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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 46th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Thursday, 26 July 2007, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. MÉRORÈS (Haiti)
(Vice-President)

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(continued)

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In the absence of Mr. Čekuolis, Mr. Mérorès (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.45 p.m.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (continued) (E/2007/L.19)

Draft resolution E/2007/L.19: Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations

The PRESIDENT said that a vote had been requested on the draft resolution.

Mr. FAUTUA (New Zealand), speaking in explanation of vote before the voting, recalled that his Government was an administering Power and had first-hand experience of the work of the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations as it related to the Non-Self-Governing Territories. It appreciated an earlier reference by the representative of the Special Committee on Decolonization to his country's role in relation to Tokelau. New Zealand remained committed to the principle of decolonization and had always endeavoured to respect the wishes of the people of Tokelau. Following the narrow rejection of self-determination in the referendum held in Tokelau in February 2006, it had declared its continuing commitment to the principle of self-determination and readiness to support the people of Tokelau whenever they wished to address that issue again. In October 2007 the people of Tokelau would again hold a referendum on whether they wished to remain as a Non-Self-Governing Territory or change to the status of self-governing in association with New Zealand.

New Zealand, as the administering Power, continued to support Tokelau; and the United Nations system likewise played a significant role in supporting the needs and aspirations of Tokelau - one of the smallest and most vulnerable members of the international community. It would continue to be Tokelau's major development partner, whatever the outcome of the October referendum, and was pleased to support draft resolution E/2007/L.19.

Mr. CRUZ SILVESTRE (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union in explanation of vote before the voting, said that the members of the European Union who

were also members of the Council would, as in the past, abstain during the voting. The European Union believed that the issues dealt with in the resolution did not fall within the competence of the Council.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) said that, while his Government was not opposed to the support provided to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the United Nations system, it did object to dealing with that issue in the one-size-fits-all approach taken in the resolution and the highly politicized context of an agenda item relating to the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to the Colonial Countries and Peoples. His delegation would therefore abstain during the voting.

The vote was taken by roll-call.

El Salvador, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Algeria, Angola, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Cape Verde, Chad, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Democratic Republic of the Congo, El Salvador, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Mauritania, Mexico, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand

Against: none

Abstaining: Albania, Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America

Draft resolution E/2007/L.19 was adopted by 33 votes to none, with 19 abstentions.

Mr. PANKIN (Russian Federation) said that his delegation had abstained not because its attitude toward the issue of decolonization had changed but because it believed decolonization was a political issue not in keeping with the Council's mandate in the area of economic and social affairs.

Mr. JORDAN (Argentina) said that his delegation supported the principle of self-determination for peoples but recalled that both the General Assembly and the Special Committee had underscored that self-determination was not the appropriate solution in cases involving disputed sovereignty. Both bodies had noted that, for example, in the case of the Malvinas, South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands, the appropriate solution was a negotiated settlement between his Government and the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The PRESIDENT said that he took it that the Council wished to take note of the report of the Secretary-General on assistance to the Palestinian people, contained in document A/62/82-E/2007/66.

It was so decided.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (continued)

(i) UNITED NATIONS FORUM ON FORESTS (continued) (E/2007/42)

The PRESIDENT said that he took it that the Council wished to defer action on the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its seventh session (E/2007/42) to its resumed substantive session.

It was so decided.

Mr. CRUZ SILVESTRE (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and Turkey, the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Montenegro and Serbia, and, in addition, Armenia, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, welcomed the progress made at the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests as a landmark in international forest policy cooperation and a crucial step toward the promotion of a holistic approach to the management and sustainable development of all types of forests.

He welcomed the main outcomes of the seventh session of the Forum: adoption of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests; adoption of a multi-year programme of work 2007-2015; and a commitment to consider a voluntary global financial mechanism/portfolio approach/forest financing framework for all types of forests. While the European Union believed that a legally binding instrument would be the most effective means of addressing forest issues in a global and integrated way, the non-legally binding instrument nevertheless provided a useful basis for addressing forest issues and its implementation would contribute to achieving the global objectives on forests.

The multi-year programme of work included important issues such as the importance of forests for livelihoods and poverty eradication and the link between forests and economic development. Discussion of such issues would clarify the contribution forest management could make to the implementation of international environmental agreements and the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals. The voluntary financial mechanism would play a key role in mobilizing additional resources, and he reiterated the invitation to the World Bank and other member organizations of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests to lay the groundwork for the discussions of the ad hoc expert group in 2008.

The implementation of the three major outcomes of the seventh session of the Forum and continued coordination with other efforts relating to the management of forest resources would contribute to the realization of the objective of sustainable development. It might even be possible to reverse the loss of forest cover and degradation of forests and thereby contribute to protecting the livelihood of forest-dependent peoples and to poverty eradication.

The European Union attached great importance to the work of the Forum and to the intergovernmental forest policy process. It supported the draft resolutions and decisions contained in the report of the Forum and looked forward to their adoption at the Council's resumed substantive session. In so doing, the Council would reinforce the intergovernmental forest policy process and affirm its support for the Forum as a unique functional body of the Council.

SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (continued)(b) SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/2007/26)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on the draft resolutions and decisions contained in Chapter I of the report of the Commission for Social Development on its forty-fifth session (E/2007/26).

Draft resolution A: Supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond

The PRESIDENT said that a vote had been requested on the draft resolution.

Mr. HAYEE (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China in explanation of vote before the voting, expressed support for the work of the Commission for Social Development to follow up the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. The Commission had focused in particular on youth, ageing and gender. General Assembly resolution 60/2 had mandated the Commission to explore at its forty-fifth session five additional priority areas for the implementation of the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond. Those five areas were reflected in the draft resolution before the Council, which had been adopted by the Commission after painstaking negotiations. The text did not wholly satisfy all parties, including the Group of 77 and China, but, out of respect for the importance of multilateral negotiations, the Group had joined in the consensus on the document.

The Group of 77 and China reiterated its commitment to the decision of the Commission. It was concerned that calling for a vote on what had been a consensus decision would set a bad precedent for other negotiated outcomes in the future. The Group would vote in favour of the draft resolution and urged all members of the Council to do likewise.

The vote was taken by roll-call.

Cape Verde, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Albania, Algeria, Austria, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Cape Verde, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, El Salvador, France, Germany, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Mauritania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Against: United States of America

Abstaining: none

Draft resolution A was adopted by 49 votes to 1.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) said that draft resolution A had been adopted by the Commission following late and rushed negotiations and as a result the text was not, in the view of his Government, of a high enough standard. Given the importance and breadth of the issues dealt with in the draft resolution as well as the importance of the issue of youth itself, his delegation had formally dissociated itself from part of the text during the Commission's adoption of the draft resolution and had reserved its right to re-open portions of the draft resolution for negotiation at the General Assembly.

The concerns raised by his delegation had not been reflected in the report of the Commission. It had therefore called for a vote on the draft resolution as a means of formally registering its opposition to the text and clearly asserting its prerogative to revisit the issue during the General Assembly.

Mr. SILVESTRE (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 60/2, Member States had participated in good faith in the negotiation of the supplement to the World Programme of Action for Youth.

Throughout the process all partners had shown flexibility and a spirit of compromise in order to achieve, in the opinion of the European Union, a good document. The European Union recognized that one Member State had disassociated itself from the consensus on one paragraph of the supplement at the time of its adoption by the Commission for Social Development, and it had expected that the same course of action would be followed in the Council. It was therefore with regret and surprise that the European Union learned the previous day that the supplement would be submitted to a vote.

Draft resolution B: Social dimensions of the New Partnership for Africa's Development

Draft resolution B was adopted.

Draft resolution C: Report of the Commission for Social Development on its forty-fifth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the forty-sixth session

Draft resolution C was adopted.

Decision 45/101: Nomination of members of the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development

The PRESIDENT said that he took it that the Council wished to confirm the nomination of the eight candidates listed in decision 45/101 for membership in the Board of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development.

It was so agreed.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN (continued) (E/2007/L.26)

Draft resolution E/2007/L.26: Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on draft resolution E/2007/L.26 and informed members that a vote had been requested.

Mr. MOLCHAN (Belarus) said that Belarus wished to join the sponsors.

Ms. FURMAN (Observer for Israel) said that, in presenting yet another one-sided resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, its sponsors were again exploiting the Council for their own personal agenda. The obsession with vilifying Israel was evident from the fact that there were no other resolutions on the socio-economic situation of peoples or countries in need of the support of the United Nations or the international community. The distorted perspective through which the United Nations was often compelled to view the conflict in the region had the effect of preventing any scrutiny of Palestinian actions.

The failure to recognize the campaign of terror and violence perpetrated against Israel over the previous six years, to take into account internal Palestinian polarization that had resulted in the Gaza Strip being taken over by extremist terrorist factions, or to mention the spirit of renewed dialogue and cooperation in the West Bank between the Israeli Prime Minister and Palestinian President, and the historic visit of members of the Arab League to Israel were examples of the resolution's glaring omissions.

A draft resolution marked by inflammatory language that pointedly refused to take into account facts that did not support its pre-determined outcome had no place in either the Council or the United Nations. Its motivation was purely political, rather than improvement of the socio-economic situation of Palestinians, and she urged all delegations to vote against it.

Ms. AL RIFAIY (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the situation in the occupied Arab territories of Palestine, including Jerusalem, as well as the occupied Syrian Arab Golan was very dramatic. People were condemned to hunger, humiliation and arbitrary action, including expulsion, yet the Council had received only a brief overview of the activities of the Israeli occupying power. A number of United Nations bodies had however revealed the dire conditions in the occupied territories, which some sought to pass over. The only matter in doubt was whether arbitrary action against a whole people would persist, whether we would continue to witness an occupation that turned its back on all international instruments and morals. Her delegation invited the members of the Council to adopt the draft resolution without a vote, in order to convey a moral message to the people in the occupied territories, to send a signal of support to the resistance of the Palestinian people, and a signal to the entire world, that the occupying forces did not have carte blanche to destroy a people's life, culture and economy.

Mr. PEREIRA (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that no entity had provided greater economic and social support to the Palestinian people, in keeping with its grave concern of the critical humanitarian situation in the occupied territories. In 2006 the European Union had provided 688 million euros in assistance, and in the first half of 2007 the contribution of the European Commission through the Temporary International Mechanism had amounted to 320 million euros. The European Union gave its full support to President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, had resumed direct financial and technical assistance to the Palestinian Government and was committed to help build the institutions and economy of the future Palestinian State.

The European Union called on all parties to work towards the opening of humanitarian and commercial flows in and out of Gaza and to ensure that Karni and other crossings were open on a regular and predictable basis, with a view to reaching the transit volumes foreseen in the Agreement on Movement and Access, essential for the viability of the Palestinian economy and improved living conditions in Gaza and the West Bank. It welcomed the financial commitments recently announced by the President of the United States and invited other donors to provide funding and other forms of contribution.

The Presidency of the European Union regretted to announce that the European Union as a whole would not be able to support the draft resolution before the Council. While it appreciated the co-sponsors' cooperation and significant concessions, the text fell short of all European Union's requirements. Lasting improvement of the economic and social situation of the occupied Palestinian territory depended on sustained progress towards a just and lasting settlement of the conflict, leading to the achievement of a comprehensive peace in the region. The European Union strongly encouraged the parties to continue their bilateral dialogue to that end, and was determined to work with the United States, other Quartet partners as well as regional partners in an effort to bring about an early end to the Israeli-Arab conflict.

The vote on draft resolution E/2007/L.26 was taken by roll-call.

The Czech Republic, having been drawn by lot by the President, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Algeria, Barbados, Belarus, Benin, Bolivia, Cape Verde, China, Costa Rica, Cuba, El Salvador, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Mauritania, Mexico, Pakistan, Paraguay, Philippines, Russian Federation, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Thailand.

Against: Canada, United States of America.

Abstaining: Albania, Austria, Brazil, Czech Republic, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Haiti, Iceland, Japan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Romania, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Draft resolution E/2007/L.26 was adopted by 29 votes to 2, with 18 abstentions.

Mr. ADSETT (Canada) said that, while Canada recognized the hardship confronting the Palestinian people, it had voted against the draft resolution since it did not adequately reflect the responsibilities and obligations of the Palestinian Authority to secure the economic and social well-being of its people. For such resolutions to be relevant and useful, they must reflect the commensurate role and responsibility of all parties involved. Canada welcomed the constructive agenda of the new Palestinian Government and would work with it to help secure its goals of peace, stability and good governance.

Mr. MILLER (United States) said that the United States shared the concerns about the hardships facing the Palestinian people, but had voted against the draft resolution since it reflected neither the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, nor the need for both parties to take steps to create peace and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. The one-sided draft resolution asked the Council to condemn Israeli actions, but had failed to address Palestinian actions or inaction. As a member of the Quartet, the United Nations must be seen by both sides as an honest broker in the Middle East conflict. One-sided resolutions undermined the ability of the United Nations to play a constructive role in furthering peace. The fact that the draft resolution was not acceptable to his delegation in no way diminished the United States' support for the Palestinian Government of President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad. The fundamental

choice facing all peoples of the Middle East was between violent extremism, on the one hand, and tolerance and responsibility, on the other. Hamas had made its choice by seeking to extinguish democratic debate with violence and to impose an extremist agenda on the Palestinian people in Gaza.

In his call for a new international peace conference to address the issue of peace, and the realization of the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, the President of the United States had underscored his country's commitment to a better future for all people in the region, including the Palestinians. The responsible people of Palestine, led by President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad, were making their choice, and it was the duty of the international community to support those Palestinians who wished to build a better life and a future of peace. Moreover, the Palestinian people and the Arab world were aware of the United States' continuing and significant aid to the Palestinian people.

Within the context of its participation in the Middle-East Quartet, the United States had lifted its financial restrictions on the Palestinian Government, which had accepted previous agreements with Israel and rejected the path of violence. Such action would enable the people of the United States and its financial institutions to resume normal economic activity and commercial ties with the Palestinian Government. The United States was also reviewing its assistance to help the new Government build institutions and infrastructure that would improve the lives of Palestinians by providing essential services, better roads and clean drinking water. Hamas had sought to divide the Palestinian nation, but the United States believed that there was one Palestinian people and there should be one Palestinian State. To help ease the suffering of all Palestinians, especially those in Gaza, the United States would contribute 40 million dollars to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency and would also provide additional assistance in Gaza through the World Food Programme efforts.

Nonetheless, the United States had consistently opposed actions such as the draft resolution presented to the Council that diverted attention and resources from practical steps taken by the Quartet and its regional and international partners to move the parties towards the realization of the two-State vision. Particularly in view of the current situation, the United States urged the Council to focus on effective and constructive steps to address Palestinian needs and help to foster progress on the path toward greater stability, security and peace.

Mr. MORI (Japan) said that his delegation shared the concern about the living conditions of the Palestinian people residing in the occupied territories, and was agreed on the need to provide appropriate assistance to them. Nevertheless, he believed the language of the draft resolution was unbalanced, and that the text made one-sided demands without reflecting certain recent developments on the ground. His delegation also believed that the Economic and Social Council was not the appropriate body in which to take up such political issues.

The meeting rose at 5 p.m.