



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. NAVAJAS MOCRO (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)  
(A/C.2/43/L.13/Rev.1)

1. The CHAIRMAN announced that Mauritania had joined the sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/43/L.13/Rev.1, entitled "Assistance to the Palestinian people".

AGENDA ITEM 82: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued)  
(A/43/3, A/43/184, A/43/L.35-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/43/740; 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)

2. Mr. RABGYE (Bhutan) said that the scientific and moral justification for addressing the causes and features of environmental degradation on an international basis had been borne out by each speaker. The United Nations could no longer afford to delay the mobilization of combined resources and the search for preventive and remedial measures. If the world found itself unprepared for that alarming situation, it was not for lack of warnings from myriad scientists and non-governmental organizations. UNEP itself had for several years been warning the international community about phenomena such as deforestation, desertification, dumping of toxic wastes, global warming, and depletion of the ozone layer. Given UNEP's essential role in combating such threats, which were comparable only to the spectre of a nuclear holocaust, his country joined those others which had called for an increase in its resources.

3. Environmental degradation had affected the developing countries very severely. Those countries' economic difficulties often compelled them to abuse their natural resources, to the detriment of their ecosystems. The problem should

(Mr. Rabgye, Bhutan)

be seen in the wider context of a globally integrated socio-economic system. His country therefore reiterated its support for the numerous initiatives to define a global strategy, and welcomed such useful contributions as the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, as well as the work undertaken by many bodies, such as the International Council of Scientific Unions and the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

4. Situated in the heart of the Himalayas, in an area which played a pivotal role in determining the relief, climate and thus the environment of a vast area of the Asian continent, his country had always been aware of the links of interdependence between man, nature and the environment. He therefore wished to share its limited, but perhaps useful, experience. In Bhutan, children were inculcated at a very early stage with Buddhist values and age-old traditions of respect for - and life in harmony with - nature. His country was therefore particularly committed to the conservation of its pristine ecosystem, which comprised an impressive array of flora and fauna, as well as innumerable lakes and rivers. It had often foregone immediate economic benefits for fear of adverse effects on the environment, as a result of such phenomena as deforestation and the erosion of soil from the often very steep slopes of the Himalayan foothills. Thus, despite its rich forest resources, his country had retained an extremely conservative forestry policy. Environmental protection enjoyed greater priority than commercial interests. Children took part in reforestation activities, and several wildlife sanctuaries, covering 30 per cent of the area of the country, were zealously protected. Mining was also subject to highly selective limitations. In view of the very real risks of desertification, the raising and grazing of goats in open spaces were strictly prohibited. His country was proud of the modest successes it had attained as a result of a policy based on the rejection of immediate financial rewards for the sake of longer-term advantages, and noted that other small countries were making similar efforts. It hoped that all nations, whether rich or poor, small or large, would make the obvious choice.

5. Mr. EMENYI (Nigeria) said that the majority of African Governments had embarked on activities within the framework of their structural adjustment programmes, to develop new and renewable sources of energy in rural areas, with a view to providing Africa's rural population with access to energy at an affordable price. There was therefore a need to intensify research into cheap renewable sources of energy. His country, for its part, had already established within its universities two centres for research and development in connection with solar energy, wind energy, biogas and biomass, wave energy and small hydroelectric power stations. It supported the proposal to establish a system of information exchange in that area, which had been the subject of a large amount of work in various countries.

6. His Government deplored the fact that Africa's ecological problems had been further aggravated by the increasingly frequent dumping, in various parts of the continent, of toxic and radioactive wastes from countries which were well aware of the grave dangers posed by such dumping. His country, which had recently been the victim of such an incident, saw such activities as a major attack on the

(Mr. Emenyi, Nigeria)

universally shared objective of a healthier environment. It congratulated UNEP on its pioneering effort to regulate the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and to prepare an international convention on that subject. However, it believed that the producers of such wastes bore responsibility for ensuring that wastes were treated and disposed of in their own countries or in countries which possessed the necessary technology. The proposed convention should therefore embody sanctions against States whose companies illegally exported radioactive and toxic wastes to countries which did not possess the technical means to dispose of them.

7. With regard to drought and desertification, he believed that urgent concerted action by the international community was required in order to help Africa to address those problems. He also welcomed Malta's initiative on conservation of the world climate, and noted that the sudden and dramatic changes in Africa's climate could be attributed to deforestation and desert encroachment.

8. Mr. KUFUOR (Ghana) said that renewable sources of energy were of paramount importance in Africa, as the conventional fuel equivalent of energy from renewable sources consumed there considerably exceeded petroleum consumption. It was well known to everyone that hydrocarbons were a finite resource and that new and renewable sources of energy should therefore be given the attention they deserved. No one should be lulled into complacency by low oil prices and the supply glut. It was also worth noting that over 2 billion rural inhabitants in the developing world were unaffected by international energy markets and that their daily concern was obtaining fuelwood. The acute scarcity of fuelwood was creating such serious phenomena as deforestation and nutrition and health problems in rural areas. It brought on desertification, on the one hand, and a large-scale rural exodus, on the other. However, fuelwood could be converted into energy more efficiently, for enormous quantities of heat were dissipated by the traditional three-legged woodstoves. The institutes and universities in the developing countries, however, should not have any difficulty in providing for the technical improvement of such stoves. The energy supply could be increased by manufacturing briquettes from sawdust, a material that was often discarded. Ghana had taken a step in that direction, but better compacting methods still had to be found.

9. Mini-hydroprojects could be constructed in rural areas; the problem there was mainly one of obtaining financial and technical resources. Ghana, which had constructed the large Akosombo dam on the Volta, exported electricity to its neighbours - a modest contribution to the economic integration of West Africa.

10. The developing countries had enormous potential for developing new and renewable sources of energy, and the fact that the Nairobi Programme of Action was being implemented too slowly was regrettable. Additional resources must also be provided to the United Nations Trust Fund for New and Renewable Sources of Energy.

11. Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Malta) noted that in most parts of the world, a satisfactory solution to the food problem was still nowhere in sight. While the work of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the World Food Council (WFC) and UNDP was appreciated, his delegation looked forward to further initiatives, particularly in

(Mr. Berg Olivier, Malta)

the Mediterranean region with respect to agriculture and fisheries. Malta could serve as a regional clearing-house for fish and fish products, and a regional fish-marketing information service. Malta supported the Cyprus Initiative against Hunger in the World.

12. Referring to energy, he said that his country had conducted several innovative studies and projects on solar and wind energy, with technical co-operation from the other countries and the United Nations system. Continued implementation of the Nairobi Programme of Action was necessary and, where appropriate, follow-up to the recommendations of the recent Castelgandolfo Colloquium on New and Renewable Sources of Energy.

13. While recognizing the need to spare no effort in conserving the environment and ensuring sustainable development, his delegation believed that developing countries should not be penalized for the past errors of developed countries. A careful and safe trade-off must be found between the needs of the present and the rights of future generations. His delegation also looked forward to the early conclusion of a global convention on the control of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes with regard to the movement of toxic and dangerous products, both transit and importing countries must be fully informed of the nature of such substances.

14. Mr. ATTARD (Malta) outlined the reasons which had prompted Malta to propose the inclusion of "Conservation of climate as part of the common heritage of mankind" as an item in the agenda of the forty-third session.

15. Climate was one of the few natural resources which conditioned all human development - physical, social and economic. Certain human activities could change global climatic patterns, thus threatening the very well-being of present and future generations. Global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer might upset the delicate ecological balance and alter natural evolutionary responses. Paying tribute to the important work accomplished in the field by various United Nations organizations, particularly the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), he said that the time was ripe for the General Assembly, the parliament of mankind, to supplement their efforts and to focus on the phenomena of climatic change, particularly global warming. It was also time to take urgent and effective action in order to remedy the problem in the interest of all mankind. Initially, it was important to infuse additional human and financial resources into the endeavour. An immediate, comprehensive global review should be undertaken. It should produce recommendations with respect to the current state of knowledge on climate; the environmental and socio-economic impact of climatic change; policies to delay, limit or mitigate the impact of adverse climatic change; and the elaboration of international legal instruments concerned with climate. The process should lead to the promulgation of an international convention on climate. Even as it provided a framework for national, regional and international measures to conserve climate, it would enumerate general principles and would be supplemented by a number of protocols which could take into account the characteristics of every region of the world. The problem of climatic change was one of such magnitude that there must be some means of ensuring that the

(Mr. Attard, Malta)

relatively limited resources available were effectively utilized in the interest of all mankind. Climatic change, particularly global warming, could have catastrophic results for mankind because of the serious consequences on health, agricultural productivity and the sea level. A man-made extinction process was currently under way, which might be comparable to the great geological events of the past, but was occurring at a much more rapid rate. The Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer demonstrated, however, that the international community was able to take effective measures in the face of such a serious problem as ozone depletion. Similarly, the international nature of the problem of climatic change called for urgent and comprehensive measures to be undertaken within the framework of the United Nations.

16. Mr. TURIANSKY (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that in the recent past, the world had been brutally awakened to the reality of the economic interdependence of States. The time had come to adapt to the idea of a growing ecological interdependence. Economic and ecological questions were increasingly interrelated. Development-related activities frequently led to destruction of the natural heritage and, conversely, environmental degradation could affect economic progress. It was therefore essential to seek a global approach that would integrate all aspects of human life and activities.

17. The extent of environmental degradation aroused grave concern over the future of mankind. Desertification and the destruction of plant cover were proceeding at a rapid pace. The arms race and regional conflicts were barriers to the harmonious and balanced use of technology, and of natural and human resources. The production, storage and transport of various types of weapons and nuclear wastes caused direct harm to the environment and retarded development. In 1988, the developing countries had protested several times against the disposal of radioactive and other wastes in their territory. Furthermore, the intensive use of chemicals in agriculture and the release of certain harmful industrial substances into the atmosphere were increasingly affecting the health of populations. Greater international co-operation was essential in order to resolve those problems. The world community had a duty to prevent an ecological catastrophe and to safeguard the planet's resource base.

18. That objective called for a radically new approach in the political and economic spheres. In that connection, the Ukrainian SSR considered that the concept of international ecological security provided an interesting perspective. The aim would be to promote sustainable and environmentally sound development in all States and to create healthy living conditions for all individuals. At a practical level, a convention could be drafted, laying down standards of conduct for States and general guidelines for co-operation in the field of ecology. The Ukrainian SSR was prepared to collaborate with other delegations to adopt the general outlines of a system of international ecological security. The draft resolution on that subject, which it intended to submit with Czechoslovakia, called for action in that respect. Such a strategy would require making clever use of, and reinforcing, the mechanisms created by the international community, above all,

(Mr. Turiansky, Ukrainian SSR)

within the United Nations and in the other intergovernmental bodies. The report of the Secretary-General (A/43/353) described the measures taken to implement General Assembly resolution 42/187. The Ukrainian SSR considered that action inadequate, however. The role of the United Nations should be reinforced through the establishment of an international mechanism, which would facilitate prompt decisions on urgent world problems, especially those of an economic or ecological nature. The proposals concerning the convening in 1989 of a meeting of experts to discuss the state of the environment, and the organization in 1990 of a meeting of senior officials of Member States of the United Nations, were worth considering. The Ukrainian SSR also supported the convening of a second United Nations conference on the environment, in 1992 or earlier.

19. More intensive co-operation in the economic field and with regard to ecology would obviously entail further substantial expenditure, which could be covered by funds released as a result of disarmament. The States parties to the Warsaw Treaty had put forward proposals to that effect in July 1988 in a document concerning the implications of the arms race with regard to the environment and other aspects of ecological security.

20. The development and utilization of new and renewable sources of energy could help to improve the quality of the environment. The Ukrainian SSR supported the activities of the Committee dealing with those matters, but thought that certain improvements could be made. The Committee should focus its attention on the practical aspects of the development and utilization of new energy sources, co-ordination of research into the latest energy-saving techniques, and the use of solar, biomass and geothermal energy. In particular, activities should be better focused and more practical. In that connection, the Ukrainian SSR approved the more specific approach adopted at the Committee's fourth session.

21. Mr. CABACTULAN (Philippines) said that there was a common theme underlying the agenda items concerning food problems, energy sources and the environment: the need to ensure man's continued and decent existence. The environment was deteriorating at an alarming rate, as was demonstrated by the depletion of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect and other harmful phenomena resulting from destabilization of the ecosystems. Although immediate action was obviously needed, it was equally essential to appreciate the root causes of the problem in order to have a clear perspective. It was generally known who was responsible for nuclear contamination, the accumulation of industrial wastes or movements of toxic or hazardous material. Before addressing specifically those who were not directly responsible for such problems, those who bore the primary responsibility should be asked what remedies they intended to suggest.

22. The Philippines noted with satisfaction the positive measures initiated, individually or collectively, by certain countries, in particular, the establishment by Sweden of an international technology institute, the Norwegian proposal concerning the development of a global strategy to identify climatic changes and study preventive measures, and Malta's proposal with regard to the conservation of climate. At the same time, emissions into the atmosphere of carbon

(Mr. Cabactulan, Philippines)

dioxide and other so-called "greenhouse" gases were continuing. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer had been signed or ratified by only about 20 countries. It provided a tangible instrument which enabled countries to demonstrate clearly their sincere desire to promote protection of the environment and climate. The Philippine Government intended to contribute to the general effort: it had already reorganized the Department of Natural Resources, which had become the Department of Natural Resources and Environment, and had recently signed the Montreal Protocol.

23. The international community could make considerable progress in the field of environmental protection if countries adopted an honest approach. Conservation of the environment must not be used as a pretext for making the access of developing countries to external resources subject to even more stringent conditions, nor should it obstruct production processes. It was important to be particularly aware of that danger since reactivation of growth and development was the developing countries' major concern.

24. The development of the agricultural sector and the elimination of hunger should be of foremost concern to the international community. His delegation urged the World Food Council to continue to provide leadership in that field. It wished also to draw attention to the problem of food security and of trade in agricultural products, in the context of the Cyprus Initiative against Hunger in the World. The liberalization of trade in agricultural and food products would be advantageous with regard to food security since it would make it possible to correct the imbalances connected with food shortages and surpluses. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) provided an appropriate context in which to challenge the increase in protectionism. In that connection, he noted with satisfaction that Poland shared the views of the Cairns group with regard to reducing farm subsidies and removing other restrictions on agricultural trade.

25. With regard to new and renewable energy sources, his delegation reaffirmed its commitment to the Nairobi Programme of Action for the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy, which had in no way been invalidated by the drop in oil prices. Given that oil stocks were not inexhaustible, it would be unreasonable to abandon or decelerate the activities proposed in the Programme. Past mistakes must not be repeated.

26. The information published in the Secretary-General's report on Energy exploration and development trends in developing countries (A/43/476) was disturbing. The extremely serious economic difficulties experienced by the developing countries fully justified their receiving external financial assistance for the development of such resources.

27. Lastly, he pointed out that his delegation did not challenge the basic premise of sustainable and environmentally sound development. That objective must be pursued, however, within the broader context, of eradication of poverty and reactivation of growth and development. Consequently, a degree of caution was in order when confronted with a whole series of measures directed principally at those



(Mr. Cabactulan, Philippines)

countries which were only marginally responsible for environmental deterioration and contamination. Otherwise, the international community would achieve nothing, or, what would be even worse, it would be inventing a convenient excuse for avoiding the real problems the world was facing.

28. Mr. MAIGA (Mali) said that the issues relating to food and the environment concerned human beings and the fulfilment of their basic needs. Clearly, much remained to be done to achieve equitable development. Despite progress made in science and technology, millions of people were threatened by famine. As existing policies and programmes had not attained the desired objective, a reappraisal was essential. The Cyprus Initiative against Hunger in the World therefore deserved particular attention, and Mali wished to reaffirm its support for the implementation of that strategy.

29. The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development had demonstrated that there was a relationship between hunger and environment. If Earth's precarious balance was to be preserved, it was essential to adhere to a system of production that took into account the interaction between the various parts of the ecosystem. Harnessing the energy resources of the developing countries would be of enormous help in achieving that balance. The Malta Initiative on conserving climate deserved to be encouraged, because it had a similar thrust.

30. In Mali, preserving the ecological balance was a national priority. In order to protect the national heritage, which had been seriously affected by the drought, in 1985, his Government had drawn up a plan to combat drought and desertification as part of its policy of food self-sufficiency and water management. The objectives of the plan were food security, protection of the plant cover and improvement of the environment and living conditions. Emphasis had also been placed on population participation. In that context, the urban population was to replace firewood by other energy sources by 1995.

31. The mid-term assessment of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, had shown that the African countries had given priority to agricultural development, food security and reforms in sectors in support of agriculture. However, a number of unfavourable outside factors had seriously impeded their efforts, particularly the drop in commodity prices, the net transfer of capital from Africa to developed countries, the drought, and acts of aggression by the racist régime of South Africa against the front-line States. Many African countries had also been hard-hit by invasions of locusts. Mali therefore appealed to the international community to pursue and intensify its assistance to Africa in its fight against that scourge.

32. Drought and desertification control was another priority area of the above-mentioned Programme of Action. In order to halt those phenomena, the African countries were undertaking activities at national, subregional and regional levels in the areas of reforestation, water-resource management, protection of joint ecosystems, exploitation of new energy sources, sand-dune stabilization,

(Mr. Maiga, Mali)

soil-erosion control, measures to fight salination, inclusion of ecological factors in development programmes and full implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

33. Africa's efforts to restore the ecological balance might well be rendered totally useless because of the increasingly widespread practice of dumping nuclear and industrial waste on the African continent. Developed countries and the international community were duty-bound to adopt effective measures, particularly appropriate legislation, in order to prevent such movements of toxic wastes.

34. In conclusion, his delegation wished to draw attention to the recommendation contained in paragraph 49 of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 (A/43/664). The Committee stressed that the environment and natural resources should become important considerations in development co-operation and that environmental activities must go hand in hand with efforts to enhance economic growth and combat poverty, as there was a clear link between economic well-being and the quality of the environment.

35. Mr. SYROGIANIS-CAMARA (Observer for the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) drew attention to the detailed documents distributed by FAO. He said that he would not repeat the information contained therein and would not address the situation in Africa. Since the world food situation and outlook had deteriorated sharply in recent months, world food production for 1988 was expected to be sharply below trend, resulting in food supply difficulties and higher prices on the international market. World cereal stocks at the end of the 1988/89 seasons were projected to fall below the minimum level FAO considered necessary to safeguard world food security.

36. FAO fully supported the Cyprus Initiative adopted by the World Food Council. The Initiative should assist in reaching an international consensus in dealing with the problem of hunger in a concerted manner. All FAO's activities had been perfectly relevant to that Initiative, and its support would be based on its past work and experiences.

37. Agricultural trade remained in a state of crisis. Despite recent increases in the prices of a number of commodities, at the end of 1987 real commodity prices had reached historically low levels. It was important that developing countries, particularly those which relied on agricultural products for a large share of their export receipts, had a steady flow of foreign exchange. There was an urgent need to ensure the development programmes and projects proposed for a number of commodities by FAO in collaboration with UNCTAD were taken up for implementation when the Second Account of the Common Fund became operational.

38. The enhancement of the competitiveness of developing countries' exports also called for vigorous action on the part of industrialized countries to enlarge market access and curtail heavily subsidized production. The Uruguay Round

(Mr. Syrogianis-Camara, Observer, FAO)

presented an opportunity to reduce protectionism, but efforts must be redoubled to reconcile the positions of participants.

39. FAO continued to give high priority to economic and technical co-operation between developing countries (ECDC and TCDC). ECDC activities in FAO covered: analysis and promotion of strategies and policies for increasing food and agriculture production; co-operation in the management of natural resources; in food security and in agricultural trade and commodities; and development of human resources. An updated systematic description of FAO's support to ECDC activities would be available to the international community in the near future. As for TCDC, it had permeated the entire spectrum of FAO activities, and he cited a number of recent examples in various regions of the world.

40. Underlining the urgent nature of the locust and grasshopper infestation, he said that the strategy for dealing with it must have the twin objectives of limiting damage to crops and destroying as many insects as possible in order to curb the spread of the plague. Campaigns based on those twin objectives had been conducted south of the Sahara. Over 1 million hectares had already been treated in the Sahel and Ethiopia, but a further 2 million hectares might have to be treated in the next two to three months, and a total of 12 million hectares by June 1989. FAO, through its Emergency Centre for Locust Operations, had continued to co-ordinate the campaign and, together with the affected countries, to analyse the development of the situation, to evaluate the needs and to mobilize support. Those activities were mainly focused on emergency operations, but there was also a need for further research and for accelerating long-term predictions. Those issues had been discussed at a meeting held in Rome from 18 to 20 October 1988.

41. Among the many overall studies FAO had made on general policy and evaluation, it was worth mentioning two regional studies completed in 1988: one covered food and agriculture in the European region and North America, while the second dealt with the food and agriculture sector and rural development in Latin America and the Caribbean. FAO believed that that type of work was gaining in importance for the international community, with the growing interdependence of the economic, political, social, technological and ecological sectors.

42. As for the long-term strategy for sustainable and environmentally sound development, FAO's long involvement in environmental matters derived from its Constitution. FAO had been active with regard to a number of issues raised by the Brundtland Report, as reflected in the adoption of a number of instruments concerning various aspects of environmental conservation and sustainable development.

43. Mr. BOECK (Austria), speaking on item 82 (g), said that a new study undertaken in the United States had concluded that there should be an immediate 100-per-cent reduction in the use of chlorofluorocarbons and halons and a freeze in the use of methyl chloroform merely to stabilize chlorine and halon atmospheric concentrations at current levels for the next 100 years. Recent workshops in Villach (Austria) and Bellagio (Italy) had revealed the probable consequences of climatic change, for

(Mr. Boeck, Austria)

example the erosion of beaches and coastal margins, loss of wetland, increased frequency of flooding and various kinds of damage to the coastal infrastructure. Those scientific findings, as well as a number of serious incidents, had led to an increasing awareness on the part of public authorities and the private sector of the fragile state of the environment and of the need for concrete, more effective and future-oriented international co-operation.

44. That awareness had manifested itself recently in a number of encouraging initiatives. Austria welcomed the entry into force of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, which would soon be complemented by the Montreal Protocol. Austria had signed the Protocol in August 1988 and its ratification was under way. Austria was willing to host meetings of the contracting parties in 1989.

45. Austria also attached great importance to regional co-operation. In the European context Austria was following with interest the work of the Economic Commission for Europe on environmental matters such as long-range transboundary air pollution and the reduction of sulphur dioxide and nitrogen oxide emissions, and the work of OECD on the transboundary movement of special wastes. Within its own territory, Austria had already reduced sulphur dioxide emissions and transboundary fluxes by 30 per cent and more. The signing of a protocol on the control of nitrogen oxide emissions, shortly to take place in Sofia, would be an important new step in implementing the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution.

46. Furthermore, Austria had submitted a number of detailed proposals on environmental protection at the Vienna Follow-up Meeting within the context of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, concerning in particular the drawing up of a European convention to protect international water courses and lakes and international agreements on transboundary movements of hazardous wastes. Stringent measures had been taken in Austria to control polluting emissions from motor vehicles, and legislation had been adopted on hazardous wastes and smog.

47. To prevent a further erosion of their common future, countries had to commit themselves to promoting sustainable and environmentally sound development. It was obvious that the vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation must be broken. It was the only way of curbing such phenomena as desertification, deforestation, soil depletion or water shortages. Preparation of the next international development strategy should therefore be geared towards a revival of growth and development; in that context it might be useful to emphasize the alleviation of poverty and its environmental consequences, as well as human resources development. Furthermore, development strategies should afford the same importance to ecological and economic factors and involve those affected in designing and implementing projects.

48. His delegation advocated better integration of ecological factors into the activities of the United Nations, a stronger role for the Organization in promoting sustainable development and a strengthening of national analytical and management capacities. His delegation also paid tribute to the leading role assumed by UNEP.

(Mr. Boeck, Austria)

49. It was obviously essential to pursue efforts to implement the recommendations of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the provisions of General Assembly resolution 42/187. In that regard the recent Oslo Conference on Sustainable Development had drawn up an array of valuable recommendations which were listed in document A/43/462. They emphasized measures to secure sustainable growth and alleviate poverty, the use of the technical capacities of UNDP and UNEP, the mobilization of public opinion and the priority issues of the United Nations; in that regard, the proposals for a conference on sustainable development in 1992, for the application of the System-Wide Medium-Term Environment Programme and for the strengthening of the role of the regional commissions provided a useful framework for action.

50. Despite differences of opinion about scientific findings, economic and environmental priorities, or about the best way of proceeding to secure sustainable development, it was essential to take further concrete measures. His delegation hoped that the current session of the General Assembly would give encouragement to that process.

51. Mr. BOSCHWITZ (United States of America) said he fully endorsed the principle of sustainable development and believed that co-operation was necessary to produce needed goods and services while safeguarding the quality of the environment. Economic growth should be promoted in order to combat poverty, which was often at the root of environmental degradation, and it was necessary to take account of the environment in economic decisions at all levels. The strategy for sustainable development should be decentralized. While his delegation endorsed the Canadian proposal for a United Nations conference on sustainable development in 1992, it cautioned against the excessive proliferation of international meetings on that issue.

52. With regard to the report of the Committee on the Development and Utilization of New and Renewable Sources of Energy (A/43/36), he emphasized that, despite a more favourable climate in the energy sector, development of new and renewable sources of energy had in no way declined in importance. The United States believed that sound national energy policies, including the elimination of price controls and subsidies and the factoring of private sector interest could assist in mobilizing capital for investment in energy, including efficient new and renewable sources of energy. It was in that spirit that the United States was implementing substantial domestic and bilateral programmes in that field. The United States continued to believe that the work of the Second Committee on the very important issue of new and renewable sources of energy could also be effectively addressed in other bodies of the United Nations system.

53. Global warming was a worrisome problem because of its potential effects, and it required action. In order to be effective, such action must be multilateral, because no one nation acting alone could have any effect on global warming. Broad international co-operation on the question of climate change was necessary, and the United Nations had an important role to play in that regard.

(Mr. Boaschvitz, United States)

54. The WMO/UNEP Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change could play a co-ordinating role. The first priority should be to provide an international assessment of climate change, bearing in mind three objectives: to increase scientific understanding, to define more clearly the possible regional impacts, and to explore the full range of possible actions.

55. The United States saw an important role for the private sector, which could help Governments develop and use environmentally sound technologies. The World Bank and other international lending organizations must also look closely at the environmental effects of the energy strategies which they promoted among their member countries. The United Nations should proclaim, in the near future, an international year of global climate protection.

56. He recounted his experience and work as a senator in the United States Congress, where he sought to promote legislation on the environment. In particular, he supported the bill introduced by Senator Stafford, which called for the virtual elimination of chlorofluorocarbons in the United States by the end of the century and a reduction of carbon dioxide emissions by about 35 per cent by the year 2010.

57. The international community must also work together to counter the effects of deforestation. A good way to do that was to plant trees, which would also make it possible to reduce the potential effects of global warming since trees absorbed carbon dioxide.

58. The United States was currently co-operating with the Government of Guatemala and several international development organizations on a project to plant 52 million trees in Guatemala. The American Forestry Association had launched a campaign to plant 100 million trees across the United States by 1992, especially in urban areas. Those were some of the actions which must be taken. There was a need to intensify research and to begin planning potential responses in the event that global warming became a reality. The United States was ready to work with other nations in that regard.

59. Mr. AYUBI (Afghanistan) said that the worsening food and agricultural situation was of great concern. Since the maintenance of international peace and security was essential for improving the economic situation, enhancing food security and establishing co-operation in those areas, he hoped that those issues would be kept at the centre of attention.

60. Food was a fundamental and universal human right, and his delegation strongly condemned the use of food as an instrument of political pressure. Afghanistan endorsed the conclusions and recommendations of the World Food Council (WFC) at its fourteenth session, and welcomed with satisfaction the Cyprus Initiative against Hunger in the World. The establishment of a food security system for the developing countries would be a positive step. Further, donor countries should increase their contributions to the multilateral agencies which were in financial need, such as the International Fund for Agricultural Development.

(Mr. Ayubi, Afghanistan)

61. Turning to the problem of the environment, he said that, in order to prevent a further deterioration of the situation, it was absolutely essential to initiate a plan based on international co-operation for rational and ecologically balanced development, the pooling of information on resource-related technologies and the conservation and assessment of ecological resources. Finally, his delegation supported the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, which had been prepared by UNEP.

62. Mr. ERFAN (Egypt) said that the FAO and WFC reports on the world food situation were extremely alarming. The reasons for that grim situation, whose consequences were particularly serious for the developing world, were many: natural disasters, unfair terms of trade, protectionism and net transfer of resources from the developing countries.

63. While emergency relief and charity concerts were appreciated, they were not durable and comprehensive solutions to the problem of hunger. Economic reforms were undoubtedly needed by the developing countries, many of which had already undertaken such measures, but there would not be much hope for progress until the international community took resolute steps to change the international economic environment, which remained unfavourable to the developing countries.

64. In particular, it was essential to reduce the amount and service of the debt owed by the developing countries and to reverse the net transfer of resources, while ensuring the transfer of technology through direct foreign investment. The implementation of structural adjustment programmes should be gradual and supported by the necessary financing in order to feed the poorest.

65. Finally, all forms of protectionism must be removed, agricultural subsidies must be gradually lifted and new means must be found to stabilize commodity prices.

66. His delegation believed that the Cyprus Initiative against Hunger in the World, which WFC had adopted at its fourteenth session, was a step in the right direction on the long path which lay ahead. Egypt would be the host of the fifteenth session, during which policy actions would be developed as a follow-up to that Initiative, and it urged all countries and intergovernmental and specialized agencies to assist fully in its implementation. His delegation also hoped that the ad hoc consultative group established by the President of WFC for that purpose would successfully accomplish its mandate.

67. Archbishop MARTINO (Observer for the Holy See) said that the problem of the environment transcended geographical and political boundaries and was so complex that it surpassed the capacities of individual countries and overrode particular national interests. The solutions on which the well-being and even the existence of future generations depended could be found only by common agreement, with the sovereignty of each country wedded to the responsibility for the common good. Since the environment belonged to no one person, no one could arrogate to himself the right to take possession of the environment for selfish purposes. All individuals and nations, without exception, were accountable for the use made of something that was the patrimony of mankind.

(Archbishop Martino, Observer, Holy See)

68. Man and his environment were inseparably linked. But in their constant interaction man's creativeness must not destroy the natural life force which enabled him to exist and develop. Modern man and the environment had become enemies who would destroy each other unless some solution was found. The fundamental symbiosis between man and his environment had been compromised by a greedy civilisation fascinated by technological achievements; that was why, without in any way disregarding the scientific and political aspects of the problem, it was important to stress that it also had a moral aspect. Man must recognize that he did not have absolute power over things. He was subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones which could not be violated with impunity. The world had been entrusted to man and he must work with profound respect for what he had received. He must rediscover the goodness of the created world and become a faithful and responsible steward of the gifts of creation, with full consciousness of the innate interdependence of things, exploring without destroying and using without squandering. People would thus be able to obey the second moral imperative, that of solidarity, sharing the resources of the world with their fellows and preserving them for future generations, so that all would have equal access to them. Only by giving pre-eminence to the spiritual values which invested earthly goods and their proper use with meaning would it be possible to prevent the world turning against man.

69. Mr. DERISBOURG (Observer for the European Economic Community) said that it was quite shocking that undernourishment should persist in certain regions of the world when large stocks of food were available in others. Those surpluses had of course been used to help countries throughout the world to cope with disastrous situations. But such assistance should not be maintained in the long term: it was the roots of malnutrition that must be attacked. The Community was convinced that local agricultural production must be developed in order to satisfy food needs, and it sought to participate in that development by encouraging local production or triangular operations with an intermediary developing country. The Community and its member States were currently supplying 15 to 20 per cent of total food aid, especially in the form of grains, through bilateral or multilateral channels such as the World Food Programme. In view of the high level already reached, it now seemed necessary to shift the emphasis to improvement of the quality of food aid as a development tool.

70. With regard to the relationship between food, agriculture and the environment, the Community agreed with the World Food Council that the environment must be respected and the environmental dimension incorporated in national food strategies, and it therefore gave increasing weight in its contractual relations with the countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to the return to rural development, the struggle against desertification, and environmental protection, as witnessed by the adoption of an action plan to conserve the soil and combat desertification in Africa and of the Community's programme of action for the environment.

71. With respect to food security and international agricultural trade, the Community endorsed the conclusions of the World Food Council concerning the need



(Mr. Derisbourg)

for reforms in the producer countries (including the EEC) and the completion of the Uruguay Round. Where production structures were concerned, the Community had begun a reform of its common agricultural policy designed to ensure better control of production and of budgetary expenditure and to cope with the new realities, particularly the membership of Spain and Portugal. It had introduced stabilizers designed to slow production growth and restrain prices in the grains and oils sector. It had also instituted a measure - the land freeze - which was very unpopular among farmers, involving the compensation of those who agreed to freeze at least 20 per cent of their land for a minimum of five years. Such measures had to be introduced gradually, for the European agricultural model must be preserved by means of a coherent policy which maintained farm incomes at acceptable levels and ensured the survival of the family farm. The reforms would bear full fruit only if the trading partners who were major farm producers agreed to meet their responsibilities under GATT, i.e. to bring supply into line with domestic and foreign demand. During the Uruguay Round the EEC had been the first to make its offer in respect of tropical products of particular interest to the developing countries, an offer which might lead to the elimination or substantial reduction of customs duties on primary or semi-finished tropical products. It was also proposing a gradual reduction of domestic taxation affecting coffee, tea and cocoa trade and consumption. Preferential treatment should also be retained for the least advanced countries, many of which had contractual links with the EEC under the Lomé Convention.

72. The most pressing issue was certainly the reduction of agricultural surpluses and subsidies. The EEC had submitted to GATT proposals for an agreed long-term reduction of agricultural support levels and for the consolidation of support levels in GATT and a gradual reduction in relation to the consolidated rate. Such action for the long-term reduction of agricultural support levels ought to be the focus of the agricultural negotiations in the Uruguay Round and it would facilitate the needed improvement of the GATT rules and procedures. The Community was convinced that beneficial results ought to be achieved in those negotiations. However, the reduction of subsidies would not bring immediate and automatic advantages to all the developing countries for some time, for not all of them were exporters and some were net importers of food products. That was why the Community envisaged arrangements to cater to the special needs of the developing countries.

73. Turning to the statement made in the Committee by the representative of Argentina (see A/C.2/43/SR.23), he said that in any comparison of the statistical data for 1970 and 1986 it was important to remember that between those two years the Community's membership had grown from six to 12 States and that its production capacity had practically doubled. By 1986 the 12-member Community had become the world's second agricultural producer, but it must not be forgotten that it had also become the world's leading importer of farm goods. It had indeed become a net exporter of beef, but it also imported 400,000 tons of high-quality meat, which was dearer than the exported beef, and unlike many importing countries, it did not invoke the risk of foot-and-mouth disease to protect its market against imports from certain regions. The figures cited by the representative of Argentina were incorrect. The Community's share of the world market in 1986 was not 45 per cent

(Mr. Derisbourg)

but 30 per cent, and that year had been an exceptional one owing to very large exports to Latin America to help certain Governments combat inflation. For the year 1987-1988, which was much more representative of normal flows, the Community's share was 23 per cent and Argentina's nine per cent. The 1986 figures cited for wheat were also wrong. The Community's share of the world market was around 16 to 17 per cent, and it should be remembered that it was the largest, if not the only, importer of secondary grains and substitution products for animal feeds. Moreover, the wheat export tonnages included the EEC's food aid, which was so important for many disadvantaged regions of the world.

74. Mr. FAIVET (Observer for Switzerland) welcomed the fact that, just one year after the Brundtland report and the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond had been presented, the Committee was turning its full attention to the problems of sustainable and environmentally sound development, conservation of climate, and toxic and hazardous wastes. He commended the initiative of Sweden to host a conference on sustainable and environmentally sound development in 1992. That conference must be carefully prepared, and the substantive and procedural framework that would guide the work of the United Nations system and individual States in that direction should be defined in the very near future.

75. Any strategy for sustainable development, if it was to be successful, must strive to maintain the ecological balances of the Earth and especially of climate. The greenhouse effect, whose causes were well known, threatened to change the climate in a way that might irrevocably disrupt life on the planet. In that connection, his delegation supported the initiative of Malta to make the conservation of climate a priority issue in the international community's debate on the environment.

76. The export of hazardous wastes to the third world, about which there was no longer any doubt was indicative of a genuine malaise affecting virtually all the industrialized countries. Those countries, which were the greatest producers of wastes, including hazardous wastes, were currently unable to manage them. That development was of concern also to the developing countries, which were likewise unable to manage rationally the hazardous wastes produced by their nascent industries. It was impossible to remain indifferent to such a problem in which the economic stakes were estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars; there was thus every reason to welcome the efforts made by UNEP, in response to General Assembly resolution 12/183, in connection with the drafting of a global convention on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes. The work of UNEP had identified the four essential components of a solution: the formulation of new policies for the rationalization of production, including efforts to minimize and recycle hazardous wastes; the need for hazardous wastes management to be carried out as near as possible to the place where the wastes were produced; strict monitoring of exports of wastes; and the institution of a technical assistance mechanism through a secretariat that would be established under the future convention. A diplomatic conference was to be held at Basel in 1989 for the adoption of the global convention. The Second Committee ought to recommend that the widest possible participation in the diplomatic conference should be

(Mr. Faivet, Observer, Switzerland)

encouraged, if necessary, by providing UNEP with the resources needed for that purpose. The General Assembly might also ask the signatories to the convention and, on an interim basis, the secretariat established under the convention to begin work at once so as not to delay the setting up of machinery for assisting developing countries. It might also be helpful if the resolution adopted by the Committee on that subject contained a specific reference to the need for immediate contributions from contracting parties so that the assistance machinery could begin to function.

77. Mr. BEN MOUSSA (Morocco) endorsed the remarks made by the observer for the Holy See, whose enlightening statement was addressed to the consciences of all; the statement by the observer for the European Economic Community, who had discussed substantive issues of major concern, was also extremely interesting.

78. Each representative on the Committee spoke with reference to what he or she considered to be a unique version of the truth; actually, however, all members of the Committee were moving towards a single objective, despite differences attributable to culture, geography or level of development. All were bound by instructions from their Governments, which in turn were limited by terms of office that reflected public opinion, which was subject to pressure from the media, which, finally, acted in accordance with its own logic. Citizens wanted whatever the media bludgeoned them into thinking they should want, to the extent that they no longer truly knew how to act of their own free will. The media disseminated a shocking image of the world, and of the developing world in particular. The media ought to adhere more closely to a code of ethics and emphasize man's identity, a vital and constant force that needed to come to terms with itself as much as with the past. Was it not then logical to view poverty as the worst kind of pollution, and was it not disgraceful that the human conscience unblinkingly accepted the fact that a billion human beings suffered from malnutrition and that the developing countries were allowed to destroy their tropical forests merely to service their debts? Was it not intolerable that wealthy countries shamefully sought to dump their toxic and radioactive wastes in the developing countries, and that fluctuations in climate caused by man's actions were passively accepted? Each saw hardship showed that the existing patterns of unbridled consumption could not become universal without seriously disrupting the fundamental equation balancing resources, population, the environment and development. History would judge governments not on their statistical records but rather on how scrupulously each one respected man's spiritual limits and the physical limits of the Earth. At stake was the symbiotic relationship between man and his environment. Indeed, the planet was on loan to the next generation, and not a legacy from previous ones, who had handed down the notion of discipline and a rejection of waste, which they considered the greatest sin. Yet the paradoxical and aberrant twentieth century, which had witnessed two world wars, various forms of fascism and the arms race, was marked by waste that was beyond control. The Earth was hospitable, but man, the conqueror of nature, was also a selfish predator who invented instruments of destruction. The time had come for a world revolution and a rethinking of the narrow concept of reciprocal ties and sovereignty in order to confirm the existence of fundamental relationship between activities on a microcosmic level and the

(Mr. Ben Moussa, Morocco)

macrocosmic balance. Committee members should remember that they were all heading in the same direction, seeking the same objectives, and only appeared to be at odds with each other.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

79. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it the Committee wished to advance the deadline for the submission of draft proposals under agenda item 148 from 15 November to Friday, 4 November.

80. It was so decided.

81. Mr. BEN MOUSSA (Morocco) asked the Committee to extend the deadline for the submission of draft proposals on the question of the fight against locust and grasshopper infestation in Africa to Monday, 7 November, so that he could make use of the information obtained from a conference held on that subject.

82. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it the Committee wished to honour the request made by the representative of Morocco.

83. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6.25 p.m.