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President: Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria)
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania), Mr. Jazairy (Algeria), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

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

(a) FOLLOW-UP TO POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND THE COUNCIL

Panel discussion with a United Nations Regional Directors Team from Latin America and the Caribbean on effectiveness of the United Nations development system at the regional level

The PRESIDENT invited Mr. Denis Aitken, Representative of the Director-General for Partnerships and United Nations reform, World Health Organization (WHO), to serve as Moderator.

Mr. AITKEN (Moderator) said that the importance of the regional dimensions of the work of the United Nations was still not sufficiently recognized. Although regional director teams had become operational in all regions, more organizations needed to join them to ensure coherent regional support at the country level. The team from Latin America and the Caribbean, testifying to the cooperation between the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the funds, programmes and agencies in the region, was an outstanding example of how the dichotomy between funds, programmes and agencies could be overcome.

Mr. JAENTSCHKE (Vice-Minister for Cooperation, Nicaragua) said that the countries participating in the World Summit in 2005 had reaffirmed that development, along with peace, security and human rights, was a fundamental pillar of the United Nations system and had stressed that each country should assume responsibility for its own development. At the midway point in the time frame for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which constituted no more than minimum standards for ensuring a decent standard of living for all peoples, it was clear that progress towards achieving the targets was not very encouraging, and in some cases gave rise to concern. Reflecting the growing asymmetries between and within countries, together with unfair conditions of trade, the gap between the world's rich and poor was increasing.

While ECLAC statistics pointed to some reduction in levels of absolute poverty in Latin America in 2006, many sectors of the population had not benefited from instances of economic growth. Countries with vulnerable economies, particularly those subject to natural disasters or economic crises, ran the risk of being unable to meet development targets. Despite encouraging global figures, poverty reduction and the promotion of social justice and equality remained pressing challenges.

In Nicaragua, the situation was far from encouraging. According to ECLAC, a level of growth above the average rate for the period from 1990 to 2002 must be achieved if the MDGs were to be attained. Nor was it enough simply to reduce poverty by half in a country where 80 per cent of the population lived on around two dollars per day. For Nicaragua to move quickly towards development and improved quality of life for its people, a revolution in ideas, commitments and cooperation paradigms was necessary - in short, a profound change in the relations between rich and poor countries.

The people of Nicaragua must take the lead by assuming responsibility for their own development. Those supporting the country in its development efforts must accept the prior requirements of national ownership and leadership. Fragmentation of assistance, a multiplicity of separate agency initiatives, a lack of focus on national priorities and excessive conditionalities, must become things of the past. Recipient countries must be able to coordinate and manage external assistance according to their national strategies and priorities. In accordance with the Managua Declaration adopted at the Regional High-level Consultation on United Nations System-wide Coherence, operational activities for development of the United Nations system should be universal, voluntary, grant-based, neutral and multilateral, and should be conducted for the benefit of recipient countries in accordance with their internal policies and priorities. The effective participation of developing countries in decision making and standard setting by international commercial and financial institutions should be made a priority in order to promote a more inclusive system responsive to the special needs of developing countries. The United Nations country team in Managua should centre its development assistance on support for national and regional efforts to eradicate hunger, poverty and illiteracy.

Nicaragua had long relied on external resources for its development, and results had so far fallen short of what was required. The Government had made development, poverty reduction and overcoming hunger and malnutrition its main tasks and had reaffirmed the attainment of the MDGs as the basis for an ambitious development strategy. In the context of discussions surrounding the CCA and the UNDAF processes, the Government had considered it important to allocate greater resources to the fight against poverty, hunger and malnutrition, even at the expense of other programmes of historical importance. The country team had demonstrated its readiness to coordinate and to accept national leadership, recognizing the importance of adapting to national strategies and of working together in the interest of efficiency and in support of national development efforts.

In the Managua Declaration, the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean had committed themselves to continue working actively and constructively in the consultation process on the coherence of the United Nations development system, and it was to be hoped that the strengthened role of the General Assembly and the Council in the context of United Nations reform would effectively serve to coordinate the activities of the United Nations system in the social and economic spheres.

Mr. MACHINEA (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)) said that the situation in Latin America and the Caribbean provided a good example of coordination between regional agencies. Regional commissions had two main functions: to promote the United Nations development agenda at the regional level, and to promote regional cooperation as determined by intergovernmental bodies and in coordination with other institutions. There were three levels of cooperation by the regional commissions: regional-global cooperation, which provided a regional perspective at the global level, and ensured monitoring and assistance for the implementation of internationally agreed development goals, including the MDGs; regional cooperation involving consensus building through intergovernmental bodies, policy dialogues and exchanges of best practices, and the establishment of strategic alliances for advancing the United Nations development agenda; and regional-country cooperation, consisting of analytical support for country regional teams, and capacity-building through technical cooperation and training.

A number of challenges existed, one of which was dialogue and coordination with other agencies, including those of the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions as well as non-United Nations entities. However, there had been substantial progress over recent years - regional coordination meetings held annually had furthered the coordination of activities and, in some cases, the formulation of common positions on certain issues concerning the United Nations system. ECLAC was providing analytical support for the operational activities of a number of agencies of the United Nations system and was turning to account the synergies made possible by the cooperative spirit of the regional directors.

Continuing challenges included: how to avoid lack of coordination and duplication in the provision of technical cooperation; how to ensure that the United Nations country teams made better use of ECLAC capabilities; and how to enhance the productive development perspective at the country level, striking a balance between social and productive policies. One of the most important challenges for Latin America and the Caribbean was the decline in official development assistance (ODA) to middle-income countries, as a result of which Latin America and the Caribbean's share of ODA had diminished. Efforts should be made to rectify that situation in coordination with donor countries.

Ms. GRYNSPAN (Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said that the Latin America and the Caribbean region consisted of mainly middle-income countries, yet over 40 per cent of the population lived in poverty. Sixty per cent of the region's poor lived in middle-income countries. The regional director team in Latin America and the Caribbean supported United Nations country teams in helping to address development challenges at the regional and country level.

To be effective, United Nations project-oriented activities at the country level should be refocused into strategic ones. In the light of international declarations, the effectiveness of the United Nations development assistance would be enhanced by the adoption of a common agenda centred on national priorities and common leadership. Four pillars had been identified to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of cooperation at the regional level. Firstly, the performance of country teams should be strengthened through strategic programme support. The second pillar involved a regional action plan, adopted in November 2006, which prioritized

integrated support, particularly for four critical MDGs. Thirdly, accountability should be improved through the provision of support, oversight and quality assurance. The final pillar, involving training, information and knowledge sharing, was critical for the improvement of regional support for country teams. The regional directors' workplan included the creation of a knowledge-sharing platform to strengthen inter-agency synergies and increase the effectiveness of United Nations development assistance at the country level.

The regional director team had a number of functions in respect of operational support, strategic programming support, and inter-agency response to crisis and emergency situations. It also had working groups on CCA and UNDAF issues, HIV/AIDS and the MDGs, which were high on the political agenda of the region. A regional report on progress towards achieving the MDGs had been published under the leadership of ECLAC, technical support had been provided to national MDG reports, and the regional action plan was focused on specific MDGs. Efforts were being made to produce disaggregated data on MDG-related issues to ensure that the targets were not simply achieved in average terms. Strategic guidance had been given to the United Nations country teams in Colombia and Haiti, as well as to the flash and consolidated appeals for Guatemala, El Salvador, Bolivia and Haiti. A regional inter-agency standing committee had been established, and guidance had been given on the advocacy of universal HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment and care. A task force had been established for the development of an inter-agency knowledge-sharing platform, quality assurance support had been provided on the harmonized programming process at the country level, and special training had been given on the human rights-based approach and results-based management for United Nations country teams. For the first time, a joint review appraisal had been carried out on resident coordinator performance.

Remaining challenges for the regional director team included: the establishment of a United Nations regional hub to facilitate the provision of coordinated inter-agency policy advice and strategic guidance to country teams; increasing the capacity of agencies' regional offices to provide substantive and operational support to country teams; supporting the United Nations coordination function; strengthening the inter-agency regional perspective; increasing capacity to support United Nations pilot programmes and joint offices; enhancing South-South cooperation; and advancing recognition of the role of the United Nations system in middle-income countries.

Ms. SUAZO (Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)) said that the regional director team recognized that part of the challenge they faced was working with countries regarded as middle-income but which nevertheless suffered from substantial inequalities, making it difficult for them to fulfil their development agendas, including the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). To help turn challenges into opportunities for development, joint and coordinated work was essential at both the regional and country level. A number of regional offices met regularly and had drawn up a joint workplan focused on the MDGs.

The joint workplan identified a number of priority areas: responding to the mandate of the General Assembly within the framework of the triennial review by providing operational support to enhance system coherence in the delivery of results; promoting accountability, assessment and feedback on operations at national level, including in 2007 self-assessment by country teams employing the 180° methodology; advising country teams on the linkages between development, security, human rights and humanitarian assistance; providing comprehensive programme support, with the emphasis on the Millennium Agenda; and supporting inter-agency coordination on crisis and emergency response.

Maternal mortality was a priority for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which welcomed the commitment of the regional directors to work jointly in that area. Obstetric emergencies produced a large number of deaths in the region, as a result of lack of access to health care and information on risk symptoms, which had a significant impact on families and the local community. In the preventive campaign being waged jointly by the regional team and governments, support was being provided to the Coalition of First Ladies and Women Leaders against the feminization of the HIV/AIDS epidemic. The aim of the Coalition, which since its creation in 2006 had mobilized high-level support in 12 countries of the region, was to promote understanding, prevention and treatment of the disease and an active commitment to halting its spread.

With a view to strengthening coordination and joint work, the regional director team had carried out a feasibility study on the establishment of a central facility to house the LAC regional offices. The Government of Panama had offered to host the complex, and the Secretary-General had launched the process on a recent visit to Panama.

Finally, she reaffirmed the commitment of the regional directors for Latin America and the Caribbean to work together in a coherent and integrated manner and strengthen the capacity of their country teams to respond to national priorities, recognizing that close communication and consultation with governments and civil society were essential to success in their work.

Mr. KASTBERG (Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)), said that, as an example of regional ownership geared to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, regional directors had cooperated with governments and regional institutions such as the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) in establishing proper systems of birth registration. Under the UNAIDS programme, it also participated in the campaign against the feminization of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in efforts to reduce mother-child transmission of the virus in the region.

Another aspect of ownership concerned building regional solidarity through South-South cooperation. Brazil had played a leading role in the delivery of South-based assistance in the fight against AIDS by providing free antiretroviral drugs to other countries of Latin America and Africa. He noted that potential donors often claimed they had no mechanisms to assist with South-South projects.

With reference to the situation of middle-income countries to which international assistance flows were significantly cut back once they had exited from least developed status, he cited the case of Costa Rica, which without international aid would require several generations to progress to a high level of development, during which time hundreds of thousands of children would suffer. The level of resources needed to keep middle-income countries on a course towards development was not prohibitively high, nor was it necessary to divert resources from other needy recipients. UNICEF, for example, allocated some \$400,000 in aid to Costa Rica, but used it strategically, by targeting it on disparities and needs that required urgent attention. Regional agencies sought to influence public policy in order to obtain gains in human development, and therefore hoped to retain a minimum level of resources that allowed them to sustain their usefulness in supporting public policy.

Presence in the region was important in order for agencies to generate knowledge and accountability on issues such as those concerning children. He stressed the need for impacts to be considered at the subnational level. It would be statistically possible for countries to achieve their Millennium Development Goals while local populations continued to live in dire conditions. Governments must be held accountable not only for achievement in terms of national averages, but also for tackling exclusion and disadvantage at the subnational level.

Referring to the Central Emergency Fund of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, he emphasized the need for access to emergency funding to be available in some instances prior and not only subsequent to emergencies. Preparedness was important, particularly in the case of recurring phenomena, and the definition of the Central Emergency Fund should be broadened to better equip international agencies to carry out their work and minimize suffering among local populations.

Mr. DAVIDE (Philippines) asked what had been identified empirically as the primary obstacles to achieving effective coordination within the United Nations system at the regional level, and what short-term strategy had been adopted by the regional commissions to address such obstacles.

Referring to the comment made by the Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean on the decline of official development assistance (ODA) to middle- and upper-middle-income countries in Latin America, he wished to know what were the main factors responsible, and whether a strategy had been adopted to counteract that trend.

Noting that successful leadership was dependent on the acceptance and support of those concerned, he asked whether the proposed regional leadership structure outlined by the UNDP Regional Director would involve the participation of the people and Governments of Latin America and the Caribbean or their representatives.

Mr. PANNEELS (Observer for Belgium) asked whether the excellent inter-agency cooperation regionally had been reflected at the country level. Was there any evidence that better collaboration and cooperation led to improved impact and results, had savings accrued, and had

duplication been eliminated? He also wondered whether the agencies had encountered any obstacles due to business practices or other aspects of the central administration in programme countries.

Ms. FORERO UCROS (Observer for Colombia) said that implementation of the principles contained in the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness lay at the core of the Colombian strategy on international cooperation. The strengthening of democratic institutions and the strong commitment of the Government to fight crime had enhanced the ability of United Nations cooperation to function as a complement to national efforts and goals. She underscored the importance of ownership of development cooperation processes through the broad participation of national authorities, and said that Colombia was making progress in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), in conformity with its own priorities as outlined in the national economic and social policy. However, it was a matter of concern to Colombia that the international community lacked a full understanding of what was required for middle-income countries to achieve the MDGs. How could the United Nations system best provide tangible support to middle-income countries.

Mr. WEISLEDER (Costa Rica) asked what were the key requirements for Latin American and Caribbean countries to attain the Millennium Development Goals. Welcoming the adoption of the Ministerial Declaration by the Council, he asked what new challenges were implicit in its implementation. The document embodied a clear consensus on the notion that good governance was essential for sustainable development. It also expressed concern about the decline in ODA in 2006, called for fulfilment of the commitments made by developed countries on ODA targets, and highlighted the potential of the Doha round for the meaningful integration of developing countries in the multilateral trading system.

Mr. RUKMA (Indonesia), noting that valuable work to improve coordination and effectiveness was being undertaken in the Latin America and Caribbean region, said that he would like to see similar efforts in his region. Referring to the regional leadership structure proposed by Ms. Grynspan, he enquired what measures or structures had been envisaged to ensure coordination with ECLAC and other programmes operating in the region, particularly in relation to the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. PIERRE (Haiti), noting that Haiti was the only least developed country in the region and therefore had greater needs in the areas of technical assistance and capacity-building, asked Ms. Grynspan how coordination efforts were organized, given the great disparity in development levels and wide range of problems in the region. He asked Mr. Machinea how many resident coordinators there were in the region and requested more information from Ms. Suazo on evaluation and appraisal and on whether any sectors other than health had been earmarked for evaluation.

Ms. ALFU de REYES (Observer for Panama) said that, in keeping with the spirit of reform for increased coordination and efficiency, her Government had offered to host and provide support for the first inter-agency regional hub for United Nations activities, in its Ciudad del Saber (City of Knowledge) complex, where the offices of a number of international agencies working in the areas of human development, technology and research were already located.

International organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the European Union had highlighted the importance of knowledge as a building block for development. The City of Knowledge, located along the Panama Canal, was a former military complex that had been transformed by her Government into a centre for knowledge, innovation and regional cooperation. The decision to locate the United Nations regional hub for Latin America and the Caribbean in Panama testified to the growing importance of Panama as a strategic focal point for the regional operations of the international community and for the holding of multilateral meetings and reflected Panama's vocation as an effective, efficient and modern centre for the provision and management of services.

Mr. GIBBS (Barbados), stressing that the middle-income countries faced most of the same challenges as the developing countries, asked why official development assistance (ODA) to the Caribbean region had declined. He wondered if it might be worthwhile to reconsider the indicators the international community used as a basis for decisions relating to ODA. While he welcomed the establishment of the first United Nations regional hub in Panama, he wondered whether that hub would be able to cater to the needs of the English-speaking Caribbean countries. Finally, he asked what support the United Nations system was providing to CARICOM (Caribbean Community), the regional development mechanism.

Mr. GOLDSTEIN (Observer for St. Kitts and Nevis), recalling that according to Ms. Grynspan 60 per cent of the poor in the world lived in middle-income countries, wondered what effective actions were being undertaken to address that situation. St. Kitts and Nevis, although a small country, was faced with the same problems as other countries, such as growing criminality and increasing poverty caused by the change from an agriculture-based to a services- and tourism-based economy. He would have thought that the relatively small scale of the problem in St. Kitts and Nevis would facilitate rapid and effective action.

Mr. FERNÁNDEZ (Bolivia) requested information on any evaluation mechanisms used to measure the effects of programmes, in particular in more marginalized sectors. Effective evaluation would give such programmes more credibility with recipients, and their feedback would provide valuable input for future decisions taken with a view to meeting their basic needs. Given the importance of sharing of knowledge and expertise as noted by Ms. Suazo, he asked how the establishment of the regional hub in the Ciudad del Saber in Panama would help increase coherence in the activities of the United Nations system.

Mr. AGUIRRE (Mexico) said that great progress had been made towards improving coordination and coherence in the activities of the international agencies and the regional bodies and commissions but asked Mr. Machinea to provide more information on the strengthening of cooperation with the Bretton Woods institutions at the national and regional levels. He would also like more information on technical cooperation among the various programmes and agencies and on coordination at the country and regional level with United Nations activities and missions, including peacekeeping missions and special representatives.

While acknowledging that the middle-income countries bore the main responsibility for reducing social inequality through their national development strategies, he believed that the United Nations also had its role to play and wondered how the system would respond to the drop in ODA to the region. Noting that Mexico, beginning in 2008, would no longer receive funding from the core resources of UNDP, he stressed the need to develop clear criteria for the granting of assistance to middle-income countries. Those criteria should take into account their specific needs and should not be based solely on per capita income, which tended to distort perceptions of the situation in the country. Finally, in keeping with the priorities highlighted in the

2005 World Summit Outcome, he said that the Council should develop a multi-year programme of work for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, which would facilitate planning and more in-depth reporting by funds, agencies and programmes and contribute to more informed decision taking in the future.

Mr. HILMERSON (Observer for Sweden) welcomed the progress made towards greater coherence and coordination, for example through the establishment of United Nations regional hubs and the joint resident coordinator performance evaluation system. For the vision of increased coherence to be effective at the regional level, a fully integrated regional United Nations development hub must be created to bring together existing resources, ensure effective oversight of the resident coordinator system, provide support to the common country assessment and UNDAF system and provide a link to the work of the regional commissions, as exemplified by ECLAC, to promote regional and subregional development. In order to complete the vision, more work was required to further clarify the responsibilities, authority and accountability of the regional director team and make a commitment to alignment of regional structures and co-location of offices.

Ms. RIVINGTON (Canada), associating herself with the statement made by the representative of Sweden, and with that of the representative of Bolivia with regard to evaluation, wondered if Mr. Kastberg had any views on measures that could be taken to help agencies take steps in the area of disaster risk reduction. In cases where, for example, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Task Team on Gender Equality made recommendations on the integration of a gender perspective in common country assessments and United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks, she asked whether such recommendations were transmitted directly to the country team or whether they were transmitted via the regional team. More information would also be appreciated on how knowledge accumulated in one area was transmitted through the regional and subregional mechanisms to the country level.

Mr. JAENTSCHKE (Vice-Minister for Cooperation, Nicaragua) said that although most of the countries in the region were middle-income countries, there was still much poverty in the region and the overall situation was far from good. Since the Millennium Development Goals were minimum objectives, not a panacea, they would not alone bring about full

development. The international community should avoid micromeasuring countries' performance, and the types and quantities of assistance, which led to the attaching of conditions to assistance, and concentrate instead on overall progress towards development.

There were tremendous challenges at the country level, where increased coherence and planning at the regional level did not always translate into concrete results on the ground. Often the priorities defined by the country were different from the priorities defined by individual agencies and other agencies had to compensate for their lack of action. That was not an effective way of addressing problems identified. Given the persistence of widespread poverty in the region, including in the middle-income countries, international partners must revise their policies and activities at the regional and country levels in order to effect real change.

Mr. MACHINEA (Executive Secretary, ECLAC), in response to Mr. Jaentschke and the representative of Costa Rica, noted that 38 per cent of the population of the region lived in poverty, 15 per cent of whom were indigenous; there was also considerable inequity among women and ethnic groups. The excellent progress made towards the Millennium Development Goals was attributable in large part to sustained average economic growth in recent years of 3.5 per cent per capita as well as to an increase of 40 per cent in social spending, which had led to a significant improvement over the past 10 years in the quality and availability of social programmes. Furthermore, the United Nations system, including ECLAC, had consistently advocated for the adoption of best practices in development activities.

With regard to questions from the representative of the Philippines and others relating to coordination efforts, he said that great progress was being made at the regional level, and there was also progress at the country and country-region level in operational and analytical activities. The greatest problem was coordination at the global level with the wider group of international development partners, caused by a lack of awareness of the importance of the regional dimension of development.

Turning to the issue of the fall in ODA to the middle-income countries, he said that those countries had a lower profile for development partners: they were not the worst afflicted by poverty; they had not enjoyed the highest economic growth; they did not have the greatest problems with immigration or violence. Even though those factors existed, the middle-income

countries in the region were generally doing fairly well. He agreed to some extent that the middle-income countries had a responsibility to do more themselves to address their problems but recalled that they too had to deal with issues such as significant levels of poverty.

The middle-income countries were also affected by their inability to access developed-country markets, and he stressed that a successful outcome of the Doha round including improved market access would be the best way of boosting their development. Unfortunately, the developed countries continued to refuse to move towards opening their markets, while at the same time they reduced levels of ODA. Furthermore, he noted that many middle-income countries were not only recipients of ODA but also contributed to the international development assistance system in the context of South-South cooperation. Brazil, for example, had forgiven 1 billion dollars in debt.

He agreed with the representative of Mexico that regional activities to implement the Millennium Development Goals and promote gender issues and health should be aligned with the priorities identified by the Council. As for the issue of coordination with the regional teams, he said that ECLAC, for example, organized technical assistance missions in response to requests from countries and consulted other partners and kept them informed of its activities. He said that there was a real willingness in the region to improve efficiency, effectiveness and coherence and, thanks to a combination of attitude and aptitude, the region was on the right path towards developing new synergies for assistance and coordination.

Ms. GRYNSPAN (Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNDP), responding to the question from the representative of the Philippines, said that it was necessary to maintain contact with governments and civil society at both the regional and the country levels. At the regional level, the regional director team endeavoured to build partnerships with regional intergovernmental bodies with a view to maintaining contact with governments and responding to their agendas, and provided a forum for discussion among governmental and civil society organizations working at the regional level. It was important to ensure, however, that the focus was on strengthening relationships with governments at the country level, and to that end, the regional director team provided support to United Nations country teams in maintaining contact with governments and strengthening their sense of service to the country and its people.

With reference to the points raised by the representative of Belgium, she said that the regional director team was not complacent about the level of progress achieved to date in terms of coordination in the region generally or within the United Nations system, and was aware of how much remained to be done. If regional coordination was strong and communication with the United Nations country teams was well developed, significant progress could be made in strengthening coordination at the country level. During official country visits, as well as meeting with the representatives of their own agency, the regional directors endeavoured to meet with the country teams to be briefed on the problems they faced. The regional directors then discussed the specific problems of the various country teams in their meetings and considered what contribution they could make.

The success of the regional plans developed by the regional directors was contingent on the support of the country team. The common country assessment and United Nations development assistance framework were also an important element in the relationship with the country teams and gave the regional directors a good sense of what was happening at the country level and what the country team's plans were for the future. It was therefore important for the regional directors to maintain the quality assurance process for those plans.

As regards savings and duplications, the regional directors took into account ECLAC's technical assistance activities at the country level when developing their own plans for the country level. Increasingly, when they required expert technical assistance, country teams referred first to the non-resident agencies before seeking help from the market at large. There was an important focus on fully exploiting the expertise available in the United Nations system, particularly in middle-income countries, whose demand for specialized technical expertise was very high. Generally, there was now much better coordination with the non-resident agencies and ECLAC in that area.

She agreed with the delegates who had pointed to the need to put in place a more effective evaluation system to measure the impact of regional inter-agency coordination. In that connection, a workshop, organized by UNICEF, was to be held shortly in Colombia to address evaluation problems. There were, however, obstacles at the central level that could not be solved at the regional level, such as the fact that the agencies had different information systems, making it difficult to have joint programming at the country level.

Responding to the representative of Barbados, she said that all of the agencies had, and would maintain, support structures in the Caribbean. The establishment of the regional hub in Panama did not preclude the establishment of other offices in the Caribbean, but it was important to also build support for the Caribbean from the regional hub. The directors were aware of the need for greater inclusion of Caribbean challenges in the Latin American agenda and were working to achieve that.

She agreed that the effective oversight of the resident coordinator system and quality support for the CCA/UNDAF were key activities for the regional director team.

Ms. SUAZO (Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNFPA) said that the regional director team was not claiming that the situation was perfect, but that there was a high level of commitment and willingness within the United Nations system to strengthen country capacity and assist governments and civil society in responding to country priorities. The Regional High-level consultation on United Nations System-wide Coherence, held recently in Managua, had provided the opportunity for dialogue with the system's agencies and the regional directors on establishing priority regional frameworks for the regional directors to act on and national priorities for the country teams to pursue. By meeting with the country teams during official country visits, the regional directors briefed the resident coordinators on their agencies' priorities and what they could contribute to the country team, and, in return, the areas in which they required the support of the country team.

By way of example, she said that the Vice-President of Colombia had recently led a high-level delegation in a meeting with regional representatives of all the United Nations system agencies, and had presented to them his country priorities. That meeting had highlighted the need for a more coordinated regional presence of the agencies. The Vice-President had, for example, requested the support of UNFPA in addressing the problem of teenage pregnancies in his country. As a result, UNFPA was now collaborating on the issue with the Pan-American Health Organization in the Andean region. She stressed the importance of the impact at the subregional level.

In addition to generating, collecting and analysing data, the agencies also played an important advocacy role for the indigenous population. In that connection, she pointed out that while the maternal mortality rate in Honduras, for example, was of 108 per 100,000 live births, among indigenous women that rate could reach between 400 and 600 deaths per 100,000 live births. She pointed out that it was World Population Day, and that the theme for that year was “Men as partners in maternal health”.

In response to comments on the evaluation of the regional coordination efforts, she said that as the process was so new, it would be necessary to wait for another few years before any real impact could be measured. The decision to establish the regional hub in Panama had been based on the results of a feasibility study conducted by a team of regional deputy directors. In response to the representative of Barbados, she said that the proposal presented to the UNFPA Executive Board on the establishment of a subregional hub in Jamaica to work more closely with the Caribbean countries would be discussed in September 2007.

Mr. KASTBERG (Regional Director for Latin America and the Caribbean, UNICEF), responding to the question by the representative of Canada on the United Nations Development Group Task Team on Gender Equality, said that its recommendations were referred to the United Nations country teams under the responsibility of the resident coordinators. In reviewing the CCA and UNDAF, the regional director team considered how the gender aspect had been integrated into the plans. The team also examined the extent to which the country team had taken into account the situation of exclusion of the indigenous and Afro-descendant population, who were often forgotten in public policy and who together represented 200 million of the region’s 545 million inhabitants.

The regional directors were considering how institutional evaluation capacity could be developed within the region, for example through the Latin American Faculty for Social Sciences (FLACSO) or universities, so that it was not necessary to recruit outside consultants to carry out evaluations.

On the issue of disaster risk reduction, he said that there were strategies in place to address recurring disasters, such as the annual drought in the Chaco region that covered northern Argentina, Paraguay and Bolivia. Efforts were under way to encourage the three countries

involved to work together, and the United Nations country teams provided assistance. The agencies also collaborated with PAHO in addressing certain health issues. He noted that with very limited financial resources it would be possible to tackle a number of major social issues that affected the indigenous population in particular.

In response to the comments by the representative of Sweden, he said that the regional director team was aligned in terms of geographical areas, but had to develop coverage in certain areas of the Caribbean. The representative of Mexico had raised an important point with regard to the criteria used by the executive boards in assessing middle-income countries. The various United Nations agencies and donor countries used different cut-off criteria. UNICEF, for example, had decided in 1997 that once the child mortality rate had fallen to 30 per 1,000 and per capita income exceeded \$2,850, it should begin discussions with the Government on how to withdraw from the country. Although that decision was now recognized by many as being unsound, the question remained of how to change those criteria. The World Food Programme used criteria related to food production versus food consumption in its assessment. Although only a few countries in the region actually required food assistance, many would benefit from technical assistance in buying food more efficiently. The criteria for graduation and the whole concept of graduation needed to be reviewed, as development issues were constantly mutating and middle-income countries faced new challenges, such as rising levels of urban violence and HIV/AIDS. That was an area on which the Council could send guidance to the Executive Boards.

As regards inter-agency crisis and emergency support, in the aftermath of hurricane Ivan UNICEF, together with the Red Cross, had coordinated the various United Nations agencies providing relief. The World Food Programme had a staff member in the UNICEF office in Barbados to support prevention measures subregionally. There were many more such examples.

The fact that all of the agencies now had offices in the regional hub greatly facilitated the organization of training, meetings and joint missions, among other things. As regards collaboration with the Caribbean Community secretariat (CARICOM), there were a number of joint projects in the areas of birth registration and HIV/AIDS, and efforts were under way to develop new ones. Collaboration with the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP) was also proving successful. All of the agencies had a very good relationship with ECLAC, and collaborated on various studies. At the end of the year, the regional director team

would publish a joint report on the Millennium Development Goals and the areas that required particular attention, such as chronic under-nutrition, infant mortality and maternal mortality. In that connection, he pointed out that there were some 23,000 preventable maternal deaths every year in the region.

Mr. AITKEN (Moderator) said that from the World Health Organization (WHO) perspective, it was unthinkable not to have a regional dimension to an issue. WHO had 60 years of experience of how the regional dimension could be more efficient and quicker than the global level on many issues, and could more easily take account of the differences between countries.

The PRESIDENT said that the excellent contributions by the panellists had highlighted the degree of cooperation that existed at the regional level in the Latin American and Caribbean region. Given that the theme of the discussion was effectiveness, the emphasis had inevitably been more on process than on outcomes. He would have been interested to hear, for example, how the joint regional approach had contributed to the rapid progress that had been made in the area of gender equality, or how it was helping to tap and develop the massive social capital of the region's indigenous population. The lessons learned in Latin America and the Caribbean would be useful in Africa, where similar challenges would be faced in the future. He would also have been interested to hear how the joint regional efforts were addressing the problem of the increasing gaps between rich and poor or seeking to assist the region's single least developed country in escaping from the poverty trap and joining the ranks of the other countries. Those and other issues might profitably be the subject of another meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.