



General Assembly

PROVIS IONAL

A/43/PV.55
22 November 1988

ENGLISH

Forty-third session

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

PROVIS IONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE FIFTY-FIFTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Friday, 18 November 1988, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. DLAMINI (Vice-President) (Swaziland)
later: Mr. AL-SHAKAR (Vice-President) (Bahrain)
later: Mr. HUERTA MONTALVO (Vice-President) (Ecuador)

- Critical economic situation in Africa: United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 [39]
 - (a) 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
 - (b) Report of the Secretary-General
 - (c) Draft resolution

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches in the other languages. The final text will be printed in the Official Records of the General Assembly.

Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, within one week, to the Chief, Official Records Editing Section, Department of Conference Services, room DC2-750, 2 United Nations Plaza, and incorporated in a copy of the record.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Dlamini (Swaziland), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 39

CRITICAL ECONOMIC SITUATION IN AFRICA: UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME OF ACTION FOR AFRICAN ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND DEVELOPMENT 1986-1990

- (a) 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 and Corr.1)
- (b) REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/43/500 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2)
- (c) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/43/664, chapter IV)

The PRESIDENT: I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at noon.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT: I would request those representatives wishing to participate in the debate to inscribe their names on the list as soon as possible.

I call on the Chairman 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, Mr. Vraalsen of Norway, who will introduce the report of the Ad Hoc Committee and the draft resolution therein.

Mr. VRAALSEN (Norway), Chairman 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: I have the honour, as Chairman of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole to present to the General Assembly the Committee's report (A/43/664). The report was adopted by consensus by the Committee. It contains an assessment of the implementation of the Programme of Action by the African countries and the international community, as well as

(Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman, 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)

measures for accelerating its implementation during the next few years. The report also contains, in chapter IV, a draft resolution which recommends that the General Assembly adopt the conclusions set forth in the Committee's report. It furthermore recommends that the General Assembly decide to conduct a final review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action at its forty-sixth session.

(Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman, 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)

I submit the draft resolution to the General Assembly in the sincere hope that the Assembly will adopt it by consensus.

The report which is now before the Assembly represents the results of two weeks of hard labour. I truly wish to pay a tribute to all my colleagues, who actively participated in the Ad Hoc Committee's work and throughout the exercise demonstrated a remarkable spirit of co-operation, goodwill and understanding. Each and every participant fully grasped the importance of the subject before the Committee and the vital need to bring our deliberations to a successful conclusion. I am particularly grateful to my colleagues in the Bureau, Ambassador Lloyd Barnett of Jamaica, Ambassador Kishore Mahbubani of Singapore, Counsellor Gert Kueck of the German Democratic Republic and Mr. Godfrey Mbulo of Zambia. I thank them for their patience and unceasing efforts. I also wish to express my most sincere appreciation to the members of the Secretariat for a job very well done.

The details of our assessment of Programme implementation efforts and of our specific recommendations are outlined in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee. I do not need to repeat them here. However, with the Assembly's indulgence, I should like to share some personal reflections on the mid-term review.

The Ad Hoc Committee had before it a number of documents, including two major reports, one from the Secretary-General and one from the Organization of African Unity. In the light of the detailed analysis set out in these reports the mid-term review was a sobering experience indeed. What the Committee found, and what is reflected in its report, is that in spite of commendable efforts to date on the

(Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman, 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)

part of the international community to assist, and in spite of courageous, determined and unrelenting efforts by African Governments in pursuing economic reforms, the situation in Africa continues to worsen. It is characterized by unsustainable, crushing burdens of external debt; a substantial decline in export earnings due to severely depressed commodity prices; a significant decline in resource transfers, in particular with regard to private investment and lending; the chronic instability of the international currency market; and abnormally high interest rates.

Such a bleak assessment could have set the stage for an atmosphere in which an exchange of recriminations about commitments unfulfilled and efforts unrecognized might have predominated. I am more than gratified to be able to report that this was not the case, at all. I believe that the real triumph of the mid-term review is to be found in a strong reaffirmation of the validity of the United Nations Programme of Action for Africa and, equally important, of the compact which was entered into in June 1986 between the international community and the African countries.

The final recommendations were hammered out in the early hours of the very last day. There were difficult negotiations up to the last minute, and the report reflects the hard compromises agreed to. In those compromises, however, I believe there is reason for cautious optimism. Reflecting on the presentations and statements made by delegations, it is clear to me that the United Nations Programme of Action for Economic Recovery and Development has become a focal point guiding the actions of both African Governments and the international community with regard

(Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman, 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)

to the African continent's recovery and development. It was agreed that recognition was due to the African Governments for their relentless perseverance in the often painful task of reforming their economies. At the same time, the steadily increasing efforts of the international community to assist were also acknowledged. More important, however, was the clear recognition among the partners to the compact that Africa's economic problems continue to be overwhelming. We are far from the light at the end of the tunnel. Much remains to be done by all parties.

We shared the forum of the mid-term review to express our disappointments, frustrations, fears and caution. We perhaps indulged in no small measure of rhetoric about what had been done, but, collectively, I think we heard and absorbed the message that more than ever Africa and its people need our determined, urgent and unstinting action. As partners we pledged such action on several important fronts.

This includes continued concentration on the agricultural sector, the rehabilitation and development of agro-related industries and greater emphasis on development of Africa's human resources. The mid-term report also highlights and reinforces a basic tenet of the Programme - the central role of women as the continent's primary producers. I was personally pleased to see the Ad Hoc Committee's commitment to further co-ordination with non-governmental organizations and recognition of their work in the development process.

I wish to extend our appreciation to those representatives of the community of non-governmental organizations who made a significant contribution to the work of

(Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman, 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)

the Ad Hoc Committee through sharing the results of their parallel forum and the advocates symposium on the role of women farmers in Africa.

The report also states the need for intensified efforts to combat environmental destruction, including the dumping of toxic and industrial wastes. Furthermore, it calls for the international community to exert increased pressure on the apartheid régime of South Africa to stop its acts of destabilization and aggression in the region.

(Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman, 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)

Some headway was made in drawing attention to the critical interrelated problems of debt, commodities and external financial flows. It was recommended that the Secretary-General should consult, inter alia, with interested Governments with a view to establishing a group of experts to undertake an in-depth assessment of the question of African commodities and the scope for export diversification.

Much attention was focused during the session on assessing the impact of structural adjustment programmes. Multilateral institutions, like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, and bilateral donors are now responding to the call for "adjustment with a human face". They have heard the urgent pleas from Africa that serious changes in thinking and in approach are required if the long-term benefits of structural adjustment programmes are to outweigh their dramatic human, political and social costs.

By far the most dramatic and difficult problem raised in the Ad Hoc Committee was the crippling burden of Africa's debt and debt-servicing obligations. This presented a host of thorny issues for all Governments. It was agreed that every effort should be made by the international community to find lasting, durable and growth-oriented solutions that cover various categories of debt, various creditor countries and various debtor countries, and that respond to Africa's development needs. The debt issue is now a priority on the agenda of many bilateral and multilateral meetings, including, as we are all aware, the current session of the General Assembly. The debate during the mid-term review illustrated the continuing need to focus attention on the problem and to pursue long-term solutions more urgently.

(Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman, 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)

I also wish to note that the Programme of Action itself and the recommendations in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee (A/43/664 and Corr.1) constitute for the Secretary-General an ambitious programme of monitoring implementation efforts over the next two years. He must also continue the important task of mobilizing public opinion and mobilizing Governments in support of our collective efforts to bring the Programme of Action to fruition.

To carry out those responsibilities the necessary resources must be made available to the Secretary-General. I am pleased to note that the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, during its review of the United Nations medium-term plan in May this year, agreed on a revision to the plan - a revision that gives a clear mandate to the Secretary-General to follow up the Africa Programme. In this connection I should like to quote the text as it stands in the revised medium-term plan:

"It is likewise essential to identify the resources that could be mobilized for the development of Africa and to ensure the support, full participation and follow-up of implementation by the United Nations system of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990."

There should be no doubt that this mandate is sufficient and is intended to provide for the necessary resources under the programme budget of the Organization for 1990-1991. As for 1989, I would urge the Secretary-General to make every effort to absorb as much as possible under the programme budget. African recovery has, after all, been a declared priority area since the adoption of the Programme of Action in

(Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman, 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)

June 1986 - nearly two-and-a-half years ago. To the extent needed, extrabudgetary funds must also be actively sought, and I urge Member States to consider favourably appeals from the Secretary-General to that effect.

In conclusion may I say that the outcome of the mid-term review was not perfect. However, more than ever, the world community is aware of the urgency and critical nature of Africa's situation. Such an outcome, forged in an atmosphere of mutual appreciation and respect, makes me believe that renewed dedication to the commitments found in the Programme of Action and to the partnership that is its essence will help us to achieve its objective together.

Our common humanity and our solidarity with the unceasing struggle of the African people to create a brighter future for their nations and for their continent require nothing less than our supreme collective efforts towards these goals.

I believe we will see considerable social and economic progress in Africa when the General Assembly reviews the Programme of Action in 1991.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of Mali, who will speak on behalf of the Organization of African Unity.

Mr. DIAKITE (Mali) (interpretation from French): First, as spokesman of Africa I should like to thank Mr. Vraalsen, Chairman 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, for his dedication and his interest in the problems of Africa. Thanks to his skill and personal qualities, he successfully conducted the work of that Committee.

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

I should also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr. Javier Perez de Cuellar, for his constant efforts to carry out the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990. I wish to take this opportunity to commend our governmental and non-governmental development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, for their co-operation in implementing the Programme of Action.

Two years ago the General Assembly held a special session on the critical economic situation in Africa - the first special session ever held by the United Nations to examine the economic situation of a specific region. The Programme of Action that was adopted at that session is based on mutual commitment and co-operation between Africa and the international community. The African Governments undertook to give priority to economic reforms and the necessary structural adjustments mentioned in Africa's Priority Programme for the Economic Recovery 1986-1990 in order to lay the foundation for sustained, self-reliant economic development. Those development measures included the rehabilitation and development of agriculture and agriculture-support sectors and measures to combat drought and desertification, as well as the development and efficient use of human resources.

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

The international community, for its part, pledged to support the economic and development efforts of African countries by taking supplementary steps through strengthening co-operation and increasing substantially its support. It also realized that lasting solutions must be found to the serious external difficulties over which Africa has no control and whose persistence hampers the efforts of the African countries.

In keeping with resolution 42/163, the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly in September 1988 proceeded to a mid-term review of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development

The consideration of measures taken to carry out the Programme of Action shows that African countries have carried out significant reforms to improve the overall management of their economies. The determination with which they are pursuing and strengthening these reforms is courageous and commendable, especially since in many countries these measures are very onerous from the social point of view and involve very serious political risks.

The political determination demonstrated by the African countries and the laudable political reorientation reforms and measures they adopted must be supported.

Despite the efforts made by the African countries and the assistance given by the international community, Africa's economic situation remains critical. It has deteriorated owing to the collapse in commodity prices, the drop in export earnings and insufficient financial flows to Africa, which, paradoxically, has become a net exporter of capital, in particular to international financial institutions. It is this situation that has added a dimension to the African debt problem that is totally out of line with the continent's ability to repay it.

Moreover, there are the effects of natural calamities, such as drought, desertification, flooding and locust infestations.

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

Furthermore, the existence of hotbeds of tension and acts of aggression and destabilization by the apartheid régime have hampered development efforts in the front-line countries.

I wish to recall here the tragic situation of millions of refugees, displaced persons and repatriates who, particularly in southern Africa, lead a precarious life cut off from production facilities and are therefore unable to contribute to the region's development.

The African countries are pursuing the implementation of measures to improve their economies, to rehabilitate and modernize agriculture and agro-industries in order to achieve self-sufficiency in food, a goal which cannot be met without solving the problem of water and addressing the problems of drought and desertification.

The African Governments are also aware of the role that must be played by science and technology for their development.

Within the framework of developing human resources, particular stress should be placed on training and health and on greater involvement of peoples in the definition and realization of development projects, in particular by enhancing the role of women and youth in the process of the qualitative transformation of society.

At the regional and subregional levels, African economic groups have incorporated the proposals contained in the United Nations Priority Programme in their work programmes. Concrete measures were taken in the spheres of agriculture, food security and crop protection.

Within the framework of South-South co-operation, co-operation between African countries and other developing countries has shown progress in a number of areas, such as trade, finance, technology and technical assistance.

Africa's commitment to mobilize the necessary resources has been closely linked to improvement in the international climate. The international community

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

recognized the need to provide the African countries with sufficient resources to supplement their efforts to implement the Programme of Action. It is important that this commitment be reflected in concrete action linking questions relating to the external debt to export earnings and financial flows.

With regard to the debt problem, it should be recalled that in the Programme of Action the international community has recognized that the burden of African debt is a major obstacle to Africa's development.

Despite the significant efforts by African countries to resolve their external debt problem, the situation continues to worsen.

Debt-servicing has resulted in a considerable drain on meagre financial resources, which thus cannot be devoted to the region's development.

At the end of June 1988, African debt was evaluated at \$US 220 billion. The average ratio for debt-servicing has now attained a level that is much higher than that of other regions, bearing in mind the relatively poor performance of exports from the continent. The situation is all the more critical for sub-Saharan Africa, where 28 out of the 40 least developed countries in the world are located.

The negative impact of external debt on the economic recovery and sustained growth of Africa prompted the Heads of State or Government of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) to devote a special session to African debt. The common position that resulted is of primary importance for Africa, in view of the magnitude of the crisis and its negative impact on the process of economic recovery and development.

This common position stresses the fact that the African debt crisis can be brought under control only through a comprehensive and equitable approach within the framework of an integrated strategy of co-operation oriented towards development reflecting the specific characteristics of African debt.

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

Because of the interdependence of the economies of debtor and creditor countries, this strategy, which is intended to resolve the debt problem, must proceed from co-operation, dialogue and collective responsibility. It is within this framework that African countries appeal for an international conference to be convened on Africa's external debt in order that Africa and its creditors can together, in a fruitful dialogue, identify ways and means to find in the near future a radical solution to our continent's external debt problem.

It is clear from the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole that Africa needs an increase in financial resources. Steps must be taken to increase considerably financial assistance to Africa, in particular on a concessional basis. This policy would be beneficial for the development of African countries if the developed countries allotted 0.7 per cent of their gross national product to development assistance.

Furthermore, it should be stressed that one of the basic conditions for African growth and development is to guarantee remunerative prices for export commodities. In order to attain that goal, the following is necessary: to stimulate demand for commodities exported by Africa by means, inter alia, of policies of world economic recovery and the elimination of protectionist practices; to raise levels of productivity and increase the economic results of agricultural, manufacturing, industrial and mining sectors, whose products are geared towards export and internal consumption; to make operational the Common Fund for commodity products; to contemplate a broad-based programme to stabilize the export earnings of African countries along the lines of the Stabex and Sysmin systems; and to increase the volume of available resources for compensatory financing and contingency financing of the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

We should also implement as soon as possible the recommendation found in paragraph 65 (e) of the report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole relating to the establishment of a group of experts to undertake an in-depth assessment of the question of African commodities.

(Mr. Diakite, Mali)

The United Nations Programme of Action for the Economic Recovery and Development of Africa is an important framework for co-operation between Africa and the international community. Africa reaffirms its commitment to the implementation of the Programme.

The gravity of the economic situation in Africa should impel the partners in African development to take decisive action to ensure the effective and accelerated implementation of the Programme of Action. It is in this context that we should see to the appeal made from this rostrum by President Traoré of Mali, the current Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, when he said:

"While recognizing that it bears the main responsibility for its development, Africa is aware that its destiny is closely linked to that of the rest of the world. It is in that spirit of interdependence that I appeal to the international community to provide appropriate, effective support for the efforts now being made by Africa to achieve economic recovery." (A/43/PV.16, p. 21)

It is on behalf of that solidarity, that complementarity, that Africa, through me, requests the Assembly to adopt the report of the Ad Hoc Committee by consensus. The report is the result of intensive negotiations between Africa and all its development partners, under the guidance of Ambassador Vraalsen. It is based on a set of compromises that should be maintained.

Mr. HELENIUS (Finland): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Iceland, Norway, Sweden and Finland.

Only two months ago we had the opportunity to review and assess the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and to reaffirm our commitment to it. The Nordic countries endorse the recommendations agreed upon and emphasize that the continuing gravity of the economic situation in Africa requires all partners to take urgent

(Mr. Belenius, Finland)

and decisive action to accelerate implementation of the Programme during the remaining period and ensure its effectiveness.

This world Organization has in recent months been successfully involved in the possible solution of a number of regional political conflicts. This momentum should be translated into appropriate action in the economic field. The African crisis is first and foremost an economic, social and humanitarian crisis; but the consequences - unless it is solved - could be highly political and could seriously affect us all.

Having attained a consensus at the review conference, all parties should have enough political will to implement all its recommendations. It is likewise essential to identify the resources that could be mobilized for the development of Africa and to ensure support for, full participation in and follow-up of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action by the United Nations system.

The Nordic countries have for their part intensified and further strengthened their already substantial development co-operation with African countries since the adoption of the Programme of Action. This includes individual bilateral programmes with partner countries, joint development projects and programmes, and contributions through multilateral institutions. In particular co-operation has been intensified with the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference (SADCC). In 1986 a new initiative was agreed upon aimed at supporting joint ventures within industry and trade and strengthening cultural and social relationships.

In recent years increased assistance has also been given to the Sahel countries in order to help them overcome problems of drought and desertification.

In addition to enhancing bilateral programmes, the Nordic countries have increased their support for programmes directed towards Africa administered by

(Mr. Helenius, Finland)

United Nations bodies as well as by such international financial institutions as the World Bank and the African Development Bank.

The Nordic countries emphasize the need for the international community to increase substantially its support for African efforts to implement the Programme of Action. In this context the eighth International Development Association (IDA) replenishment, the initiatives taken by the World Bank through its Special Programme of Action for debt-distressed sub-Saharan countries and by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), through the Enhanced Structural Adjustment Facility, constitute important steps forward. In broader terms, however, concrete actions have fallen short of expectations and the flow of resources to Africa is still insufficient in the light of the decline in export revenues and the heavy debt-service burden of many African countries. Financial flows to Africa must therefore be increased substantially.

There is thus an urgent need for donor countries to increase their official development assistance effectively and substantially with a view to attaining as soon as possible the 0.7 per cent target. All remaining bilateral official development assistance loans to the least developed African countries should also be converted to grants. Nordic countries have fully implemented resolution 165 (S-IX) of the Trade and Development Board of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and undertaken other measures in order to ease the debt burden of the low-income African countries.

The Nordic countries have on many occasions expressed their concern about the debt problems of the developing countries, in particular as regards the debt-distressed sub-Saharan countries. We therefore welcome the consensus achieved in the Paris Club on the proposal put forward at the Toronto Economic Summit meeting on options for debt relief aimed at reducing the debt-service burden of the poorest and most heavily indebted countries through co-ordinated measures. Within

(Mr. Helenius, Finland)

the framework of these measures some Nordic countries are in a position to offer interest subsidization on rescheduling officially guaranteed debt.

A large part of the debt of those countries is to multilateral institutions. In order to help in easing this part of the debt burden, the Nordic countries have put forward the idea that a multilateral mechanism should be created with a view to reducing the debt burden of World Bank loans made in the past to countries which are now IDA-only eligible, seriously indebted and undertaking policy reforms. The main beneficiaries of these measures would be the African countries. We are pleased that this idea was endorsed by the United Nations report on financing Africa's recovery and consider it to be an important contribution to the consideration of resource flows to Africa. We welcome the decision to use part of IDA reflows to assist IDA-only eligible countries to reduce their payments of interest on old World Bank loans.

On the implementation of structural adjustment programmes the Nordic countries have shared the concern of the African countries that people have been badly hurt by the economic crises and by the different ways of combating those crises. With these problems in mind the Nordic countries have urged all parties concerned to design the structural adjustment programmes in such a way that they are particularly sensitive to the human aspect of adjustment.

A consensus has emerged on the necessity of undertaking policy reforms, in particular aimed at improving the agricultural and related sectors. We recognize that many African countries have now embarked on courageous reform programmes, but all programmes and reforms have not been pursued with equal vigour. Difficulties and obstacles have persisted, particularly in relation to the policy mix in each individual country. It is important that the African countries continue to pursue the process of reform and adjustment. The international community should continue its full and timely support for those efforts.

(Mr. Helenius, Finland)

Co-ordination has become a key word in seeking greater efficiency in the common aid effort. The Nordic countries have emphasized that responsibility for co-ordination lies with the Government of the developing country itself. It has become recognized that institutional capacity for managing aid is often limited. The Nordic countries have expressed a willingness to help in strengthening this institutional capacity. We welcome efforts made by the United Nations Development Programme and other organizations along these same lines.

For African Governments, much work remains to be done to enhance the conditions for economic recovery and development. These include improved domestic management and resource mobilization, human resource development and population policies, protection of the environment, and broadening the participation of women and local communities in development.

The Nordic countries are committed to continue to work together with their African partners for the economic recovery of the continent.

The PRESIDENT: I now call on the representative of Tunisia, who will speak on behalf of the Group of 77.

Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 had the objective of allowing the African continent to overcome an economic situation which was deemed critical, to relaunch its economic growth and thus to strengthen its stability and foster its progress.

Its launching by the General Assembly was hailed in its time with hope on the part of Africa, as well as the members of the Group of 77, which gave it unanimous support. The mid-term review of the implementation of that Programme was sure to acquire great importance for us.

On behalf of my delegation and the Group of 77, I should like to express to Ambassador Vraalsen of Norway, President of the United Nations Ad Hoc Committee of

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

the Whole, as well as to the other members of the Bureau, our great appreciation of their dedicated efforts in the work of the Committee.

The United Nations Programme of Action constitutes a framework in which, on the one hand, African States committed themselves to carrying out economic reforms and improving their economic policies in the context of the priority Programme for the economic recovery of Africa and, on the other, the international community took it upon itself to make its contribution in support of Africa's efforts.

But two years after the adoption of the Programme, the economic situation in Africa has further deteriorated. To illustrate this, suffice it to note by way of an example that terms of trade show for Africa a deterioration of 17 per cent between 1985 and 1987; that, between January 1986 and February 1987, African countries transferred three and a half times more money to the International Monetary Fund than they received in 1985; that the export earnings of those countries experienced a 20 per cent drop in 1986 and 1987; that the gross domestic product per capita in Africa dropped by 2 per cent in 1986 and 0.2 per cent in 1987.

However, as was just emphasized by the representative of Mali, representing the Acting Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, African countries have, particularly since 1986, made major efforts and engaged in great sacrifice. They have, by and large, established major and painful structural adjustment programmes and carried out important economic and political reforms.

The Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly on the Review and Appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action notes in fact that:

"The determination with which African countries are pursuing and strengthening these reforms is courageous and commendable, particularly since in many countries such measures involve severe social costs and political risks."

(A/43/664, p. 31)

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

However, as is rightly stated by the Secretary-General in his report:

"... efforts by the African countries to pursue and deepen the reform process cannot be sustained indefinitely in the face of an adverse external environment and without increased support from the international community."

(A/43/500, para. 8)

We are in duty bound to see in fact that while Africa for its part has done its share in this reciprocal commitment entered into in the context of the Programme of Action, the assistance of the international community has remained far from what had been expected by the African countries.

The report of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly clearly indicates that resource flows to Africa have in real value been even less in 1986 and 1987 than they were in 1985. Protectionism continues to hinder the efforts made by African countries to develop their exports, whose earnings are so important for their economic recovery. Africa's financial problems have been further aggravated by the persistent drop in the price of many commodities. Debt servicing reflects a considerable drain on the meagre financial resources of African countries, and thus those resources cannot be devoted to the development of the region. The agreement which took place at the summit meeting of the seven largest industrialized countries held last June in Toronto concerning the debt was indeed a positive measure, but it was limited to simply providing for a re-scheduling on an individual and selective basis of the public debt of the poorest countries. Natural disasters, drought and desertification, locust and grasshopper infestations and floods have continued to undermine the efforts of African countries to achieve economic recovery. And the contributions made by the multilateral system, although somewhat diversified, remain inadequate.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

These few conclusions drawn from an objective mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the Programme of Action clearly show that the Programme has fallen considerably short of the expectations of Africa and the Group of 77 as a whole for want of an appropriate response by the international community to the efforts made by the African countries. Prospects for the next two years are thus not very encouraging, particularly since the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole involve almost no specific commitments by the international community.

The Group of 77, which wishes to reaffirm once again its support for and solidarity with the African countries, believes that the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 cannot achieve its objectives without genuine political will on the part of the international community to support the flow of financial resources and assist Africa in dealing with its heavy debt burden.

Mr. INFANTE (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): In our statement last September to 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 we referred to three key issues: the external debt, commodities and official development assistance. We also referred to the political climate and to the need for peace to prevail in the region as a prerequisite for economic and social recovery. In this context we mentioned the importance of making specific recommendations to the General Assembly on measures which the international community should adopt to co-operate in the development of an international and humanitarian commitment, which is a task incumbent upon us all.

(Mr. Infante, Colombia)

We shall not dwell on a detailed analysis of the situation in Africa and of the recommendations presented by the Ad Hoc Committee to the General Assembly, but we intend to refer to some of the specific recommendations in document A/43/664 and Corr.1 and the political content, which is positive for the region.

My delegation had hoped that, by the time this item was taken up by the General Assembly the negotiations between the Governments of Angola, Cuba, South Africa and the United States would have crystallized and been completed, with the establishment of the independence process for Namibia under United Nations auspices. My Government, always mindful of the principles of democracy and the peoples' right to self-determination, hopes that the political will of the parties involved will soon lead to the strengthening of peace in that region, which, as we have said, is a prerequisite for the economic recovery of Africa.*

As mentioned in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee, among other things, the African countries, with the support of the international community, should intensify efforts to put an end to the destabilizing acts carried out by the racist régime of South Africa, which constitute the most destructive form of conflict in the region. The countries members of the Southern African Development Co-ordination Conference lost the outrageous amount of \$30 billion between 1980 and 1986 as a consequence of South African acts of aggression. This unjustifiable situation, among other factors, has caused the destruction of the social and economic structure of the region and makes necessary effective, direct action by the international community and the African countries.

Neither Africa nor the developing world will be able to achieve sustained growth while trade protectionism, high subsidies for agricultural production in

*Mr. Al-Shakar (Bahrain), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Infante, Colombia)

industrialized countries, external debt and the injustice which has characterized economic relations in this decade persist. In the agricultural field the Cyprus initiative aimed at combating world hunger and malnutrition and the forthcoming meeting of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) offer a unique opportunity for the developed world to demonstrate its political will in an attempt to resolve the major trade and economic conflicts which impede development and severely affect African countries. This is a specific recommendation in the report before us.

With regard to financial resource flows, we must emphasize the political response by several countries for the purpose of reducing or limiting the financial burden which is restricting Africa's economic development. The specific proposals of the Ad Hoc Committee on the official bilateral and multilateral debt provide options on which action must be taken in the short term.

In a broader context, the measures adopted by the industrialized world with respect to Africa's external debt have demonstrated that it would be irresponsible for the international community to leave the main political problem of our time in the hands of bankers. The critical economic situation in Africa is to a large extent a mirror image of the external debt and development crisis, and the future of the world economy as a whole is at stake here. For this reason we proposed during the relevant debate in the Second Committee the convening of a world conference at which creditors and debtors representing the political will of their Governments, as well as eminent representatives of the worlds of finance and academe, could try, with imagination and courage, to work out the decisive elements of a plan to guide the world in the next few decades.

The African continent and the developing world, of which my country is a part, have been the victims of a continuing state of injustice which has limited their

(Mr. Infante, Colombia)

development. African countries and the developing world have largely fulfilled their commitments. My Government therefore associates itself with and supports the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Committee, which emphasize that the political commitments undertaken must be of a long-term nature. Only in this way can we guarantee the future prosperity and well-being of Africa and mankind as a whole.

Mr. N. S. KHAN (Pakistan): The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development, adopted at the thirteenth special session of the General Assembly, was predicated on certain postulates, namely the acceptance by the African countries of their primary responsibility for their own recovery and development; a commitment by the international community to extend full support to Africa's recovery programme through enhanced resource transfers on concessional terms; the reversal of the flow of resources from Africa to the donor countries and institutions; an increase in the levels of Official Development Assistance; an intensification of co-operation and co-ordination among donor countries; and the initiation of special measures to alleviate the debt burden of the African countries. The Programme also called upon the developed countries to promulgate necessary policy changes which would improve the access of African products to their markets.

A mid-term review and appraisal of the Programme was undertaken in September of this year by the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole. The report of the Committee reveals that the African countries have made serious and sustained efforts to implement the Programme of Action and have been unremitting in their endeavours to adjust their economies to the existing economic realities. As is pointed out by the Secretary-General in his report (A/43/500) of 10 August 1988, Africa's efforts to implement economic reforms have been impressive. Most African countries have pursued policies of reform and structural adjustment designed to improve their economic performance and to pave the way for sustained growth and development. The agricultural sector in particular has been targeted for reform measures which include rehabilitation and development of agro-related industries, improvement in the transportation and communications sector, trade deregulation and financial efficiency. Steps have also been taken to combat drought and desertification and

(Mr. N. S. Khan, Pakistan)

promote rational development planning and human resource development. African Governments have also instituted policy reforms in economic management, exchange rates, public enterprises and population planning.

These measures, which underline Africa's sincere commitment to the Programme of Action, have entailed many risks and sacrifices. The people of Africa have borne these sacrifices and burdens with courage and dignity. It would be a mistake to take for granted the indefinite prolongation of these unsatisfactory conditions. They rightly and reasonably expect that their personal sacrifices should now lead to national revitalization and recovery.

The response of the international community has not been commensurate with the commitments envisaged in the Programme of Action. According to the Secretary-General's report, the net resource flows to Africa increased from \$17.9 billion in 1985 to \$19.9 billion in 1986 and \$22.9 billion in 1987; however, in real terms these flows were lower in 1986 and 1987 than in 1985. Similarly, Official Development Assistance from the developed countries and multilateral institutions registered no real increase during the past two years if measured at 1986 prices and exchange rates. Furthermore, export credits to Africa during 1986 and 1987 declined, whereas private commercial flows remained negligible. This situation has been rendered worse by a net transfer of financial resources from Africa to the International Monetary Fund. According to the report of the Secretary-General, this reverse transfer amounted to \$1 billion in 1987.

On the crucial question of external debt, there has been some forward movement. The decision of the Secretary-General to appoint an Advisory Group on Financial Flows to Africa and the agreements reached at the Toronto summit meeting in June 1988 are noteworthy. However, these are limited measures which fall far short of the nature of long-term relief which was envisaged in the Programme of Action.

(Mr. N. S. Khan, Pakistan)

The inadequate international response to the African crisis has seriously eroded the hope which was generated two years ago with the adoption of the Programme of Action. The adverse effects of domestic and external resource constraints on African productivity have outweighed the positive impact of policy reform. The external debt burden of Africa has continued to escalate. By February 1988, the region's external debt totalled \$220 billion, consuming almost 45 per cent of the continent's entire export earnings.

(Mr. N. S. Kahn, Pakistan)

The debt-service burden has been compounded by the virtual collapse of commodity prices. The average price index of commodities of interest to Africa stood in 1987 at the alarmingly low figure of 68. A recent study by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has quantified the impact of declining commodity prices on Africa's external earnings at \$48.3 billion between 1985 and 1987.

It is obvious that the prevailing situation cannot be allowed to continue. The bold policy measures undertaken by the African leadership are extracting a heavy social price from their people. The conclusion is inescapable - it is ineluctable - that without strong international support for African recovery, the political risks of structural adjustment and other economic initiatives will become unbearable for most countries. It is imperative that the United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development should be implemented in its entirety and within the agreed time-frame. The commitments made by major donors and multilateral institutions should be met in full if the tide of economic distress and dislocation sweeping the African continent is to be rolled back and reversed. Equally important is the need for improving the external economic environment, which continues to impede Africa's recovery effort. Concerted measures should be taken to eliminate barriers against developing countries' exports; resource availability should be placed on a long-term, assured and predictable footing, and a serious attempt should be made to remove subsidies on all agricultural products, particularly those which compete directly with African exports.

(Mr. N. S. Kahn, Pakistan)

The linkages between trade flows, commodity prices, exchange rates, fluctuations, levels of interest rates, indebtedness, protectionism and growth rates in the world economy cannot be overemphasized. The African economic crisis, its specific features and its particularities notwithstanding, has not emerged out of a void or as an isolated phenomenon. Reform of the international economic and financial system is as vital to Africa's recovery as are the specific measures aimed at alleviating the crisis. An overall improvement in the international economic environment will revitalize growth and development in the developing world in its entirety. The opportunities for horizontal co-operation thus created would immeasurably reinforce Africa's efforts to place its economy on the path of sustainable development and growth, leading to improvements in standards of living in a reasonable period of time.

It goes without saying that peace and stability are essential prerequisites for Africa's economic recovery and development. The Pretoria régime's destabilization policies against the front-line States have added considerably to the burden and cost of their recovery. In this context we support the relevant recommendations made by the fourteenth session of the Permanent Steering Committee of the Organization of African Unity.

Taking into account the constraints on its economic resources, Pakistan has been giving practical expression to its responsibility to the African countries in their quest for long-term and meaningful development.

We have been making a modest but significant contribution to the expansion of the pool of know-how, skills and professional competence in African countries. In August 1987 Pakistan launched a five-year technical assistance programme for Africa incorporating the following elements: first, 650 scholarships for training in banking, railways, airlines, administration and polytechnic courses; secondly, 100 scholarships, under our cultural exchange programme, in the fields of agriculture,

(Mr. N. S. Kahn, Pakistan)

veterinary services, business management and commerce; thirdly, 125 scholarships in the fields of medicine, pharmacy and engineering; fourthly, 50 senior-level fellowships for specialized training in water management, small-scale irrigation, agricultural research and extension, livestock development and agricultural loans and credits; and, fifthly, establishment of a panel of 50 Pakistani experts in agriculture- and irrigation-related fields for deputation to African countries to help increase food and agricultural productivity.

We in Pakistan are confident that the people of Africa, steadfast in their commitment to their noble values, will be able to overcome their current difficulties and restore faith in the belief that this great continent, inherited by resilient, courageous and talented people, is indeed a continent of hope and promise. It is, however, our collective responsibility to assure the African countries that they are not alone in their battle for economic growth and progress. There cannot be a better way of giving this assurance than an unqualified declaration by the international community, the United Nations system and the multilateral institutions of their intention to implement in full measure the understandings reached within the framework of the United Nations Programme of Action for Africa's Economic Recovery and Development.

Mr. ZVEZDIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) (interpretation from Russian): I have the honour to make a statement on behalf of the delegations of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, the People's Republic of Bulgaria, the Hungarian People's Republic, the German Democratic Republic, the Mongolian People's Republic, the Polish People's Republic, the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

An evaluation of principle of the current economic situation in Africa was provided in the joint statements made by our countries during the session 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.

The lack of tangible progress in overcoming the critical economic situation in many countries of Africa is a matter of serious concern to us. We are alarmed at the slow rate of implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990, adopted in 1986 at the thirteenth special session of the General Assembly.

Our delegations believe that the work of the Ad Hoc Committee was an important stage in the international community's efforts to identify the factors impeding the implementation of the Programme of Action and reach agreement on recommendations concerning ways of eliminating such difficulties. The statements made at the session of the Ad Hoc Committee and during the drafting of the report clearly reflected a growing understanding of the fact that the causes of the economic crisis in Africa not only pers., but are even more serious. As before, there are still unfavourable external economic factors, including a deterioration of the terms of trade of the African countries, growing protectionism, an increase in external indebtedness, exchange rate fluctuations and a substantial outflow of financial resources from Africa.

(Mr. Zvezdin, USSR)

The economic and social development of the African countries is being hampered by regional conflicts which are causing considerable material damage, destabilizing the situation and impeding the establishment of normal external economic relations. The aggressive policies of the racist régime of South Africa constitute a serious obstacle to the stable and sustained development of African countries.

We note the considerable efforts made by the African countries to implement the Programme of Action. However, few of them have been able to make any substantial headway in their economic development. Indeed, many countries of the continent are on the brink of economic catastrophe. We are convinced that unfavourable circumstances outside those countries are largely responsible for their plight.

Our delegations share the view expressed in the Ad Hoc Committee that, in resolving the problems posed by the economic development of the African countries, it is very important to take their social aspects into account. This is true, first of all, of the "structural adjustment programmes", which are sometimes not adequately co-ordinated with the long-term development objectives of the African countries and often entail unjustifiably high social costs. In the context of the national, socio-economic development priorities of the African countries, the human factor should be duly taken into account in the formulation of such programmes.

Much of this assessment is reflected in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee (A/43/664 and Corr.1). We note with satisfaction that it reaffirms the key provisions of the Programme of Action concerning the importance of strengthening peace and security and of settling conflicts in Africa by political means with a view to channelling resources into economic recovery and development. The report quite correctly emphasizes the need to put an end to acts of aggression and destabilization on the part of the racist régime of South Africa, the importance of strengthening international co-operation and mobilizing the efforts of the African

(Mr. Zvezdin, USSR)

countries themselves for the purpose of overcoming the crisis, and the need to create favourable external conditions for their development.

Our countries, guided by considerations of principle, have given consistent support to the African countries and are undertaking practical measures to give effect to the decisions taken by the United Nations General Assembly at its thirteenth special session to implement the Programme of Action. Accordingly, the socialist countries are continuing to provide technical assistance to African countries. More than 2,000 industrial enterprises and other projects have been set up in the developing countries in Africa with the assistance of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance countries, and approximately 400 new facilities are under construction or will be built in Africa under existing agreements.

We are, to the best of our abilities, intensifying various forms of economic and technical assistance to African countries on the basis of long-term agreements and programmes; Africa accounts for 40 per cent of all the assistance provided by the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance member States to the developing countries.

We are actively developing trade with African countries, despite the deteriorating world economic environment.

We are expanding our assistance to African countries in the training of skilled personnel. In 1987 approximately 50,000 nationals of African countries were trained in specialized educational establishments at the higher and intermediate levels in the countries of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance.

We are supporting the activities of the Action for Resisting Invasion, Colonialism and Apartheid (AFRICA) Fund established by the Non-Aligned Movement in 1987.

Our countries are also providing the African countries with substantial assistance for disaster relief.

(Mr. Zvezdin, USSR)

The Programme of Action is to continue until 1990. Our delegations would like to share some ideas concerning international measures that could be taken to contribute further to its successful implementation.

The reduction of military expenditures and the channelling of the funds released by disarmament to peaceful purposes would provide an important concrete source of additional resources for African economic recovery and development. Today the world has come closer to attaining that goal.

The Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the United States on the Elimination of Their Intermediate-Range and Shorter-Range Missiles and the other steps they have taken to halt the arms race and move towards real disarmament have opened up new prospects for resolving disarmament problems and saving mankind from the threat of self-destruction and the burden of the senseless waste of material and human resources on the arms race.

Our countries are convinced that the principle of "armament rather than development" should be replaced by the opposite, namely, "disarmament for development". Disarmament involving substantial cuts in military expenditures could release enormous additional resources. In that connection, many States have supported the idea of establishing an international "disarmament for development" fund that could serve as a mechanism for the transfer of part of those resources to the developing countries, including the African States.

A just and lasting settlement of the problems that have built up in southern Africa is essential for the successful implementation of the Programme of Action. We support the ongoing negotiating process and hope that it will lead to normalization of the situation in that part of Africa. That would undoubtedly have a favourable impact on the situation in the continent as a whole and help to resolve social and economic development problems.

(Mr. Zvezdin, USSR)

With every passing year the contemporary world is becoming increasingly interrelated and interdependent in economic terms. For this reason, it is extremely important today to promote in international economic relations such principles as stability, predictability, equality, mutual benefit, non-discrimination and free access to the latest achievements of science and technology. The adoption by the world community of measures to develop economic relations among States on this basis would help to establish a new international economic order, strengthen the economic security of African countries and make them less vulnerable to adverse fluctuations in the world economic climate.

The first steps taken by the United Nations to set up a system for early identification and forecasting of social and economic problems are in this context well timed. Such a system would be particularly useful for Africa in view of the difficulties experienced by national economic analysis and forecasting services.

Our countries are prepared to continue to take part, together with the entire world community, in resolving the complex problems of the economic development of African countries. We are convinced that the real, steady progress of African countries along the road of economic and social development can be achieved only through joint efforts, with, of course, the active participation of African countries themselves and on the basis of broad, equitable and mutually beneficial international co-operation.

Mr. WALTERS (United States of America): The United States is pleased to endorse the report of the Ad Hoc Committee (A/43/664 and Corr.1) on its mid-term review and appraisal of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. We believe this report is a good summary of the economic problems facing Africa, what has been achieved to date, and the need for further concrete action to address Africa's economic and development problems.

(Mr. Walters, United States)

It is clear that there has been progress since the start of the United Nations Programme of Action. A large number of African countries now have comprehensive economic reform programmes in place. The international community has made a major effort to provide new resources to support economic reform, through their bilateral programmes and through the World Bank and International Monetary Fund programmes. The result of these efforts will soon be seen in increased disbursements in Africa in support of growth-oriented adjustment programmes. While growth payoffs have not been as rapid or predictable as everyone would have liked, there has been a clear improvement in growth rates among the reforming African countries as a group.

We recognize that reform has been difficult for African Governments and their peoples and that many question when the fruits of this effort will be seen. We wish we could say that the future path will be much easier and that rapid growth is around the corner. We cannot. The truth is that the reform path is going to be long and arduous. Africa is not at the end of the reform process, but at the beginning. It has further to go before some of the key determinants of growth will fall into place, such as the return of "flight capital", the mobilization of domestic entrepreneurship and the attraction of foreign investment. Reform also must be broadened to include new actions in areas such as the environment, the role of women and family planning. Reform must also be implemented in a way that does not impose undue burdens on particularly vulnerable groups. The World Bank and bilateral donors will have to help in this regard.

None of this will be easy. But what is the alternative? If Africa fails to sustain reform, or implements it half-heartedly, the continent risks a repeat of the decline and depression of the recent past. None of us wants that. On the other hand, if Africa continues on the road of reform and broadens and deepens that road over time it can look forward to a brighter future. The responsibility for

(Mr. Walters, United States)

Africa's development is in African hands, but help from the international community is needed if Africa is to stay the course.

The importance of the mid-term review is that it enables us to recommit ourselves to the goal of African development and to mobilize for further action. This requires African Governments and the international community to work together co-operatively to support Africa's growth. Really to achieve sustainable African recovery and development we are all going to have to continue our efforts. That is the important message of the United Nations Programme of Action. Let us not shrink from this call, but meet it with realistic understanding of the commitment required of us. Let us work together in responding to the long-term challenge. The United Nations Programme of Action is a solid base on which to build. An essential element of the Programme will be continued close co-operation among the United Nations and its agencies, the international community and the developing countries. The United States will do its part in that effort.

Mr. PAPADATOS (Greece): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Community and its 12 member States on agenda item 39, "Critical economic situation in Africa: United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990".

Two years ago African Governments presented at the 1986 special session of the General Assembly a strong case for concerted action towards the economic recovery and development of the continent. It was the first session at which development problems of an entire region were addressed. African leaders did not merely call for support by the international community for their efforts but laid the foundation for a unique partnership as expressed in the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990. The international community expressed in the Programme its readiness to honour its commitments and to

(Mr. Papadatos, Greece)

sustain support for Africa's response to the challenge of economic renewal, and African Governments have undertaken major policy actions to meet the responsibilities called for in the Programme of Action. The common recognition of the need for co-operative approaches by all participants to bring about an economic turnaround of the African crisis was a formidable achievement for the United Nations.

Only two months ago the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole of the General Assembly successfully completed the review and appraisal of the implementation of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. It assessed the critical economic situation in Africa, took into account the constraints hampering Africa's development efforts, and recognized the response of the international community in support of the efforts of African Governments. The assessment exercise proved that African countries have taken courageous and impressive action aimed at reactivating their development process, while donor countries have played an important role in supporting the African policy measures undertaken in the context of the United Nations Programme of Action.

(Mr. Papadatos, Greece)

More important yet, a clear message that emerged from the implementation of the Programme was that enhanced and sustained efforts from all sides were more necessary than ever, given the unsatisfactory overall economic performance of Africa and the hope all of us hold for the reversal of Africa's economic decline. The recommendations cover a number of economic and other concerns of essential importance for the development strategy of African countries. Women farmers, food security and population issues in a long-run development perspective deserve increased attention. The environment and natural resources should receive special consideration in development co-operation to enhance economic growth and combat poverty. The international community should increase its support for efforts undertaken by African Governments to implement the Programme of Action. It should also provide an increased level of financial assistance to African countries, both bilaterally and multilaterally.

The Community and its member States have played and continue to play their part in demonstrating commitment to the objectives of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development. Our contribution is multifaceted and can be demonstrated in programming and financing activities, in enhancing the economic recovery of Africa, in improving the external environment, and in taking the lead in alleviating the external debt problems of African countries while supporting reforms. Significant initiatives undertaken recently by major creditor countries, the European Community and financial institutions should bear results in the future. Our approach, as reflected in Lomé III and to be further elaborated in Lomé IV, is intended to be a response to the particular problems of our African, Caribbean and Pacific partners and is based on a policy dialogue to determine the priorities for the use of the Community's financing.

We consider that the mid-term review of the Programme of Action has inspired efforts to take further steps towards the implementation of the Programme in a

(Mr. Papadatos, Greece)

constructive spirit. We welcome the draft resolution in the report of the Ad Hoc Committee (A/43/664 and Corr.1) adopting the conclusions of the mid-term review and appraisal of the implementation of the Programme of Action. We also look forward to the final review and appraisal to be conducted at the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly. We are looking ahead to implementation of the Programme before 1991 and feel confident that by means of combined initiatives concrete results must be achieved. The same co-operative atmosphere that prevailed during the adoption of the Programme of Action was present during the mid-term review. It was shared by all participants - African countries, international institutions, non-governmental organizations and donors.*

Mr. MATNAI (Israel): The plight of Africa's economy - a critical issue in world affairs - is well known and unfortunately cannot be exaggerated. In recent years there has been some cause for hope. Wide-ranging proposals have been drawn up, and a recovery process has emerged in such areas as food security, drought control, water development and reversal of desertification.

However, a tragedy of gigantic proportions remains. Millions of people in Africa are affected by shortages of food and water. Today Africa must import millions of tons of grain. Drought and desertification are eating up valuable farmland, and recently swarms of locusts have added to the tragedy. Soil erosion is prevalent. The Sahara desert, for example, has expanded by an estimated 250,000 square miles over the past 50 years, and with Africa's population increasing at a rate of about 3 per cent per year it is inevitable that arable land will be over-cultivated.

Africa's rural communities are the main victims of this vicious cycle. The children of Africa are suffering too. Malnutrition, disease and dehydration are

*Mr. Huerta-Montalvo (Ecuador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Mr. Matnai, Israel)

afflicting the future generations of Africa. In order to break this cycle, in order to overcome the suffering and destitution, great efforts must be made. Plans must be laid for the future. Co-operation and co-ordination must exist. Israel wants to help; it has the ability to help.

I speak now from experience. There is a great similarity between the problems that are facing Africa today and the problems that faced Israel 40 years ago. Israel's early pioneers confronted severely degraded land in a hostile natural environment. We faced a constant lack of water and we lived in fear of not being able to feed our new-born State. Reviving the land presented a great challenge. Creating income-gathering opportunities was a severe struggle. Developing a modern economy was a fierce battle. Yet we persevered and we toiled and, against all odds, we overcame. Our achievement was completed in one generation - ours.

Today Africa is facing the same battles and with co-operation from all the countries represented here it too can overcome. This is a responsibility we all share. Because of our historical experience in nation-building, the people of Israel are acutely aware of the challenges that lie ahead for the people of Africa. It is in this spirit that I now reiterate Israel's long-standing commitment to place its technical know-how at the disposal of Africa.

Israel is ready, by itself or in co-operation with third parties, to assist the nations of Africa, whether it be in rolling back the desert or desalinating ocean water; whether it be instituting cloud-seeding to increase rainfall or irrigating with brackish water; whether it be applying solar-energy technology or introducing genetic modification of cash crops to improve their shelf life and economic performance. Israel is ready to lend its assistance to Africa, be it in agriculture on the land or in harnessing the rivers and seas for water or fish. Israel can contribute, for example, towards improving grain storage at

(Mr. Matnai, Israel)

revolutionarily low costs and reducing the loss of stored grain due to rodent infestation and other problems.

Again I speak from experience. In 30 years of co-operation with more than 100 countries Israel has welcomed over 30,000 trainees from developing countries; it has instructed 25,000 others in their respective countries; and it has sent abroad over 10,000 Israeli experts and instructors who specialize in a variety of fields. Each year we organize and run dozens of seminars, workshops and courses in agriculture, water management, community development, co-operative and labour-organization management and community health services.

The centrepiece in our fight against desertification and other agricultural challenges is Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Desert. It was established in Beersheba, the capital of the Negev, to marshal the resources of science and technology in order to unlock the mysteries of arid lands and fight desertification. It is the culmination of our history that goes back 2,000 years to the utilization of flash floods and even moisture or dew conservation by rudimentary methods. We have come a long way since then.

In Israel the biblical prophecy "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as a rose" (The Holy Bible, Isaiah 35:1) is not a promise; it is a daily reminder of the challenge we meet. Israel has created a laboratory for arid-land agriculture. We have learnt much, and we want to share it with others. Freedom from hunger is essential. Life from the desert is possible.

Israel continues to offer the inclusion of programmes developed at Ben-Gurion University on a bilateral level in the network of African agricultural research

(Mr. Matnai, Israel)

institutes or, multilaterally, through the United Nations Development Programme and other specialized agencies. We are ready to enter into discussions with various interested African countries, or under the auspices of the United Nations, regarding the urgent and acute problems facing Africa's agricultural and economic development. All of us will be the richer for such co-operation. Let us work together to overcome the challenges ahead.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.