



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 24th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NAVAJAS-MOGRO (Bolivia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)

Draft resolution on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/C.2/43/L.13/Rev.1)

1. Mr. KHAN (Pakistan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/43/L.13/Rev.1 on behalf of its sponsors and expressed the conviction, with particular reference to paragraph 3, that the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements was eminently qualified to supervise the development of the programme of economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people and would be able to prepare a satisfactory programme rapidly.

AGENDA ITEM 83: EXTERNAL DEBT CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT (continued)

Draft resolution on the external debt crisis and development: Towards a durable solution of the debt problem (A/C.2/43/L.15)

2. Mr. ELGHOUAYEL (Tunisia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/43/L.15 on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the text was based on the analyses, studies and solutions advocated in 1987 and 1988 within multilateral bodies or during the highest-level international meetings, as well as on General Assembly resolutions 41/202 and 42/198. He noted, however, that the various proposals so far put forward had produced very little result and that the international community must now consider ways of resolving the debt crisis speedily and definitively and must display firm and effective political will in order to do so.

3. One of the basic proposals put forward by the international financial community and the countries concerned was that debt and debt servicing must be reduced. The role of the United Nations was to emphasize and promote that approach in order that technical institutions, Governments and commercial banks should undertake to work out and propose general solutions which might be put into practice at the earliest opportunity.

4. The draft resolution drew attention to the link between the debt crisis and the problem of growth, both of the developing countries and of the world economy as a whole. The crisis of the developing countries was global in its impact and political in its nature and consequences; it should therefore be addressed accordingly.

AGENDA ITEM 82: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued)
(A/43/3, A/43/184, A/43/235-S/19674, A/43/283, A/43/287-S/19740, A/43/370,
A/43/373, A/43/387-S/19918, A/43/399, A/43/425-S/19962, A/43/435,
A/43/457-E/1988/102, A/43/460-E/1988/104, A/43/463-E/1988/106, A/43/480,
A/43/510-S/20091, A/43/538, A/43/544, A/43/584, A/43/587, A/43/695, A/43/714;
A/C.2/43/2, A/C.2/43/3, A/C.2/43/4, A/C.2/43/L.5, L.6; E/1988/50)

(c) FOOD PROBLEMS (A/43/19)

(d) NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY (A/43/36)

(e) DEVELOPMENT OF THE ENERGY RESOURCES OF DEVELOPING COUNTRIES (A/43/476 and
Corr.1)

(g) LONG-TERM STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DEVELOPMENT
(A/43/353-E/1988/71, A/43/462)

AGENDA ITEM 143: RESPONSIBILITY OF STATES FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE ENVIRONMENT
AND PREVENTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION AS A RESULT OF THE ACCUMULATION OF TOXIC
AND RADIOACTIVE WASTES, AND STRENGTHENING OF INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION FOR THE
PURPOSE OF RESOLVING THE PROBLEM (continued) (A/43/193, A/43/671)

AGENDA ITEM 148: CONSERVATION OF CLIMATE AS PART OF THE COMMON HERITAGE OF MANKIND
(continued) (A/43/241)

5. Mr. NYAMBI (United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office) said that, while the
process of ecological degradation was a matter of concern for the world as a whole,
it seemed to have a particularly marked effect on arid and semi-arid regions, such
as those in Africa. For the Sudano-Sahelian region it was a question of pure
survival: the 15 years of chronic drought, desertification, locust plagues, recent
floods and the losses arising from them had all helped to create an environment
which made sustainable development extremely difficult.

6. The maintenance of an appropriate balance between current needs and future
dangers continued to pose problems; the subject must be addressed globally but must
also take account of the specific situation of each developing country. One way in
which long-term ecological security could be strengthened in the context of
economic development would be for the international community to provide the
resources required to help the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region develop
their capacity to undertake timely ecological monitoring and essential resource
planning measures. UNSO stood ready to intensify its efforts and to co-operate
with the countries concerned, and with other United Nations agencies, international
organizations and donors.

7. Mr. VASILYEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the struggle to
protect the environment was a matter of concern for all countries and continents
and required a new approach, incorporating both political and ecological elements,
as well as the strengthening of international co-operation and of activities
carried out at the national level. His country favoured the elaboration and
application of the concept of environmental security, defined as the existence of

(Mr. Vasilyev, USSR)

international relations ensuring the preservation, rational use and improvement of the quality of the environment for the purpose of promoting stable economic and social development and creating favourable conditions for the life of all countries; it was for that reason that it wholeheartedly supported the initiative of Czechoslovakia and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

8. Efforts to save nature should not become the object of ideological confrontations or propaganda. The success of such efforts required thoughtful analysis of the situation and rapid adoption of concrete and concerted measures. His country had therefore proposed that a series of extraordinary international meetings be held during the next few years and favoured the convening at the highest level, in 1992 or even earlier, of a second United Nations conference on the environment. In addition, and without waiting for that conference to be convened it would be useful for all countries to engage in consultations on the organization of international co-operation and the undertaking of joint activities. UNEP and other United Nations bodies, particularly the regional economic commissions, could play a more significant role in that area. His delegation hoped that the Second Committee would work out recommendations as an important step towards the expansion of co-operation to protect the environment.

9. There could be no doubt that climate was an important component of the environment, and international co-operation in that area should also be strengthened. His country had repeatedly stressed, at the highest level and, in particular, in the statement issued after the summit meeting between Mr. Gorbachev and Mr. Reagan, the importance which it attached to the problem of climate change. It was engaged in active co-operation with other countries, as well as with several international agencies and organizations. It shared the view of the delegation of the United Kingdom that joint efforts were required in order to solve a common problem, agreed with the Norwegian delegation that a global strategy must be elaborated in that area, and endorsed the call voiced, inter alia, by the delegations of New Zealand and Egypt, for enhancement of the role of the United Nations, and particularly that of UNEP. The latter should be entrusted with co-ordination tasks which it could carry out in close collaboration with WMO and other international organizations.

10. Concerning development of the energy resources of developing countries, his delegation agreed with the findings contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/43/476). It also agreed with the measures proposed in the report for strengthening international co-operation, particularly with regard to information and ensuring the development of energy production. The latter was especially important in the developing countries, whose primary objective should be self-reliance. His delegation agreed with the Group of 77 concerning the need for Governments of developing countries to maintain tight control over direct foreign investments in the energy sectors of their economies.

11. The Soviet Union was aware of the difficulties faced by developing countries in solving their energy problems. For that reason, one fourth of the industrial assistance it currently furnished was for the development of projects for the

(Mr. Vasilyev, USSR)

acquisition of a national fuel capacity and an integral energy system. The Soviet Union was prepared to continue its assistance and to support the efforts of the United Nations in the development of international co-operation in the field of energy.

12. New and renewable sources of energy would continue to be used modestly until the end of the century, but could none the less play an important role in solving the energy problem under favourable conditions. Consequently, the Soviet Union attached great importance to the United Nations mechanism in that area and persistently sought to enhance its efficiency. In particular, it sought to improve the working methods of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy.

13. With regard to food problems, the results of the fourteenth session of the World Food Council (WFC) and the discussion on the issue of food and agriculture which had taken place at the second regular session of 1988 of the Economic and Social Council demonstrated that despite the success scored by some countries, the food situation remained critical in many developing countries, essentially because of their economic backwardness and poverty. The ability of those countries to attain food self-sufficiency was limited by external economic factors such as the foreign debt, the net outflow of resources and monetary and financial instability.

14. His delegation welcomed the efforts of the World Food Council to resolve the problem of hunger and malnutrition and particularly supported the Cyprus Initiative Against Hunger in the World. His delegation also supported the idea of setting up an informal Consultative Group to prepare a report for presentation to the World Food Council, at its fifteenth session, on the understanding that the group would be financed within available resources or from extrabudgetary resources.

15. Mr. WORONIECKI (Poland) said that the debates in the Committee had highlighted the unacceptable deterioration of the world environment, and the need for joint action. It had also been pointed out, quite rightly, that that external indebtedness considerably limited the resources that countries could devote to protection of the environment and prevention of transboundary pollution. Measures capable of generating environmentally sound and sustainable development would be an important contribution to the strengthening of peace and security in the world. At the same time, the relaxation of political tensions should be exploited in order to develop the capacity to protect the environment.

16. As yet, however, there had been no agreement on the extent of co-operation necessary for combating environmental pollution. It was his delegation's view that the barriers to such co-operation had been a key factor in the globalization of environmental problems. Hence, those barriers must be removed as speedily as possible. The new approaches and new financial instruments proposed (for example, debt-for-nature swaps) deserved careful study. In that context, it would be useful to develop the flow of information and the transfer of technology related to the protection of the environment. Sweden's decision to establish an international environmental technology institute in Stockholm was to be commended.

(Mr. Woroniecki, Poland)

17. Environmental change called for immediate and concerted action by the international community. Efforts must be directed at attaining environmentally sound development through the adoption of legally binding instruments and appropriate standards. Action should be undertaken at both the global and regional levels. The 1992 world conference on sustainable development should be preceded by several regional conferences. The idea was gaining ground, for it was necessary to measure more precisely the impact of environmental pollution and climatic change. The adoption of a Charter of ecological rights and duties of States and a programme of action on environmental security could be considered at the world conference.

18. His delegation approved of the initiative taken by the Maltese Government to proclaim climate as part of the common heritage of mankind. Depletion of the ozone layer and the destruction of tropical forests, the greenhouse effect, and marine and river pollution were problems of grave concern. Strengthening international law would not, in itself, resolve them. Large-scale technical co-operation and assistance from surplus countries, perhaps "ecological Marshall Plans" would also be required.

19. The United Nations, the United Nations Environment Programme in particular, had an essential role to play in protecting the environment. Poland set great store by the system-wide medium-term environmental programme, which was being elaborated.

20. Despite the efforts made by Governments and multilateral organizations, the goal of food security was no nearer to being attained. Enormous development disparities persisted. While certain developed countries had surpluses, the developing countries had no resources either to import essential food products or to intensify their own food production. Apart from the moral aspects, the situation carried with it the seeds of a major conflict. Hunger and malnutrition were not isolated phenomena. They were signs of more general economic underdevelopment. Therefore, the key to solving the food and agriculture problems lay in reducing indebtedness, reactivating development and restructuring the trade of agricultural products.

21. Currently, protectionist practices and export subsidies ruled out virtually any competition on some agricultural markets. Poland supported the proposals of the Cairns group for a reduction in the subsidies granted to farmers. His delegation was also in favour of gradually lifting quotas and other import restrictions imposed by the developed countries. General rules on the trade of agricultural products would have to be worked out within the framework of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

22. In conclusion, he drew attention to the sixteenth Regional Conference for Europe organized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) held at Kraków in August 1988, in co-operation with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The Conference had stressed the importance of European co-operation on ecological and agricultural issues and provided an opportunity to reflect on one of the essential problems of international co-operation: elaboration of a long-term and comprehensive approach to sustainable and environmentally sound development.

23. Mr. CHRISTIDES (Greece), speaking on behalf of the member States of the European Economic Community, said that environmental problems had been neglected in the past and were still not adequately dealt with. However, awareness had increased, and there was a realization that economic development was based on a very fragile ecological balance. The importance now attached to the environment was clear from the number of related problems included in the agenda of the current session.

24. In the past year the European Community and its member States had devoted much attention to issues concerning environmental protection. They were already taking the environmental dimension into account in their economic co-operation with other countries, and were now working on generally applicable Community guidelines. In June 1988 the Community had acceded to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the related Montreal Protocol. A resolution on limitation of the use of chlorofluorocarbons and halocarbons had also been adopted. The Community continued to play an active part in implementing the Mediterranean Action Plan, within the framework of UNEP. The Community was playing a very active role in the negotiations relating to the global convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and had offered to host the penultimate meeting of the ad hoc group of experts preparing the convention. On the subject of nuclear wastes, the Community wished to affirm the important role of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

25. Environment and development policies should be aimed particularly at securing growth on a sustainable basis and alleviating poverty. The Community reiterated once more its commitment to the concept of sustainable development, as elaborated in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (A/42/427), and attached great importance to the initiatives that had subsequently been taken to achieve the objectives set forth in the report. The work of UNEP on the movement of hazardous wastes and climate were of particular interest to the Community. In securing sustainable development much still remained to be done. The Community was ready to assume its share of the responsibility, specifically through supporting further initiatives such as the global conference on sustainable development which was being planned for 1992.

26. As for new and renewable sources of energy, the committee dealing with their development and utilization had recently reiterated that the Nairobi Programme of Action was still valid, in particular for satisfying the energy needs of rural areas and encouraging the use of those sources of energy in the long term. It had also reaffirmed the need for efficient international co-operation to implement the Programme. In that context, it had been emphasized that lower oil prices had not fundamentally changed the situation for the rural areas of developing countries. Those areas were hardly affected by fluctuations in international energy markets, and new and renewable sources of energy would remain crucial in meeting their energy requirements.

27. The report of the Secretary-General on energy exploration and development trends in developing countries (A/43/476) indicated that those countries had accomplished much in developing their production of oil, natural gas, coal and hydroelectricity. There had, however, been a very marked decline in investment in

(Mr. Christides, Greece)

exploration and development following the fall in oil prices, and especially since 1986. In general, oil and gas played a key role in meeting the energy needs of the developing countries, and that dependence was expected to continue until the year 2000 and beyond. It was therefore important to diversify sources of energy.

28. The European Community had noted with interest the initiative taken by the Government of Malta on the subject of climate, which was a cause of increasing anxiety around the world. International organizations, Governments and industry should take specific measures as a matter of urgency to reduce atmospheric pollution and other harmful activities, including those that caused deforestation and desertification. The Community welcomed the establishment by UNEP, the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU) of the intergovernmental panel on climate change, and hoped that all member States would become parties to the international instruments concerning protection of the environment.

29. Mr. FALL (Senegal) said that for the developed countries the problem of the environment manifested itself in the bad management of stocks of toxic and radioactive substances and residues, and of the pollution of the atmosphere, the soil, the marine environment and outer space, whereas in Africa, particularly in the Sudano-Sahelian region, the main challenge was that of desertification. That phenomenon must be distinguished from drought, which was a climatic fact arising in a particular situation which prevented spontaneous or cultivated vegetation reaching maturity, and also from the effects of drought, which were chiefly food shortage, inadequate diets, rural-urban migration and speculation in food prices. Desertification was caused by the destruction of soils and vegetation due to the influence of man, his shifting cultivation and too numerous herds, and occurred through the progressive transformation of a relatively humid region into a desert.

30. In Africa, desertification could be likened to the advancing desert and according to scientists was ascribable to six main causes: climatic factors (aridification), abuse of agricultural land (due to population pressure and to the cultivation of cash crops), abuse of pastoral land (overgrazing, pruning to feed animals and bush fires), deforestation (as a result of the increasing need for firewood), and soil and wind erosion. Thus 60 per cent of the African continent was arid or semi-arid and the role of desertification in the impoverishment of Africa, accentuated by successive droughts, needed no further demonstration: 6 million hectares were totally destroyed every year. Desertification was not unconnected with the food situation since vast areas of productive land were lost as a result of it and several regions of the third world were therefore continuing to suffer sporadically from food shortages.

31. Environmental protection must be linked to the restructuring of the international economy, and that restructuring would not be complete if it did not take account of increasing protectionism, net transfers of resources from the developing countries and external debt. He was gravely concerned that the multilateral financing institutions were taking environmental problems into account lest that meant imposing further conditions on the granting of funds.

(Mr. Fall, Senegal)

32. The economic crisis which the countries afflicted by desertification were undergoing had goaded them into collective action. With the assistance of bilateral and multilateral donors, Senegal had decided to curb desertification swiftly by launching four large-scale operations: reforestation and conservation of nature and the environment; an integrated programme of secondary sand-dune stabilization and protecting market gardening areas; reducing the massive exploitation of forests, particularly by developing replacement sources of energy such as biomass and solar and wind energy; and prohibiting and combating bush fires. Senegal had also implemented a policy of training and awareness building among the masses.

33. He then described several projects and programmes which had been implemented to combat desertification, and thanked the donors. His country considered that investment in the system of roads, which made remote areas more accessible, was an important means for development. He welcomed certain initiatives taken in the area of subregional co-operation, in particular by CILSS, and noted that other subregional organizations (the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development and the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference) were also taking measures to combat desertification. Senegal had acted as host to the first and second sessions of COMIDES; the third session would be held in Algeria. The United Nations Environment Programme often conducted activities in Africa through the committees established under the Cairo Programme for African Co-operation, in particular the Committee on Desert and Arid Lands, which was chaired by Senegal. The Government of Senegal had implemented a realistic environmental policy which took account of the close relationship between environment and development, but the developing countries would be able to translate their goodwill into action only if the developed countries undertook parallel efforts to solve the problems of poverty and debt.

34. Finally, with regard to the illegal dumping of hazardous and toxic wastes, a group of UNEP legal experts had been appointed to prepare a convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, and the General Assembly must reach a decision on that issue. Senegal offered to act as host to a conference on toxic wastes in 1989.

35. Mr. GALKA (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the struggle to protect the environment and carry out a programme of sustainable and environmentally sound development was in fact a struggle for the survival of mankind. In the opinion of most scientists, mankind was largely responsible for current environmental problems such as the destruction of the ozone layer, global warming, the pollution of air, oceans and rivers, desertification and climatic disturbances. The reckless policy of introducing technologies which harmed the environment and of later spending large sums to repair the damage was no longer acceptable. It was, of course, not easy to organize production in such a way as to ensure development while preserving the environment. His delegation therefore supported the elaboration of a world strategy based on the rational use of natural resources, an international programme on the management of economic risks and the gradual introduction of technologies which did not threaten the environment.

(Mr. Galka, Byelorussian SSR)

36. The export of pollution was a matter of concern which had recently been discussed at great length. It involved practices which consisted in storing and treating - both legally and illegally - hazardous wastes in developing countries or to engage in production which was harmful to the environment of those countries. That was, clearly, a short-sighted policy. Ecological interdependence was a reality which could not be ignored. The thoughtless destruction of the environment meant also the destruction of a heritage which was vital for the current and future development of all countries.

37. The Byelorussian SSR was beginning to focus more closely on problems involving the destruction of the environment, for example, excessive concentration of industry in certain regions, air pollution in large cities, failure to comply with regulations in the areas of industry and agriculture, and the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. New industrial and agricultural projects would henceforth be subject to approval by the State organs responsible for ensuring the protection of the environment. Those organs were empowered to prosecute and prohibit production activities deemed excessively polluting.

38. The question of environmental protection should be put back in the context of international relations. On the occasion of the visit of the President of Brazil to the USSR, Mr. Gorbachev had emphasized the common responsibilities which the leaders must assume with respect to their peoples and mankind in order to protect the world's two major forested regions - Siberia and the Amazon. The debate on the concept of sustainable and environmentally sound development had helped States become more aware of their responsibilities.

39. At their meeting in July 1988, the States parties to the Warsaw Treaty had commended the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development, and had requested the international community to define broad outlines for co-operation in the field of the environment. The Soviet Union's proposal regarding the organization of a series of special meetings on the problems of co-ordinating international activities to ensure environmental safety was a step in that direction.

40. A more thorough analysis of the concept of international environmental security, which was viewed as a prerequisite for sustainable and environmentally sound development, would be a useful contribution to the preparation of the second United Nations conference on the environment.

41. At the current session, support should be given to proposals to prohibit or sanction illegal movements of hazardous wastes and their export to developing countries for storage purposes, as well as proposals which called for more detailed studies of that question. Measures to prevent abnormal climatic change on a global scale should also be considered.

42. There was a direct relation between the implementation of sustainable and environmentally sound development and the solution of food problems, the development of new and renewable sources of energy or, more generally, energy resources of the developing countries, as well as other acute problems facing

(Mr. Galka, Byelorussian SSR)

mankind. Consequently, sustainable and environmentally sound development could be one of the main objectives of the new international development strategy.

43. Mr. KHAN (India) said that, despite the changes in the price of oil, the energy problem remained acute in the developing countries, where total energy demands continued to rise, quite logically, along with social and economic development and population increases. His delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the 1981 Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, and endorsed the conclusions of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy at its fourth session. The question of new and renewable sources of energy had recently acquired added importance in view of the fact that countries had become more aware of the environmental impact of various forms of energy, and that it was now increasingly accepted that the massive and inefficient consumption of hydrocarbon fuels was a major contributory factor to the phenomenon of "global warming". By increasing its financial and technical assistance for the dissemination of relevant information, the international community could help the developing countries incorporate environmental factors in their energy policies and their development plans.

44. India had adopted a plan for developing non-conventional sources of energy up to the year 2000, which should have a direct effect on reforestation, the creation of jobs, improvement of health and hygiene, provision of drinking water and the production of bio-fertilizers. The development of 50 models of different wood stoves to suit the traditions in various regions of the country made possible large savings in fuel wood and slowed down deforestation. Almost 1 million biogas plants had been built in the past three years, leading to a saving of fuel and fertilizers. The thermal applications of solar energy had been made commercially viable and had been introduced in various sectors. A number of wind farms had been set up, and the indigenous production of photovoltaic cells and systems had begun.

45. His delegation wished to reaffirm that environmental problems should be dealt with on a global level and to stress three considerations of extreme importance to developing countries. Firstly, it would be unfortunate if international financial and development institutions introduced new conditions relating to the environment into their lending policies. Secondly, there must be a commitment to find additional resources for environmental protection and not to divert resources intended for development. Thirdly, any international environmental protection measures must take into account existing inequities in the global pattern of production and consumption and the need to correct them. Only thus would the international community give effect to the concept of sustainable and environmentally sound development.

46. On the item relating to the conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind, he agreed with the representative of Malta that concerted action was needed to counter global warming and the greenhouse effect, deforestation and depletion of the ozone layer. However, not only climate conservation required study but also the possibility of inducing benign changes in climate, such as improved rainfall. Consideration should also be given to whether the term "common heritage" was appropriate in the context since it was not a

(Mr. Khan, India)

question of sharing natural resources or of dealing exclusively with areas lying outside national jurisdiction. His delegation was ready to participate actively in further discussions with a view to defining the concept.

47. Mr. DEL ROSARIO (Dominican Republic) outlined the serious dilemma faced by developing countries, in particular the Dominican Republic: on the one hand, there was a need to make the economy efficient so that the agents of production could receive the equivalent value of their contributions to the national product, while, on the other hand, it was imperative to provide for that proportion of the population whose purchasing power was inadequate to obtain basic consumer goods at market prices. His Government had sought to tackle the dilemma in a climate of freedom and democracy, despite the problems posed by the unfavourable world economic situation and the burden of external debt. In the developing countries population growth was outstripping food production. In addition, the Dominican Republic had to export some 20 per cent of its production of foodstuffs to obtain the foreign currency needed for other sectors of the economy and agriculture itself. The reduction in the sugar quota on the North American market and the drop in the prices of the primary commodities exported by the Dominican Republic had severely impaired its economy, while external debt servicing absorbed 34 per cent of the country's export earnings.

48. After giving a number of figures which illustrated the importance of agricultural and livestock production to his country's economy, he said that his Government had formulated short- and long-term food strategies designed to increase daily calorie and protein intake and to make the fullest use of all the country's resources in improving the nutritional status of the population, in particular in low-income groups. The Government had endeavoured to boost agricultural and livestock production, end agricultural price controls, liberalize trade in rice, eliminate taxation of traditional agricultural exports, and promote various traditional crops intended for domestic consumption. That policy was complemented by an ambitious agricultural reform plan ultimately intended to meet food needs, preserve natural resources and improve national income distribution. That economic and social development strategy had run into several major constraints, in particular the burden of structural adjustment. An improvement in the external economic situation would facilitate fulfilment of the strategy, given that, for the time being, the Dominican Republic was suffering the effects of negative resource transfers. There was a major balance-of-trade deficit, particularly with Latin America, Asia and Europe. His Government had taken steps to accede to the Lomé Convention, which would allow it preferential access to the market of the European Economic Community.

49. Mrs. SUMIRAT (Indonesia) said that the report entitled "Our Common Future" (A/42/427), submitted by the World Commission on Environment and Development, together with the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, prepared by UNEP, had heightened awareness of the indissociable links between development and the environment. Environmental degradation and the threat of ecological destruction had focused the attention of the international community and impelled it to act, as evidenced by the inscription of four new items on the environment in the agenda of the Second Committee for the current session.

(Mrs. Sumirat, Indonesia)

50. The first item concerned sustainable and environmentally sound development, which, according to General Assembly resolution 42/187, implied meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations. In developing countries, for which the problem was one of straightforward survival, the concept could have no meaning unless it could ensure the right to a decent life. Such development would have to overcome the economic constraints that compelled countries to plunder their ecological base. The situation was aggravated by an unfavourable external environment (increase in the debt burden, plunge in commodity prices, contraction of financial flows, escalation of protectionism, etc.). Accordingly, sustainable development required the refocusing of development policies on the eradication of poverty and enhancement of the resource base. The success of such an undertaking would depend on the willingness of all countries to co-operate and their ability to incorporate an environmental dimension into policies and programmes for growth.

51. Trafficking in and dumping of toxic wastes by the developed countries in the developing countries also gave cause for deep concern. Such activities violated principle 21 of the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted at Stockholm in 1972. In order to end that state of affairs, it was essential to adopt international measures and legal instruments to ban transboundary movements.

52. There could be no doubt that abnormal climatic changes such as the greenhouse effect were attributable to man and could threaten his survival. Moreover, gases such as chlorofluorocarbon were depleting the crucial life-sustaining ozone layer in the stratosphere. The international community must take action to counter such phenomena, the adoption in 1987 of the Montreal Protocol being a step in the right direction.

53. While the increase in the number of items on the environment indicated heightened awareness of the importance of the problem, it would be desirable for those items to be consolidated so as to ensure the more effective and rational conduct of the Committee's work.

54. The food and agriculture situation remained paradoxical. While the world was producing more food than ever before, hunger and malnutrition continued to increase. Indonesia fully supported the Cyprus Initiative, designed to give food problems top priority. If the international community was to defend effectively the fundamental and universal right to food, it must make a determined effort to promote self-sufficiency in food.

55. Mr. MILINTACHINDA (Thailand) said that international trade in the food sector remained highly protected. According to OECD, the cost of agricultural support measures imposed on taxpayers and consumers in its member countries had almost doubled between 1984 and 1986. Furthermore, for the developing countries, such policies distorted commodity trade and had the most damaging and direct impact on the poorest countries.

56. There was much to be gained from greater liberalization of agricultural trade, including, first and foremost, budgetary savings. Furthermore, the ensuing

(Mr. Sanga, United Republic of Tanzania)

adjustment programmes had resulted in, at best, a minimal improvement and had often had a negative impact, at least judging by the development of the situation in Africa since the introduction of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. The reason for that minimal impact was that those distortions existed not only in developing countries but also in developed countries, in the form of producer subsidies and trade barriers. To that must be added trade and financial practices which were glaringly unjust to developing countries and the crushing weight of the external debt. Thus, it was clear that the proposed adjustment programmes, far from being a panacea, could cause considerable damages unless their immediate consequences were mitigated. In order to make those programmes effective, the Bretton Woods Institutions should encourage the industrialized countries to adopt such programmes too so as to support and supplement the efforts of the developing countries. His delegation hoped that the international community would play its role and that it would be possible to eliminate hunger and malnutrition by the end of the century.

51. Mr. SALAZAR (Guatemala) recalled that the 1980s had been particularly disastrous for the developing countries, which had had to cope simultaneously with population growth, an international economic environment inhospitable to exports to developed countries and difficulties of access to new capital. The world was now witnessing the emergence of even more serious environmental problems, caused by the inefficient use of energy resources.

52. His country, like other developing countries, could not both ensure its development and protect the environment without ample support from the international community. The main problem was deforestation, which had serious consequences for the climate and for agricultural production. Since deforestation was caused by people seeking to fulfil their basic needs, the problem should be dealt with by bringing electricity to rural regions and providing more employment in the secondary and tertiary sectors. To that end, his country wholeheartedly supported the realization of all the energy projects and the projects intended to stimulate the economic revitalization of Central America contained in the Special Plan for Co-operation for the region. It likewise strongly supported all the efforts which would be necessary to achieve sustained and environmentally sound development.

53. Mr. FADZIL (Malaysia) said that the Malta Initiative, relating to the conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind, was particularly welcome because there was a growing awareness of the continuous degradation of the environment, its effect on the planet and the urgent need to find lasting solutions to that highly complex problem.

54. In his country it was also human endeavour that had created ecological problems: national development efforts had often been carried out at the expense of the environment. The problem was to determine appropriate measures conducive to balanced development, measures which would reconcile the development of the infrastructure and the need to preserve the environment. On the basis of that approach, his country, aware that its economy depended to a large extent on sound

(Mr. Yenal, Turkey)

throughout the world. The dumping of various industrial wastes, including hazardous chemical and nuclear substances, in the territory of developing countries was an issue of concern to much of the international community. Appropriate measures should be taken on a global level to check those practices. The fact that the danger posed by the depletion of the ozone layer was finally being recognized was a welcome development in that regard. The Executive Director of UNEP had referred to the need for closer co-ordination and collaboration. His delegation commended the efforts made by UNEP in that direction.

62. While a better grasp had been gained of the interdependence between those issues and growth and development, the fact that financial considerations and the debt problem were also part of the equation must be borne in mind as well. The problems currently facing the world were of an urgent nature, and the international community must not hesitate to take action.

63. Mrs. DARLING (Australia) endorsed the general thrust of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development (A/42/427); the report had clearly outlined the relationship between social, political and economic development and the environment, and its implementation would require a reorientation of economies and attitudes. The world conference on sustainable development which had been proposed for 1992 might be quite valuable for following up the recommendations contained in the report and for mapping out a strategy for further action. United Nations bodies, particularly UNEP and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO), should continue their research on climate change, the effects of which were still poorly understood. The WMO/UNEP Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had an important role to play in that regard.

64. The increasing difficulties caused by the transboundary shipment of toxic wastes called for the introduction of major technical and regulatory measures, especially in the developing countries, to ensure the safe handling and/or management of hazardous wastes.

65. With regard to world food problems, one solution that had been proposed was the shipping of foodstuffs from surplus countries to deficit countries in order to offset food shortages. However, that solution had neglected to take into account two crucial considerations: firstly, hundreds of millions of people in poor countries simply lacked the purchasing power to buy food. Secondly, agriculture remained the chief economic activity of most of the world's people, and accelerated agricultural growth was the best means of stimulating development in other sectors as well. In contrast, the import of subsidized foreign goods could cripple domestic production and provide only temporary benefits for some urban consumers. Furthermore, such imports existed at the whim of taxpayers and consumers in developed countries and reflected a situation of over-supply which could change from one day to the next.

66. To increase agricultural production, developing countries needed to allocate more financial resources for agricultural research, irrigation, transport, rural electrification and education. The developed countries, in turn, needed to reduce protectionist barriers and liberalize their trade practices in a concerted effort

(Mrs. Darling, Australia)

to eliminate poverty and hunger. Since agriculture accounted for between 50 per cent and 100 per cent of the total trade of developing countries, trade was an important source of income for them and the principal means by which they acquired foreign exchange to repay their debts. Unfortunately, agricultural trade remained the sector most in need of urgent reform.

67. Some important exceptions had made agricultural trade virtually exempt from the basic rules and tenets of GATT, such as non-discrimination and reciprocity. That absence of rules, which resulted from the implementation of domestic agricultural policies designed to protect producers from market forces (particularly in the United States, the countries of the European Economic Community and Japan), had been largely ignored in the seven rounds of GATT multilateral trade negotiations which had preceded the Uruguay Round.

68. However, the situation was not hopeless. According to the World Food Council, the Uruguay Round presented a last opportunity in the twentieth century to strengthen GATT rules, establish an agricultural trading system based on market forces, end subsidization and work towards the long-term goal of dismantling protectionist barriers.

69. For its part, the Cairns Group called on countries that protected their agricultural sector to reduce their total subsidies for 1989 and 1990 by 10 per cent. It was also proposing elements of a long-term framework for the reform of agricultural trade. Interest in those proposals was growing, and their acceptance by all parties at the forthcoming mid-term review of the Uruguay Round at Montreal would be welcome. The Second Committee could make an important contribution to the reform of agricultural trade by sending a message to the Montreal meeting stressing that no effort should be spared in achieving progress in that area.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.