis of informal consultations. The draft resolution had no programme budget implications and he proposed that the Council should adopt it.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT proposed that the Council should take note of the following documents: comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for the year 1999 (A/56/70/Add.1-E/2001/58/Add.1); report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund on its first regular session 2001 (DP/2001/11); report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund on its annual session 2001 (DP/2001/23); annual reports of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and of the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/2001/10); report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2001 (E/2001/34 (Part I)); annual report of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme on its first, second and third regular sessions and its annual session of 2000 (E/2001/36); annual report of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, 2000 (E/2001/47); report of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries on its twelfth session (TCDC/12/5); and extracts from the report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children's Fund on its annual session of 2001 (E/2001/L.12).

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that the adoption of the above-mentioned draft resolution brought to an end the debate on the operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation. Summing up the salient points of the debate, he said that all speakers had deplored the reduction of resources for operational activities for development, which was likely to impair the effectiveness of the activities of the United Nations system and call into question the results of reforms and improvements in the use of existing resources. Particular emphasis had been placed on the role of Governments of developing countries in giving impetus to the coordination and programming of the operational activities of the United Nations system. That aspect had been confirmed in discussions with the United Nations country teams in the

United Republic of Tanzania and in the People's Republic of China and was at the centre of the conclusions of the assessment of the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. At the same time, it had been recognized that the Framework and the common country assessments were exceptional tools for strengthening the harmonization and integration of the cooperation activities for development being carried out by the United Nations system.

Among the other topics discussed, he drew attention to the importance of strengthening national capacities and to the role the United Nations system could play in that regard. He also stressed the need to reconcile the international objectives set in the Millennium Declaration with those established nationally, provided that the national priorities defined by the authorities of beneficiary countries were fully respected. He welcomed the fact that, following the discussion, the international community recognized the particularly important role of the United Nations system in cooperation for development.

The meeting rose at 11.30 a.m.