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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING
Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 23 July 2007, at 10 a.m.

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

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

GENERAL SEGMENT (*continued*):

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 (agenda item 9) (A/62/65, A/62/82-E/2007/66, E/2007/47)

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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 (agenda item 11) (A/62/75-E/2007/13)

Ms. HERNÁNDEZ TOLEDANO (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, said that effective implementation of the Economic and Social Council and General Assembly resolutions concerning implementation of the Declaration by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations would assist greatly in strengthening the capacity of Non-Self-Governing Territories to manage their own affairs in accordance with the right of peoples to self-determination set forth in the Charter of the United Nations.

Some United Nations bodies already included the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their development assistance activities. With regard to Tokelau, it was to be noted that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had contributed material support to the organization of a referendum scheduled for October 2007 on its status of free

association with New Zealand. Furthermore, in November 2006, 10 United Nations bodies had sent a joint mission, the first of its kind, to Tokelau, to prepare a development strategy for the period 2007-2010. A special trust fund had been established for Tokelau, to which Member States and international and regional institutions were invited to contribute.

In addition, in 1999 the General Assembly had undertaken to facilitate participation by associate members of the United Nations regional commissions in its special sessions devoted to economic and social questions. The Economic and Social Council had not followed that example, although in its resolution 2006/37 it had welcomed the adoption by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean of its resolution 574 (XXVII) of 16 May 1998 calling for the establishment of the necessary mechanisms to enable its associate members, including small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, to participate in the special sessions of the General Assembly, and in the work of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. The Special Committee hoped that the Council would follow up on that request.

Lastly, the Special Committee welcomed the publication, by the Department of Public Information in March 2007, of the brochure requested by the Economic and Social Council on assistance programmes, entitled “What the UN Can Do to Assist Non-Self-Governing Territories”.

Mr. NOUR (Regional Commissions New York Office), introducing the reports dealing with regional cooperation, said that the regional commissions had undertaken to strengthen their coordination. As a result, the regular meetings held between the executive secretaries had made it possible to enhance coherence between the various

commissions' development activities. The Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) and the Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar were two examples of such coordination. The commissions had also pooled their analytical expertise in order to contribute to the work of various United Nations bodies and committees by presenting the regional dimension of the various subjects dealt with.

Outposts of the United Nations, the commissions were also an important component of the regional institutions and worked in partnership with other bodies in their respective regions. Accordingly, the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), the African Development Bank and the Commission of the African Union had acquired a joint secretariat. The commissions also cooperated more than previously with United Nations bodies active at the regional level, including UNDP, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a development that augured well for more coherent and effective support by the United Nations system for national and regional development programmes.

Mr. NEBENZIA (Russian Federation) said that the reform of the United Nations development system must do nothing to diminish the prerogatives of the regional commissions, which contributed to maintaining a proper balance between the economic and the social action carried out at global level in support of internationally agreed development objectives. The regional commissions' role was to deal in depth with problems specific to a given region or subregion and must accordingly be enhanced.

An active member both of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the Russian Federation wished to see the two Commissions cooperate to promote the economic

progress of their respective member States. Counting on the continued contribution of ECE, a Europe-wide body, to increasing economic cooperation in the continent and ensuring more rapid integration of the Russian economy in the European and world economies, the Russian Federation was in favour of entrusting that Commission with more important functions and, as from 2008, would make an annual contribution of US\$ 1.2 million to its budget. In parallel, the social and economic integration of the countries of Europe and Central Asia must be continued, particularly within SPECA.

ESCAP did useful work in the area of transport, particularly in the fields of road and rail infrastructures, energy and the environment. With regard to transport, it should be noted that it also collaborated with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

At its sixty-third session, in Almaty, ESCAP had taken important decisions concerning cooperation and integration in the Asia and Pacific Region. In parallel, it had held a Business Forum, an initiative that should be repeated at future sessions.

Mr. QIAN Jin (China) said that his country attached great importance to regional economic cooperation, which constituted a new strategic approach for many countries of the Pacific. In recent years the developing countries had made remarkable economic progress following the establishment of new trade relations. China had been participating in ESCAP for several years and intended to continue to do so.

Mr. NOUR (Regional Commissions New York Office), introducing the report on the 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 (A/62/75-E/2007/13), said that the Israeli occupation continued to worsen the economic and social difficulties endured by

the Palestinians, inter alia as a result of the closure of the territory, house demolitions, land confiscation, the establishment of settlements and the construction of the wall between the Palestinian territory and Israel.

The Palestinian Authority's fiscal situation had also deteriorated following the legislative elections of 2006, as Israel had ceased to pay the Authority the revenue derived from value added tax. Health and education services were feeling the consequences. Furthermore, in the occupied Syrian Golan, new settlements continued to be built.

International aid was increasingly used to fund short-term emergency response rather than the long-term development of the territory. While the funds mobilized following the common appeal launched by the United Nations country team had served to stabilize the situation briefly, those temporary measures could not be a substitute for the direct responsibility of the local parties, or for a rejuvenated political process that could address the underlying issues of the conflict.

Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer for Palestine) said that the root cause of the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis, which must be addressed as a first priority, was the occupation of the Palestinian territory. Furthermore, the Palestinian Authority – which was deprived of resources and the constant target of Israeli attacks – could not be held responsible for the malfunctioning of the Palestinian economy and the tearing apart of the social fabric. Even mere economic survival became a near-impossibility in an economic climate marked by restrictions on freedom of movement, the building of new settlements and the construction of a wall dividing the two communities.

The first step needed was compliance by Israel with international law, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention. The international community must also bring about a revival of the peace process and Israel must agree to withdraw from the Arab territories. In that regard, he welcomed the call for the convening of a Middle East peace conference, an initiative which, it was to be hoped, would open up the way for an end to the occupation and the long-awaited creation of the Palestinian State.

Mr. BITAR (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the report by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) on the 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, currently under discussion, clearly showed that the economic situation of the Syrian Arab population was deteriorating day by day as a result of the judaization of the occupied Syrian Golan. Israeli policy had only one objective, namely to compel them to leave the territory or to take Israeli nationality, in breach of international law. The Arab villages of the Syrian Golan suffered from grave shortages of doctors and specialists, as the occupying authorities no longer issued authorizations to practise medicine in the Golan, thereby further swelling the ranks of the unemployed, who were left with no choice other than exile.

It was indeed shocking that the Economic and Social Council should be meeting to discuss the toll of 40 years of Israeli occupation, instead of, for instance, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals for the Palestinian people or the expansion of the Palestinian industrial sector. Israel had no desire to secure the welfare of the Palestinian people and continued to deprive it of its future. Israel's practices were

applied indiscriminately to all Palestinians – including pregnant women, children and the sick. The Council must intervene immediately to bring about an end to those practices in Jerusalem and the occupied Golan.

Ms. MOSCHINSKAYA (Belarus) said that, in spite of efforts by the international community, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories remained a matter for concern. The occupation only worsened the economic and social situation and the continuing military operations inflicted an ever-increasing humanitarian toll. The international community must not forget that the situation particularly affected women, refugees and children. Accordingly, Belarus supported all the United Nations programmes to assist the Palestinians and believed that the Economic and Social Council should step up its efforts to improve living conditions in the occupied territories.

Mr. SHALEV-SCHLOSSER (Observer for Israel) deplored the politicization of the debates in the Council, which was yet again discussing a situation that was unrelated to its mandate, particularly in the light of the fact that it did not examine the economic and social ramifications of other conflicts elsewhere in the world. Although the report remained biased, some interesting changes were to be noted. For instance, it reported that the sharp increase in acts of violence and deaths of Palestinians since 2006 was attributable to the violence between Palestinians themselves, which had resulted in some 250 dead and more than 1,300 wounded. There could be little doubt that those figures had probably further swollen in the first half of 2007 following the clashes between the forces of Hamas and Fatah in the Gaza Strip. The report showed that the fiscal position of the Palestinian Authority had deteriorated following the victory of Hamas in the January 2006 legislative elections, and that those electoral results had led some of the

major donors to turn their backs on the Palestinian Authority. Nevertheless, the international community had contributed more than US\$ 450 million in direct humanitarian aid to the Palestinians in 2006, to which must be added the Palestinian revenue released by Israel in January 2007.

The report failed, however, to point out that for six years Israel had been subjected to a campaign of terror and violence that justified increased security measures. Nor did it point out that the number of suicide attacks had fallen by 100 per cent since the construction of the security wall and Israel's withdrawal from Gaza. Those omissions from the report were as nothing, however, compared to those that characterized the draft resolution on that agenda item, a text that largely replicated the one submitted in 2006 and omitted to mention the resumption of talks between Israel and the new Palestinian Government in the West Bank with a view, inter alia, to lifting certain economic restrictions. Despite the campaign of vilification to which it continued to be subjected in various United Nations bodies, Israel would steadfastly continue its efforts to improve the daily lives of the Palestinians and promote the socio-economic development of the Palestinian territories.

Mr. PEDROSO (Cuba) said that although, in countless resolutions over more than half a century, the United Nations had condemned violations of the Palestinian people's rights, Israel still refused to comply with those resolutions. Repeated incursions into Palestinian territory by the Israeli military had resulted in the destruction of vital infrastructure, impeding the pursuit of sustainable development by the Palestinian people. The closing of the borders had increased the unemployment rate and worsened economic insecurity in the Palestinian territories, leading to a deterioration in social and

humanitarian conditions. Israel persisted in the illegal construction of the security wall, flagrantly disregarding the Palestinians' economic and social rights. The establishment of settlements, repeatedly condemned by the international community, constituted a breach of article 49 of the fourth Geneva Convention. The unlawful withholding of revenue due to the Palestinian Authority and the economic isolation imposed by the United States of America, the European Union and other western countries were a form of collective punishment of the Palestinian people that only served to increase its poverty.

Given that situation, it was vital to maintain and strengthen solidarity with the Palestinian people so as to guarantee access to food, medical care and medicaments for the civilian populations affected, displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries and ensure free movement of shipments of humanitarian aid.

Firmly condemning the Israeli military occupation and aggression, Cuba again called for respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the creation of an independent sovereign State with East Jerusalem as its capital, the return of the refugees and withdrawal from all territories occupied since 1967. Cuba supported the recent Declaration of the Coordinating Bureau of the Non-Aligned Movement in which it requested, inter alia, that measures should be taken to protect the territorial unity and the integrity of the Palestinian territory and to enable the Palestinian people to settle its disputes peacefully. Cuba urged the international community to take the necessary steps to stabilize the situation and to revive the peace process and recalled the responsibilities incumbent on the United Nations with regard to the settlement of the question of Palestine on the basis of international law.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria) said that his country sympathized with the plight of peoples who lived under occupation anywhere in the world, whose lands had been turned into prisons by occupying forces. From Western Sahara to the people of Palestine and the occupied territories, Algeria was dumbfounded at the long catalogue of injustices committed by occupying forces, in disregard of United Nations resolutions calling for the protection of peoples under foreign domination. Dismissals, marginalization, humiliation, the destruction of infrastructure and the plundering of resources were the consequence of the political deadlock that prevented the exercise of the right to self-determination. In the occupied Palestinian territories, the parties must commit themselves in good faith to a dialogue aimed at achieving that right, for it was a refusal to engage in dialogue that had led to the present upsurge of despair. Only a change in Israeli policy could bring about an improvement in the Palestinians' living conditions. In all the Non-Self-Governing Territories, refusal to engage in dialogue was bound to lead to violence, and at worst to blind violence. The only solution was recourse to peaceful means based on the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mr. ANSHOR (Indonesia) said that it was a matter of great concern that the Palestinian people continued to endure the daily violence and suffering inflicted by Israel. It was particularly unacceptable that innocent children should be the victims of such violence, that they should suffer from malnutrition and be denied access to education and health services. Israel continued to construct the separating wall and establish new settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories, in defiance of General Assembly resolution ES-10/15 and the July 2004 Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice. The economic and social welfare of the Palestinians was seriously jeopardized

by that action, as was shown by the fiscal crisis that the Palestinian Authority was currently experiencing. Development prospects remained gloomy. The unemployment rate had doubled and poverty in the occupied territories was on the increase. Food insecurity and lack of access to water were just some of the threats to the very existence of the Palestinian people.

It was essential to prevent the situation from further deteriorating and for all concerned to show a stronger commitment to peace, which entailed reconciling the two Palestinian political factions. The United Nations and its specialized agencies must continue to play an active role in alleviating the sufferings of the Palestinian people and the Economic and Social Council must continue to work to achieve respect for its right to live in dignity, free from need and fear. For its part, Indonesia fully supported the Palestinian people's aspiration to live in a safe, prosperous and independent State.

Mr. RASHWAN (Saudi Arabia) said that the Palestinian people was currently traversing a difficult period because of the grave deterioration in its living conditions. The Economic and Social Council had adopted many resolutions calling for the lifting of the economic blockade imposed on the Palestinians so as to allow the free movement of persons and goods. The measures taken against the Palestinian people were contrary to international law. The report showed that the Israeli occupation was responsible for the worsening of the Palestinians' sufferings and that the closure of the territories had had a particularly significant role in plunging the population into destitution.

Saudi Arabia hoped that the Council would adopt a unanimous position, with a view to ending the sufferings of the Palestinian people and the Arab population in the

occupied Syrian Golan, by calling for a revival of the peace process on the basis of the relevant United Nations resolutions.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) said that the United States shared the concerns relating to the difficulties currently experienced by the Palestinians but considered that the present debate reflected neither the complexity of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict nor the need for the two parties to take steps to bring about peace and restore the security of Israelis and Palestinians.

As a member of the Quartet, the United Nations must be considered by the two parties as an intermediary in the conflict. Politicized debates and resolutions that ignored or distorted the facts compromised the Organization's capacity to play a constructive role in bringing forward peace.

The Palestinians, like all the peoples of the Middle East, were faced with a fundamental choice: they could opt for violence and extremism, or, instead, for tolerance and responsibility. When calling recently for the convening of a new international peace conference with a view to creating two States coexisting in peace and security, President Bush had stressed the United States commitment to improving the situation of all peoples of the region, Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Mr. LOULICHKI (Observer for Morocco), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that the representative of Algeria had made a false comparison between the situation of the Palestinian people and that of the inhabitants of the provinces of southern Morocco, whose conditions, he had claimed, were those of prisoners. It was the Algerian Government that was responsible for the situation of the Moroccans confined at Tindouf,

in the south of Algeria, for the past 30 years, whereas the inhabitants of the southern provinces of Morocco were free.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria) pointed out that the representative of Morocco had misquoted his remarks. At no point in his statement had he used the term “prisoners” in referring to the inhabitants of Western Sahara. Consequently, the allegation that the inhabitants of the Tindouf camps were confined was not plausible; it was hard to see how the World Food Programme, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and all the international organizations that had come to the aid of the refugee populations could be accomplices in the confinement of tens, even hundreds, of thousands of people. Furthermore, to consider Western Sahara to be an integral part of the provinces of southern Morocco was a denial of the position taken in the United Nations on the decolonization of Western Sahara. Until such time as the status of the region had been established following a referendum, that province of southern Morocco would exist only in Morocco’s imagination.

Mr. LOULICHKI (Observer for Morocco) formally requested the secretariat to ascertain whether the representative of Algeria had or had not referred to the question of Sahara. Furthermore, the reference to a population numbering tens, even hundreds, of thousands of people raised the question of how their numbers were to be counted. For 30 years Morocco and the international community had been asking for an accurate count to be taken of the numbers involved, yet the Algerian Government formally refused to allow the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees to carry out such a count.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria) said that, at the point in his statement when he had spoken of peoples “whose lands had been turned into prisons by occupying forces”, he

had not yet made any mention of Western Sahara. He had referred to it only at a later point in his remarks. On the matter of a population count, a Security Council resolution had provided for the holding of a census in the context of a referendum to be held on self-determination, but Morocco had opposed the holding of that referendum. As for the status of Western Sahara, the Security Council had recently reiterated its call for negotiations between Morocco and the Sahrawi population with a view to coming up with a solution compatible with the principle of self-determination, a proposal that Algeria supported.

Draft resolution on a Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar

(E/2007/L.12)

Mr. LOULICHKI (Observer for Morocco), introducing the draft resolution, said that the Strait of Gibraltar had always been a strategic zone on account of its geographical location between Europe and Africa, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Morocco and Spain had therefore decided to establish a fixed link through the channel. The studies launched in 1980 had resulted in 1996 in a decision to opt for a drilled rail tunnel. The link, which would reduce the journey time between the two shores to about 30 minutes, would be conducive to the region's economic development. A work plan was currently being drawn up. Once it was completed, an evaluation report would be prepared for submission to the two countries promoting the project and the European Union authorities. The European Commission was taking an interest in the fixed link and had selected it as one of the priority projects for the development of transport networks in the Euro-Mediterranean region. The Euro-Mediterranean Forum on Transport had also accorded priority to the project in its plan of action adopted in Brussels in May 2007.

Under the terms of the draft resolution, the Council would welcome the cooperation between the Economic Commission for Africa, the Economic Commission for Europe, the Governments of Morocco and Spain and specialized international institutions, and would request a report, to be submitted in 2009, on the progress made with the project studies.

Draft resolution entitled “Review of the intergovernmental machinery of the Economic Commission for Africa” contained in document E/2007/15/Add.1

Mr. LOULICHKI (Observer for Morocco), referring to the convening of the joint annual African Union/Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, said that ECA was obliged to act on the opinion delivered by the Legal Counsel of the United Nations whereby, in the event of a joint meeting of the ECA and a regional intergovernmental organization, ECA must comply with the decisions of the organs of which it was a subsidiary, including the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. When the composition of the host organizations differed, the issue must be resolved in accordance with the rules and procedures of the United Nations, if the latter was one of the host organizations.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) asked whether the draft resolution had any financial implications.

Ms. PLINER (Secretary of the Council) said that the draft resolution had no financial implications.

The resolution was adopted.

Draft resolution entitled “Admission of the Republic of Korea as a member State of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean”, contained in document E/2007/15/Add.2

The resolution was adopted.

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (agenda item 7)
(continued):

(h) JOINT UNITED NATIONS PROGRAMME ON HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
(E/2007/56)

SOCIAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS (agenda item 14)

(i) GENETIC PRIVACY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION (E/2007/65 and Add.1 and Add.2)

Mr. PIOT (Executive Director, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)), introducing the UNAIDS report, said that since 2005 more than 2.3 million people in low- and middle-income countries had received antiretroviral treatment. In many countries of East Africa and the Caribbean and in some parts of Asia infection rates were falling. About US\$ 10 billion would be spent on tackling the pandemic in low- and middle-income countries in 2007, and about a third of that total would come from those countries. Good progress had thus been made, but it still fell far short of the US\$ 18 billion needed to counter the epidemic effectively, given that more than 10,000 people were infected and 8,000 died of AIDS-related illnesses every day.

Political support from the international community remained firm, and in June 2006 the States Members of the United Nations, in a new declaration on HIV/AIDS, had reaffirmed the pledges made in 2001.

Over the past two years UNAIDS had stepped up its activities in its five core areas. First, it had intensified its action at country level by assisting countries in

establishing their national objectives with a view to securing universal access and ensuring that measures were implemented effectively, in particular by applying the “Three Ones principles”: one national AIDS strategy, one national coordination authority, and one country-level monitoring and evaluation system. Second, the programme had focused on making the best use of the funds invested with a view to ensuring universal access to prevention, treatment and care. Third, it had continued to harmonize and improve monitoring and evaluation activities at global and national levels. Fourth, it had helped to mobilize financial resources in low- and middle-income countries, working closely with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the World Bank and other multilateral donors such as the European Commission and the regional development banks. Fifth, it had promoted the participation of civil society in the effort to prevent and fight the pandemic.

HIV/AIDS was not just a short-term emergency but also a long-term crisis. It was thus time to work to ensure effective responses that could be sustained over time, to attach greater importance to coherence and accountability, and to step up efforts to mobilize funding and strengthen prevention measures. Lastly, it was vital to ensure that HIV/AIDS remained high on the international and national agendas.

Mr. SETH (Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on genetic privacy and non-discrimination, said that the report included information and comments received from Member States and entities of the United Nations system on the implementation of Economic and Social Council resolution 2004/9. The report highlighted the potentials and dangers of new developments in the genetic field and reviewed initiatives taken to

promote respect for genetic privacy. In particular, it highlighted the adoption of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights, a major development at the international level. In view of the very small number of replies received from Member States, the Council might perhaps wish to decide how best to proceed in considering the matter.

Ms. MOSCHINSKAYA (Belarus) welcomed UNAIDS activities to step up the fight against HIV/AIDS at national level in the context of the “Three Ones principles” strategy. Belarus offered a good example of the effectiveness of the work of UNAIDS at national level: the systematic approach adopted by the Government, and international cooperation with UNAIDS, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and several non-governmental organizations had enabled Belarus to put in place an effective HIV/AIDS prevention and care mechanism to stabilize the situation. Prevention programmes for the period 2006-2010 and a strategic plan to combat the pandemic had been prepared and implemented, and had already yielded results: according to the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General for HIV/AIDS in Eastern Europe, Professor Lars Kallings, who had carried out a mission to Belarus in October 2006, the country spearheaded the fight against the spread of AIDS in Eastern Europe and, if the present trend continued, would have succeeded in halting or even rolling back the epidemic by 2010.

Mr. JAZAIRY (Algeria) urged UNAIDS to give immediate attention to the plight of those HIV-positive persons who were now at more serious risk because they could not meet the much higher cost of therapies used to replace treatment they had been receiving

that had been found to be carcinogenic. Algeria had made HIV/AIDS prevention a public health priority; since 1985 it had taken safety measures for blood transfusions and come up with a multisectoral response involving the Ministry of Health and the general public and entailing a reform of the hospital system. The main thrust of public policy was based on the Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS adopted by the General Assembly in 2001. Algeria welcomed the preparation by UNAIDS of a guide to monitor progress made by reference to clear indicators, but stressed that efforts to achieve the objective of universal access by 2010 would fail unless prevention, treatment and the resources allocated to the fight against HIV/AIDS were stepped up.

Since 2005 Algeria had adhered to the “Three Ones principles”, embarking on the actions necessary for their implementation. In order to prepare the national consultation on universal access in collaboration with UNAIDS and the World Health Organization (WHO), a multidisciplinary group of national experts in the core areas of the fight against AIDS had been set up. Algeria provided free care to HIV-positive persons and had established seven reference centres for that purpose. With regard to surveillance, the information system on sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS was being reviewed to take account of the need to involve the private sector, decentralize HIV diagnosis and ensure confidentiality. Algeria had institutionalized second-generation sero-monitoring surveys and developed a monitoring and evaluation system designed, inter alia, to establish a database of national indicators covering resources, activities and the impact of measures.

Ms. LIU Zhongxin (China) said that the fight against AIDS was a matter of high priority, given the impact of the pandemic on all countries’ socio-economic development.

The developing countries were hard hit and faced considerable challenges as they accounted for 90 per cent of persons affected by HIV/AIDS; accordingly, the international community must increase its assistance to them. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria offered an excellent example of cooperation in that regard. In the fight against AIDS, the Government of China attached great importance to prevention, inter alia through government mechanisms involving civil society and various ministries. China had adopted vigorous and transparent policies, as well as successful legislative measures. It had participated in prevention efforts, had paid a substantial contribution to the Global Fund and embarked on projects in cooperation with countries of Asia and Africa in the areas of prevention and pharmaceutical research. China would continue to promote the implementation of General Assembly resolutions and to participate in international cooperation.

As for the UNAIDS report, the number of persons receiving antiretroviral treatment remained low; she hoped that the causes of that state of affairs would be investigated and that steps would be taken to increase the number of beneficiaries. Lastly, she requested details of the measures and programmes to be promoted in the context of the campaign entitled “Uniting for HIV Prevention”.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) said that since the 2001 Declaration of Commitment, the world had begun to mobilize for the fight against HIV/AIDS, financially, politically and especially on the ground, by carrying out coordinated actions, particularly through the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board, of which the United States was a member. In parallel, the United States had put in place its own intervention mechanism, aimed at helping communities and States to stem the pandemic, a mechanism

based on the tried and tested principle of partnership. President Bush had recently announced his intention to increase, with the agreement of Congress, the United States financial contribution to the global fight against HIV/AIDS, raising it to more than US\$ 48 billion over 10 years.

As the Executive Director of UNAIDS had stressed, it was now essential to have an accurate epidemiological picture for each country in order to adopt appropriate prevention strategies. In recent years it had become apparent that persons with access to proper information acted more responsibly, as was seen in some countries of Africa where many young people were adopting safer practices. Emphasis must also be placed on human resources, the essential link between prevention and care, when drawing up strategies and plans to combat HIV/AIDS: in some countries, particularly those most affected by the epidemic, the solution was probably to train less qualified personnel as a response to the shortage of more highly qualified personnel.

Ms. SAHUSSARUNGSI (Thailand) said that the fight against HIV/AIDS presupposed active participation by and effective cooperation between each of the countries concerned; it was thus necessary to strengthen the national capacities – including health personnel, health infrastructures and educational structures – of the countries affected and to involve the public in prevention efforts and care arrangements. Furthermore, while access to care and treatment had improved in recent years, the number of HIV-positive persons continued to increase. Efforts must thus focus on prevention: what was needed was long-term programmes that could be adapted in response to changes in behaviour and in the epidemic. The international authorities were now also emphasizing the social dimension and factors such as gender inequality, which

was both a cause and a consequence of the disease. While concrete and concerted action was needed at the international and multilateral levels to counter those phenomena, it must go hand in hand with an assumption of individual responsibility.

Since its inception in 1994, UNAIDS had played an important role in ensuring the coordination and coherence of policies and in the implementation of activities and programmes to fight HIV/AIDS. It was now time to consider whether reforms would be needed to make its action more effective. Thailand, which currently chaired the Programme Coordinating Board, thus welcomed the Board's decision to carry out an independent evaluation of UNAIDS.

Mr. EISA MOHAMED (Sudan) said that his country was committed to fighting and preventing HIV/AIDS. One key action to that end had been the establishment and subsequent strengthening of an integrated system for surveillance and control of the spread of diseases, particularly in States affected by conflicts, through funds and resources earmarked for crisis situations. Training had been provided in electronic management and notification of surveillance data. Other training covered the geographical information system for mapping of diseases, epidemiological surveys and control of health standards. A national workshop had been held on the drafting of guiding principles on prevention. Special efforts in the area of HIV/AIDS had consisted of rationalizing activities with a view to improving States' capacity to react collectively to the epidemic; training and workshops had been conducted in sexually transmitted disease management, blood transfusion safety, and care and treatment. In 2006 the review of the national strategic plan on the basis of the new guidelines laid down had been completed. All those activities had been financed by government funds; the Sudan

would welcome increased aid from the donors and financial institutions. It should be noted that in the Sudan malaria killed more people than did HIV/AIDS.

Mr. TORRINGTON (Guyana) stressed the importance of regional cooperation in fighting the spread of HIV/AIDS, which constituted a major challenge for Governments in the Caribbean: 33,000 people in the region lived with the infection, and in three of its countries, about 2 per cent of the population were affected. The regional approach adopted in the framework of the Caribbean partnership made it possible to step up action against HIV/AIDS at all levels and to increase the effectiveness of the measures taken. The support provided by various partners, especially the United States, was therefore welcome.

Mr. MOLINA (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that the national programme to fight HIV/AIDS was based on four pillars: education and prevention, management, care, and epidemiological surveillance. It was in the area of prevention that results were the most convincing. Since 2004, workshops had been conducted to train teachers and students in requesting institutions and communities, and agreements had been signed with various universities and the National Youth Institute with a view to training staff in health issues. Access to antiretroviral treatment for persons living with AIDS was available free of charge in Venezuela; 17,000 persons had benefited from it in 2006. The problem of HIV/AIDS was tackled from the human rights perspective by respecting the rights to health and welfare and the principles of universality, access free of charge, equity, social integration and solidarity. Venezuela was recording a spread of the epidemic, particularly among women; hence the need to establish prevention and awareness-raising strategies and campaigns targeting the most

vulnerable populations. Persons affected with AIDS must also be protected by the law, with regard, for instance, to their right to work.

Ms. BREINES (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization – UNESCO) said that the adoption in 2005 of the Universal Declaration on Bioethics and Human Rights had shown the international community's commitment to respecting and implementing a number of universal principles in developing and applying scientific and technological practices. The Declaration, which, inter alia, opposed discrimination and stigmatization, was a starting point. Member States that had not yet set up a bioethics committee should do so, and should promote an open and enlightened public debate on ethical issues, develop education and training on bioethical matters, and take the necessary steps to facilitate transnational research.

With regard to the fight against HIV/AIDS, in 2004 UNESCO, aware of the key role played by the education sector at national level, had launched EDUCAIDS, the Global Initiative on Education and HIV & AIDS. Considerable progress had been made in tackling the pandemic from the cultural standpoint, particularly in the areas of prevention, human rights and reducing vulnerability. Greater account was taken of social and cultural factors when drawing up, implementing and evaluating strategies and programmes. Approaches designed to respect gender equality were more frequently used, and programmes drawing on the arts and creativity to raise awareness among the young were being developed.

Mr. PIOT (Executive Director, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)) said that, while much progress had been made with regard to the treatment of AIDS, the situation was growing more and more complex. In 2001 fewer than 200,000 persons in low- and middle-income countries had been receiving antiretroviral treatment – most of them in Brazil, the first large country to provide treatment free of charge – as

compared to the present figure of 2.5 million, a coverage rate of about 30 per cent. That rate was attributable to the state of the health system in some countries, the fact that most persons living with HIV did not know that they were HIV-positive, and the very high cost of treatment for persons who became resistant to the initial treatment. UNAIDS was working to eliminate those obstacles. With regard to prevention, which was essential to stemming the epidemic, UNAIDS ensured that it was one of the key components of each national plan to fight AIDS and that the plans took account of each country's specific characteristics. The Programme laid down normative guidelines, a field in which the co-sponsors made an invaluable contribution, and provided technical assistance, relying inter alia on South-South cooperation and local expertise. Its action also entailed the establishment of support groups for prevention. Lastly, he stressed the importance of regional cooperation, on the model of what was being done in regions such as the Caribbean; for in order to stem to global advance of AIDS it was necessary first to halt its progress at local and regional levels.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.
