

PROVISIONAL

E/2003/SR.31
9 November 2005

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Substantive session of 2003

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 31st MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 11 July 2003, at 3 p.m.

<u>President:</u>	Mr. HUSSEIN (Vice-President)	(Ethiopia)
later:	Mr. KUCHINSKY (Vice-President)	(Ukraine)

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In the absence of Mr. Rosenthal (Guatemala), Mr. Hussein (Ethiopia),
Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION (agenda item 3) (continued)

- (a) FOLLOW-UP TO POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE
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- (c) TECHNICAL COOPERATION AMONG DEVELOPING COUNTRIES
(continued) (TCDC/13/4)

The PRESIDENT recalled that under agenda item 3 (a), the Council had before it
a draft resolution entitled "World Solidarity Fund" (E/2003/L.21), prepared on the basis of
informal consultations concerning draft resolution E/2003/L.18 on the same subject.

Draft resolution E/2003/L.21

The draft resolution was adopted.

Draft resolution E/2003/L.18

The draft resolution was adopted.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take note of the following documents:
Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled
"Extension of water-related technical cooperation projects to end-beneficiaries: bridging the
gap between the normative and the operational in the United Nations system (case studies in
two African countries)" (A/57/497); Note by the Secretary-General transmitting his comments
and those of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination on the report

of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled “Extension of water-related technical cooperation projects to end-beneficiaries: bridging the gap between the normative and the operational in the United Nations system (case studies in two African countries)” (A/57/497/Add.1); Report of the Secretary-General on comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for the year 2001 (E/2003/57); Annual reports of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme and the Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/2003/13); Annual report of the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, 2002 (E/2003/14); Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Children’s Fund on the work of its first regular session of 2003 (E/2003/34 (Part I)); Annual report of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children’s Fund to the Economic and Social Council (E/2003/48); Report of the Executive Board of the World Food Programme on the first, second and third regular sessions and annual session of 2002 (E/2003/36); Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund on the second regular session 2002 (DP/2003/1); Report of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund on the first regular session 2003 (DP/2003/9); Report of the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme on strengthening consultations with Member States on the Human Development Report, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 57/264 (DP/2003/17); Decisions adopted by the Executive Board of the United Nations Children’s Fund at its annual session of 2003 (E/2003/L.8); Report of the High-level Committee on the Review of Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries (TCDC/13/4).

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that the Council had completed its consideration of agenda item 3 and its discussion on operational activities.

Mr. Kuchinsky (Ukraine), Vice-President, took the Chair.

SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE
(agenda item 5) (continued) (A/58/85-E/2003/80 and Add.1, A/50/89-E/2003/85;
A/58/99-E/2003/94 and A/59/821-E/2003/86)

Panel discussion on the topic “Humanitarian financing and effectiveness of humanitarian assistance”

Ms. McASKIE (Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs) said that the victims of humanitarian crises who had suffered the most tragic fate were perhaps the millions of human beings who had been subjected to “forgotten” emergencies and whose suffering could not be alleviated because their needs were not known or the means to satisfy them were lacking.

Everything must be done to ensure that humanitarian aid was adequately financed and distributed equitably and effectively. That was indeed an enormous task requiring that all parties concerned should arrive at a common perception of the needs and of how to respond to them. It also required that aid agencies should put an end to competition detrimental to the coherence of their action and build on their comparative advantages in order to make the best use of limited resources. Donors, too, must respond more rapidly to the appeals launched. Both donors and aid agencies must rebuild trust and confidence. Donors must have faith in the ability of agencies to identify risks and requirements, and agencies must know that donors would provide them with financing on the basis of the priorities they had identified rather than political whim. The International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, held in Stockholm in June 2003, had brought together donors and others involved in the provision of humanitarian assistance and had undoubtedly marked a step towards greater efficacy of the assistance provided.

Mr. BERTELING (Director for Human Rights, Humanitarian Assistance, Good Governance and Peacebuilding, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands), said he would address the question of the quality of humanitarian financing and the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance from a donor’s perspective, drawing on a wealth of information: three recent studies, a fourth in progress, and the results of two recent meetings.

The studies carried out had dealt with need assessment, specifically the methodology used for that purpose and the use made of the results by agencies and donors; the allocation of humanitarian financing among the various humanitarian aid organizations; and lastly, donor behaviour and motivation.

Those studies had, among other findings, revealed a patchwork of policies applied and activities carried out by donors which did not provide the basis for a coherent or effective system for financing humanitarian needs. They had also pointed to the fact that donor funding decisions were frequently based on domestic policy considerations and geopolitical imperatives, rather than on needs to be met. For their part, humanitarian agencies tended to evaluate needs on the basis of assumptions rather than a proper diagnosis, which led donors to question the value of such assessments. Lastly, both donors and humanitarian agencies lacked adequate data on financial flows, were weak on accountability and tended to mistrust each other.

The two meetings had been, firstly, that of the High-Level Working Group held at The Hague in May 2003, at which donors and officials of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs had stressed the need to strengthen the performance of the Consolidated Appeals Process, for instance by the use of integrated coordination tools, and the International Meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship, which had addressed the role of donors in providing adequate, predictable and transparent funding. While both meetings had been useful, they had brought together only a small and relatively homogenous group of participants, so he welcomed the opportunity to discuss, in the broader setting of the Council, the role of donors and the positive or negative consequences of their behaviour in the field.

The Consolidated Appeals Process was undoubtedly a valuable mechanism, and in any case it was the only one available at present for the relatively rapid and coordinated formulation of strategy, particularly through the Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP), and for fund-raising. Nevertheless, that mechanism needed to be improved. That was why donors had launched the Montreux Process, which had already resulted in a number of recommendations to the Emergency Relief Coordinator on how to improve the field performance of the United Nations system and of donors themselves.

While the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms needed no further proof, they came at a cost that donors had to weigh up. The success of the intervention in Angola, in which UNOCHA had had a strong presence, showed that the price tag for coordination was small in comparison with the results obtained. It also showed that donors had a role to play in improving field coordination. They should encourage all involved in humanitarian assistance to participate in the CHAP, as the Netherlands was already doing. When an NGO requested assistance for operations in a CHAP country, the Netherlands authorities made the provision of funds conditional upon the NGO's participation in the Plan, knowing that the results would be beneficial: commitment to common goals, better understanding of the role and inputs of NGOs and increased transparency.

Donor participation in CHAP was also beneficial in terms of funding, since it required donors to make commitments on which it was difficult to renege owing to peer pressure, and because it led to more effective coordination among donors, thus to more efficient allocation of funds.

The time had come to take donor coordination a step further. During the two meetings just mentioned, the idea had gained ground that donors might jointly assess needs, jointly fund and jointly evaluate action in one or more CHAP countries. It would then be CHAP as such, and not the individual activities or aid agencies, that donors were funding. That would be a good way to strengthen the role of the humanitarian coordinator or country team, without necessarily having funds flow through UNOCHA. There were sound reasons for having as coordinator a body that was not involved in implementation.

In conclusion, referring to the constraints on better humanitarian financing, he cited the worldwide recession, which obliged States to make difficult choices, and the increasing influence of politics on humanitarian aid and humanitarian financing, a serious problem that would have to be tackled one day.

Mr. LENNARTSSON NAKAMITSU (Head, Humanitarian Section, Department of Global Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden) said that today, thanks to the programme of work on the funding of humanitarian assistance, there was a much better understanding of the situation in that area. It was well known, for example, that donors' funding

decisions were not sufficiently based on existing needs, which must be assessed much more systematically, and both allocation and use of humanitarian assistance had to be improved. Meeting in Stockholm in June 2003, the 15 donors of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) had endorsed a set of principles and good practices governing humanitarian action and an implementation plan to strengthen donor accountability and coherence of response. The donors had agreed that humanitarian assistance should be allocated on the basis of needs assessments and that, as far as possible, funding in response to new crises should not adversely affect ongoing assistance. They hoped that their approach, which must be dynamic, would help improve donor practice and, more generally, the response to humanitarian crises, and they encouraged all other donors to consider the principles adopted. But of course an effective response also depended on the recipient Governments and the implementing agencies.

Despite the considerable achievements recorded in the past decade in the area of humanitarian assistance and the increased transparency and effectiveness that had made it possible, following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 46/182, to introduce better instruments for funding, planning and coordination, improvements were still needed in a number of areas. Funding must be more predictable, with a move from project-based to policy-based approaches, longer-term framework agreements and multi-year funding arrangements; faster in terms of decision-making and disbursements; more flexible, i.e. with fewer but larger and less restrictive allocations of resources; more transparent, in particular through the adoption of a commonly accepted definition of humanitarian assistance; more equitable, through the elaboration of better benchmarks; adequate, through an increase of between 5 and 10 billion dollars in donations and a substantial widening of the donor base (currently the top 10 donors accounted for 90 per cent of all humanitarian assistance); and, lastly, more accountable, for example through improved peer reviews for recipients, implementing agencies and, above all, donors.

The Humanitarian Financing Work Programme and the Good Humanitarian Donorship process were important tools for improving the international donor response to basic humanitarian needs in the foreseeable future.

Mr. GRAISSE (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)) pointed out that one of the most underfunded and yet essential components of humanitarian assistance was the planning of emergency relief and preparation for emergency situations, to which very few organizations had the means and the time to devote resources. In disaster or crisis situations, WFP had until recently been able to release some of its resources rapidly under its Food Aid for Development programme, but those resources had declined considerably and, but for the generosity of certain donors such as the United Kingdom, it would for example have been impossible for it to meet the many emergency situations which had arisen in 2002. Hence the need to give emergency relief planning and preparations for emergency situations a better institutional framework.

It was also important to improve methods for assessing the need for foodstuffs and agricultural products, and with that in mind WFP had held consultations with donors in conjunction with FAO. The requisite priority must also be given to food aid even before a shortage occurred, in order not to be caught unawares if a crisis should develop, while recognizing that all sectors must receive sufficient funding, for there was no point in trying to feed people who were homeless or ill if nothing was done to house or care for them. Lastly, “silent emergencies”, which public opinion had eventually grown tired of but which led to alarming situations, must not be forgotten.

He suggested inviting, during a meeting of the unofficial humanitarian action group, new food aid donors such as South Africa, Kenya, India and Russia, which did not always have the resources to transport, store and distribute their assistance and which might benefit in that regard from the help of the traditional donors.

Mr. MECHALE (Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission, Ethiopia), stressed the complexity of humanitarian relief operations and the importance of flexibility in that regard. Their complexity was due in part to the diversity of needs. Depending on the circumstances, the need might be for non-food aid (water, shelter) or food aid, which might in turn take the form either of cereals or of nutritional supplementation. Implementation arrangements also posed problems. For example, aid would have to be provided in the form of

rations or as part of food-for-work programmes. In the non-food area, it might be necessary to improve or maintain watering places or care for livestock, all matters requiring special skills. The aid also had to be sent in, and funds were not always available to pay for freight.

Thus, the flexibility offered by cash contributions was particularly valuable. Unfortunately, the usual donors did not make many contributions of that kind, which generally came from Ethiopians living abroad or from the private sector. To win the confidence of donors, it was very important to define needs in a careful, concerted and transparent manner. That was the responsibility of the recipients and the implementing organizations, which must also be accountable. The media had an essential role to play in heightening public awareness and mobilizing financial support.

It was important to agree with the donors on how their cash contributions were to be used. In Ethiopia some donors, such as Sweden, allowed the funds they had provided for development, if not used by the end of a certain period, to be allocated to emergency operations. Others, such as Japan, permitted their cash counterpart contributions to be converted in an emergency. The flexibility of all such arrangements greatly contributed to the effectiveness of humanitarian assistance.

Referring to the situation in his country, he said that the assessment of humanitarian needs had been the work of all parties concerned, including the Government, aid agencies, local authorities and local associations. That participatory approach offered better chances of success, because a single joint appeal could be put out. In 2003, Ethiopia had actually received food aid commensurate with its enormous needs, for which it was grateful to the international community. On the other hand, the results had been less satisfactory for non-food aid, for reasons which probably had to do with the lack of a clear method for assessing needs.

The main sources of food aid to Ethiopia were NGOs, WFP and bilateral donors. Despite its modest means, the Ethiopian population had been keen to take part in the humanitarian effort, making contributions which totalled US\$ 10 million. A single governmental service coordinated the aid, thereby reducing the risk of duplication.

His Government had made progress in collecting rainwater for agricultural purposes and combating the structural problems which led to humanitarian crises. An integrated approach must be adopted for a successful transition from emergency relief to sustainable development. It was unfortunate that certain donors attached many conditions to their assistance, which created serious difficulties in the distribution of relief.

Mr. MORJANE (Assistant High Commissioner, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)) said that UNHCR's dual mandate - ensuring the international protection of refugees and seeking permanent solutions to their problems - required action that went beyond the strictly humanitarian. UNHCR's activities were thus part of a larger process of consolidating peace and development. The effectiveness of international humanitarian operations depended on the establishment of a genuine partnership among all those concerned, including donors, United Nations agencies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, the Governments of host countries and the affected communities. There must be more accurate needs assessments and a better follow-up of aid provided. Lastly, it was important to move beyond traditional notions of humanitarian aid and development assistance and break new ground by linking aid programmes more wisely with efforts in the areas of trade, security and conflict prevention.

Turning to matters specific to his office, he said that the High Commissioner had launched the Convention Plus initiative to facilitate the drawing up of special agreements to complement the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees. The aim of the initiative was to find lasting solutions to the problems of refugees and improve burden sharing. UNHCR welcomed the initiative by Norway to open a budget line for transitional situations and a similar initiative by Denmark to enhance protection and assistance in refugees' regions of origin. In closing, he said that UNHCR was resolutely pursuing its efforts to broaden its donor base.

Mr. HUSSEIN (Pakistan) said it was unfortunate that the allocation of budgetary resources for humanitarian aid was often dictated by the political interests of donors. For example, whereas funds totalling some 2.5 billion dollars had been rapidly mobilized for Iraq, Pakistan had obtained only 40 million out of the 159 million dollars requested for assisting refugees on its soil. If donors were not satisfied with the arrangements set up to channel humanitarian aid, they should consider other solutions, such as development aid based on debt

reduction, the opening of markets to the agricultural products of developing countries, direct foreign investment and the fight against poverty. It was a regrettable fact that countries were often more inclined to invest in new weapons systems than to finance humanitarian aid programmes. Only by demonstrating real political will could the international community prevent the collapse of the humanitarian aid system, and the regime for the protection of refugees in particular.

Mr. CHRISTENSEN (Observer for Denmark) said that needs assessment could be improved through privatization. If humanitarian needs were not assessed by the aid recipients themselves, the accuracy and credibility of the procedure would be greater. One source of financing for humanitarian aid was emigrant workers, whose remittances amounted to more than 100 billion dollars worldwide, or twice all public development aid. It would be useful if donors could know to what extent that source helped fill the gaps in funding for humanitarian aid. Admittedly, the allocation of resources for humanitarian aid was often determined by political considerations; the time had come to remedy that anomaly. It must also be said that humanitarian crises were often due to the mistaken policies applied by the countries concerned and to their inability to resolve structural problems, such as the question of landownership.

Mr. NEIL (Jamaica) requested clarification on any steps the Economic and Social Council could take to prevent political considerations from hindering humanitarian assistance, which should be aimed strictly at meeting needs. As for the conditions which, according to Mr. Mechale, some donors imposed on assistance, he wondered whether they were of a political or logistical nature. He expressed surprise that there could be any question of conditions where humanitarian assistance was concerned.

Mr. NAMWALO (Kenya) wondered whether the "food-for-work" programmes implemented in Ethiopia were functioning as well as possible and were viable.

Mr. GOPINATHAN (India) said it was inevitable that political considerations would affect humanitarian assistance. He cited Kosovo as an example of favouritism in the area of humanitarian assistance and wondered whether the international community had learned any lessons from that experience, for example, whether donors were trying to prevent humanitarian assistance from being driven by media coverage, with successive crises being brought to the

attention of the public and then forgotten. He wondered whether the placing of conditions on humanitarian assistance could ever be justified and whether patronage, whereby a given donor systematically called on the same NGO to implement assistance programmes, could be avoided. The transport and delivery of assistance often posed problems and he asked whether international bodies and the funding community had given any thought to the contribution that non-traditional donors, such as India, might make in that regard. Finally, he questioned whether the donor community was truly committed to promoting “food-for-work” programmes.

Mr. MECHALE (Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission, Ethiopia) explained that the continuing humanitarian crises in Ethiopia were less a result of political problems than of a set of complex factors which, above and beyond the issue of agricultural reform, highlighted the need for measures to increase agricultural productivity, address the lack of infrastructure in rural areas and increase the purchasing power of farmers by improving marketing systems and developing non-agricultural income-producing activities.

Donors were, of course, free to call on the NGOs of their choice to provide assistance. Conditions might be imposed on assistance to the extent that certain bilateral donors made their food aid conditional on the beneficiary countries assuming related costs such as for transport and storage. Conditions varied with the partners involved in providing the assistance; for example, where non-food components required a financial contribution, such as for the construction of a rural track, NGO programmes did not always have the necessary flexibility because the scope of their action was narrower.

There were three indispensable factors in ensuring that “food-for-work” programmes were effective and viable: carefully thought out projects, a steady flow of predictable resources, and provision of the necessary backup capabilities. Those conditions were not always met.

Mr. GRAISSE (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)) said that the food assistance agencies avoided any favouritism. Whatever the beneficiary country, the ration supplied was the same: 2,000 calories per day per person. However, for geographical and logistical reasons, such as air transport, some programmes were more costly than others. In the Balkans, NGO assistance was readily available because of the close proximity of the area of operations. As for the “food-for-work” programme, in crisis situations WFP endeavoured to

terminate the distribution of food assistance as soon as possible, so as not to create a dependence on aid. Turning to needs assessment, he saw no real need to assign that task to the private sector, since FAO was well equipped to deal with it.

WFP participated systematically in the consolidated global appeals process, and fully recognized its importance. However, the constraints of local production along with pressure from donors sometimes obliged WFP to bypass the procedure and launch individual appeals. In any case, any review of that process would require in-depth analysis.

The only condition imposed by WFP on the granting of food assistance was that it should not be used or diverted for political purposes, for example in a pre-electoral context.

Mr. LENNARTSSON NAKAMITSU (Head, Humanitarian Section, Department of Global Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Sweden) said the statistics showed that, unlike official development assistance (ODA), humanitarian assistance had increased considerably over the past decade, growing from US\$ 2 to 6 billion. The current debate on humanitarian efforts within the funding community should enable some thought to be given to the problem of the politicization of humanitarian assistance and measures to ensure that such assistance was fair and based on an objective needs assessment. It would no doubt be preferable for any such assessment to be a joint effort. It might also be assigned to the private sector, which would however imply separating the evaluation and implementation aspects, a choice which would not be without consequences. Meeting the real needs would also help combat favouritism and avoid having assistance fluctuate with the level of media coverage. In any case, the volume of multilateral assistance allocated to countries facing ongoing crises, such as Sudan and Angola, had remained fairly stable over the years. As for conditionality, it could not but arouse very serious reservations in the context of humanitarian assistance.

Mr. BERTELING (Director, Human Rights, Humanitarian Assistance, Good Governance and Peacebuilding, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Netherlands) said that the volume of ODA provided by the Netherlands had remained stable whereas humanitarian assistance had increased. Donors were quite aware of the inherent risks associated with media coverage of

humanitarian problems and in fact the United Nations agencies did not hesitate to remind the media of crises which were no longer front-page news. Assessments of real needs undertaken jointly by aid agencies, funding bodies and beneficiary countries should make for better understanding of the overall context and therefore facilitate fairer allocation of assistance, without neglecting countries with ongoing crises.

The “food-for-work” programmes were not considered to be emergency assistance. As a donor country, the Netherlands did not provide food aid but rather financial resources. The question of who was to pay for transport of food aid had been widely discussed among traditional donors; his Government took a firm position on the subject but new donors, such as India, did not necessarily have the same point of view; accordingly, there should be an in-depth review of that relatively complex issue.

Mr. GOTTA (Ethiopia) said that collective land ownership was enshrined in the Ethiopian Constitution and had been reaffirmed by referendum in 1994. Development efforts were the only means to overcome famine in the long term, but owing to lack of resources measures to that end adopted by his Government had had only a limited effect. Such initiatives must therefore be supported by the international community through increased ODA, more debt relief and the opening of markets.

Ms. LYNCH (United States of America) said the humanitarian assistance problem could not be dealt with by using simplistic and set responses. Her Government felt the consolidated appeals process was extremely useful and it would continue to act in accordance with the initiatives agreed to at the Conference of food aid donors, while recognizing that that procedure did not always afford the flexibility or the information necessary for rapid intervention. As the European experience in the Balkans had shown, over-concentration on assistance to a nearby region could detract from the attention given to other crises, no less severe but affecting more distant countries. The provision of consistent and well-coordinated assistance necessarily meant involving the leaders of the beneficiary countries in any actions undertaken.

Mr. ACHARYA (Nepal) wondered what efforts had been undertaken in the context of the “Convention Plus” initiative to find lasting solutions to the refugee problem.

Mr. MORJANE (Assistant High Commissioner, UNHCR) said various initiatives were under way to update the 1951 Convention, considering that instrument from a perspective which would not be strictly juridical and taking in the whole problem area of protection. A review had been launched based on a Canadian study on resettlement. The regional groups were likewise studying solutions in a regional context.

The CHAIRMAN thanked the participants for a thought-provoking and constructive exchange of views.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.