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SECOND COMMITTEE  
39th meeting  
held on  
Friday, 17 November 1978  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MWANGAGUHUNGA (Uganda)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 67: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR:  
REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/33/3, 82, 195; A/C.2/33/L.25)

1. Mr. AGUIRRE (Chile) commended UNDRO on the efficient manner in which it continued to mobilize and distribute international disaster relief, despite the limited financial and material resources available to it. His delegation welcomed the recent internal structural changes in the Office, particularly the arrangement whereby all aspects of disaster matters in a particular geographical region were dealt with by the same group of officers. Until its resources were increased, UNDRO should concentrate on co-ordinating relief without, however, neglecting preparedness and prevention measures. His Government attached particular importance to the latter aspects of UNDRO's work and had recently organized the First International Seminar on Disaster Preparedness, to which UNDRO had submitted an interesting paper on co-ordination of the international response in case of disasters. He also commended UNDRO on its efforts to implement General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) through the publication of manuals on disaster prevention and relief.
2. He welcomed the conclusion of co-operation agreements between UNDRO and other organizations of the United Nations system, in particular those concluded with IMCO and UNIDO on "other disaster situations". In that connexion, he endorsed the Co-ordinator's views that with increasing industrialization in the third world, the risks of disaster would rise and would need to be taken into account by national bodies responsible for public safety.
3. The administration of disaster relief was one of the basic functions of the United Nations. Consequently, his delegation supported the gradual transfer of administrative and other associated costs to the regular budget of the United Nations, as proposed by the Co-ordinator in paragraph 9 of the report (A/33/82) with a view to providing UNDRO with the necessary financial security to enable it to recruit the professional staff needed to fill vacancies in the Office. It also supported the allocation of \$400,000 in the regular budget for the current biennium, as requested by the Co-ordinator. However, it could not endorse the idea that UNDRO technical assistance activities might possibly be financed from UNDP country programming funds, since that approach would jeopardize the right of Governments to determine the use to be made of their national indicative planning figures. However, the possibility of including UNDRO technical assistance activities in UNDP regional and interregional programmes might be explored.
4. Mr. PFANZELTER (Austria) said that his delegation shared the sense of urgency conveyed by the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator in his statement at the thirty-fourth meeting with regard to action required in the field of disaster relief. His delegation noted with satisfaction that the Co-ordinator's Office had been given a new internal structure to ensure the effective discharge of its work in disaster prevention and preparedness and relief co-ordination. Disaster

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(Mr. Pfanzerter, Austria)

relief no longer consisted solely of quick and effective assistance to victims of disaster, but extended to measures in other areas such as development, in which much could be done to eliminate or reduce the risks of disaster and to alleviate the consequences. Furthermore, relief assistance was required not only in emergencies such as earthquakes or floods, but also in disasters which built up more slowly and might be difficult to detect or predict in the early stages: one example was the drought in the Sahelian region, which was causing death and destruction over a whole continent. Similar disasters might be caused by changes in climate, pollution or the proliferation of substances whose impact on the biosphere was often insufficiently known. Action against such disasters fell primarily within the scope of other national or international institutions, but account would have to be taken of them in planning for disaster prevention and preparedness.

5. An important role could be played by science and technology, especially through the use of remote sensing techniques and high-altitude photography in the assessment of damages and need; research and training in the field of disaster prevention and relief management was also highly relevant. There was still a considerable potential of scientific and technological knowledge which could be tapped in formulating the strategy for disaster prevention. If such a strategy was to provide a comprehensive framework for dealing effectively with disaster problems, close co-operation between Governments and agencies within and outside the United Nations system was needed. His delegation was therefore gratified by the progress made in formalizing co-operation between UNDRO and other organizations. The multiagency memorandum to which the Co-ordinator had referred in his statement was an important step in that direction and offered a sound basis for action. His Government attached great importance to the work of UNDRO and, as in the past, would continue to be responsive to appeals for relief assistance.

6. Mr. ZAMAN (Bangladesh) said that the report of the Secretary-General (A/33/82) highlighted once again UNDRO's important role in disaster situations. In the year under review UNDRO had not only co-ordinated and mobilized the international response in an increasing number of disaster situations but had also acted as a clearing-house for disaster information throughout the world. In addition to monitoring and reporting incipient and developing disasters, it had dispatched a number of technical assistance missions to help disaster-prone countries to strengthen their disaster preparedness and prevention abilities. The Co-ordinator and his Office were to be congratulated on their worth-while accomplishments.

7. The importance of disaster preparedness and prevention was internationally recognized. Although natural disasters could not be avoided, losses could be minimized through adequate preparedness and prevention programmes. Many disaster-prone countries, particularly the least developed among them, badly needed such programmes. United Nations assistance to preparedness efforts in

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(Mr. Zaman, Bangladesh)

those countries should be intensified, and UNDR0's programmes of assistance in effective pre-disaster planning deserved the expanded support of the international community. The technical co-operation subaccount of the UNDR0 trust fund should be enlarged to enable UNDR0 to provide the necessary advice and assistance to Governments which needed external help in pre-disaster planning.

8. The Co-ordinator, in his introductory statement (A/C.2/33/SR.34), had drawn attention to the separate but complementary national and regional elements in disaster preparedness programmes. In the South Asian subcontinent several countries had frequently experienced simultaneous natural disasters arising from the same cause. The recent floods in Nepal, India and Bangladesh, caused by monsoon rains in the Himalayas, were a case in point. Subregional co-operation was essential for effective preparedness for such disasters.

9. Bangladesh had suffered more than its share of natural disasters. Those disasters seriously impeded the pace of social and economic development, as emergency situations required effort and resources to be diverted to immediate relief and rehabilitation programmes. It therefore viewed UNDR0's disaster assistance as an investment in the long-term development process and as a contribution to the general development of disaster-prone developing countries. A recent example of fruitful and effective co-operation between Bangladesh and UNDR0 was the implementation of a project for 200 rescue boats to be used during flood emergencies. UNDR0 had been involved in the project from its inception, and his Government was particularly grateful to the Co-ordinator for all that he and his Office had done. By appealing for financial assistance to selected donor countries, UNDR0 had succeeded in procuring the necessary finance in a relatively short time. His delegation agreed with the Co-ordinator that that successful venture opened up a new vista for UNDR0's operations, using a selective appeal for assistance in providing the material resources needed for preparedness programmes in disaster-prone countries. It shared his hope that the success of the project would lead to further UNDR0 involvement in activities of that type.

10. Some concern had been expressed in the Committee regarding possible duplication and waste as a result of unco-ordinated and haphazard operations by various United Nations and non-United Nations agencies and individual Governments in disaster situations. It was that concern which had motivated the establishment of the UNDR0 Co-ordination Centre in Geneva. The Centre provided machinery for the proper mobilization, disbursement and use of disaster relief assistance. It could keep donors abreast of the types and amounts of aid needed, and recipients informed of the availability of assistance and the supply position, with a view to ensuring better co-ordination and providing an integrated disaster operation framework. The establishment of the Centre would add greatly to UNDR0's scope

(Mr. Zaman, Bangladesh)

and efficacy. His delegation therefore joined the Co-ordinator in his appeal to donors and recipients to make better and fuller use of that machinery.

11. The new internal structure of the Office of the Co-ordinator reflected the reorganization called for in Economic and Social Council resolution 2102 (LXIII). As the Co-ordinator had noted, however, the full potential of the reorganization could not be realized unless the necessary specialist staff could be recruited, which was made extremely difficult by the uncertainty of UNDR0's financial position. A viable and permanent operation such as UNDR0 had to have a sound, assured and regular budgetary basis. In view of the ever-increasing demand for UNDR0's services, the General Assembly had agreed in resolution 32/213, on the programme budget for the biennium 1978-1979, to finance approximately one third of the budget requirements of the Office of the Co-ordinator from the regular budget, rather than voluntary sources. That was a step in the right direction, but his delegation still felt that the entire administrative costs of UNDR0 should be met out of the regular budget, without precluding the use of voluntary funds for programme activities designed to benefit recipients directly. Only then would UNDR0 have a financial status commensurate with its operational responsibilities and would it be able to attract the necessary specialist staff.

12. Mrs. PHAN MINH HIEN (Viet Nam) said that UNDR0's efforts in the field of disaster prevention were of particular assistance to developing countries. Similarly, its research on the occurrence and consequences of disasters had led to improved co-ordination and a more rapid response by UNDR0 and other organizations and Governments in mobilizing emergency aid to disaster-stricken regions.

13. For three years her country had suffered from a succession of severe natural disasters; in the current year alone, over 1 million hectares of crops had been destroyed and over 3 million tons of rice lost, 5 million people had been affected and over 500,000 homes had been flooded or destroyed. The torrential rains and successive typhoons in recent months were the worst disasters which her country had suffered in decades. Her Government and people were making every effort in the field of disaster prevention and rehabilitation, but given the fact that Viet Nam was still recovering from a disastrous war, their achievements were necessarily limited. Her Government was grateful to UNDR0 and the many international organizations and Governments which had responded promptly and generously to its appeal for assistance.

14. In view of the sudden climatic fluctuations that had occurred in recent years and were likely to recur in the future, she urged UNDR0 to continue to assist developing countries to avail themselves of modern technology and experience in the fields of disaster prevention and preparedness.

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15. Mr. GADEL HAK (Egypt) said that it was essential to provide a sound financial basis for UNDRO's core programme and to provide the Office with increased financial resources in order to equip it to carry out its emergency relief work and technical co-operation activities. His delegation supported the emphasis on disaster preparedness and prevention and urged that those activities should be expanded, particularly in disaster-prone countries. He commended the Co-ordinator on his initiative in launching a special appeal for assistance to finance the emergency rescue boats project in Bangladesh and suggested that that method of mobilizing funds might be further developed.

16. His delegation welcomed the internal organizational changes introduced by the Co-ordinator with a view to strengthening the co-ordinating capacity of the Office and was gratified by the co-operation arrangements and memoranda of understanding concluded between UNDRO and other United Nations agencies and organizations.

17. Mr. MUNGAI (Kenya) commended UNDRO on the dedication and energy with which it was discharging the responsibilities entrusted to it by the General Assembly. The speed and effectiveness of UNDRO's response to disaster emergencies in the year under review had helped to reduce human suffering and save countless lives.

18. His country, as one that had suffered from disasters such as floods, famine and locust swarms, appreciated the value and effectiveness of disaster preparedness and pre-disaster planning at the national and regional levels. Consequently, it welcomed UNDRO's increased emphasis on those aspects, particularly the proposal to hold regional seminars in disaster-prone areas on such topics as weather-related disasters, regional initiatives and contingency plans.

19. On behalf of the sponsors, he introduced draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.25 and announced that Cape Verde, Congo, Egypt, the Gambia, Guyana, Lesotho, and Mozambique had become sponsors. The sponsors wished to revise the text of the draft resolution. First, the title should read "Assistance to the drought-stricken areas of Ethiopia". Secondly, the following preambular paragraph was to be added: "Taking note with appreciation in this regard of the continued efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and of the United Nations/FAO World Food Programme, in particular the assistance given by FAO through its technical co-operation programme, its Office for Special Relief Operations and the emergency food aid provided by the World Food Programme, as approved by the Director-General of FAO,". Thirdly, the following words were to be added in paragraph 2 following the reference to UNDP: "the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Food Programme,".

20. Between 1972 and 1974 Ethiopia, a close and sisterly neighbour of his country, had suffered a severe and prolonged drought and famine, resulting in the loss of approximately 150,000 lives and large-scale cattle mortality in the north-eastern region. In 1975 there had been a further severe drought, particularly in

(Mr. Mungai, Kenya)

the south-east lowlands, which had resulted in the loss of approximately 40 per cent of the livestock. The existing situation in the regions of Wollo, Tigrai, Bale, Haraghe and Sidamo was no less grave: some 1.5 million people were currently in need of food aid and their numbers might ultimately increase to 2 million. In the regions of Bale, Haraghe and Sidamo, the food supply situation was further aggravated by the military conflict. Approximately 200,000 homeless persons were living in resettlement camps where they were receiving food, medical aid implements, clothing and other relief, and there had been widespread destruction of crops and livestock. Owing to the military operations, the Eastern African Desert Locust Control Organization had been unable to detect or control locust breeding, and locust swarms had appeared in many areas of Ethiopia and were causing damage that would add to the sufferings of the people.

21. Despite much generous assistance, the food situation in Ethiopia remained critical. The Co-ordinator had stated that a further 97,000 tons of cereals and 5,000 tons of protective food were required, in addition to the amount already pledged or under negotiation. Moreover, as indicated in the report of the multidonor mission which had visited Ethiopia in June 1978, the country had severe infrastructural and logistical problems which were hindering the prompt and effective distribution of relief. The mission had recommended that efforts should be made to acquire evacuators, vehicles and aircraft. Given the gravity of the food situation in Ethiopia, the sponsors had felt it necessary to submit draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.25 as a matter of urgency with a view to ensuring that UNDRO and the other United Nations bodies concerned would continue and indeed intensify their assistance to Ethiopia in its relief and rehabilitation efforts. They also appealed strongly to Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and all voluntary agencies to continue and increase their assistance to the Government of Ethiopia; any assistance, whether in the form of money or in kind - especially food-stuffs or the infrastructural equipment he had mentioned - would be greatly appreciated by the people of Ethiopia. It was the view of many independent observers that unless the international community came to the aid of Ethiopia promptly, a terrible tragedy would occur in that country.

22. Mr. MALINGUR (Somalia) said that the report on the activities of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (A/33/82) showed once again that UNDRO was providing an indispensable service to the world community. As its range of operations continued to widen and the quality of its humanitarian assistance improved, its need for a sound and stable financial base increased proportionately. The restructuring of the Office's internal organization reflected not only the increased scope of its central work of relief co-ordination but also the importance of its other areas of activity. Its technical assistance projects for disaster preparedness and prevention, and its emergency assistance to meet immediate needs in disaster situations were of great practical value.

(Mr. Malingur, Somalia)

23. His country had experienced both disastrous drought and disastrous floods in recent years, and was particularly appreciative of UNDR0's policy of giving priority to those disaster-prone countries which, like Somalia, were also among the least developed. Somalia had benefited greatly from all three of UNDR0's areas of activity. It had received direct emergency assistance from UNDR0, international assistance channelled through it, and technical assistance in the form of an advisory mission on disaster preparedness and prevention. In the course of its visit, the mission had shown great flexibility by helping to deal also with an emergency situation that had arisen at the time.

24. Its first-hand experience of UNDR0's valuable work made his Government anxious to see UNDR0's financial base strengthened and stabilized. It therefore welcomed the transfer to the regular United Nations budget of 34 per cent of UNDR0's costs previously met by voluntary contributions. It was also glad to learn that the sum of \$400,000 was available in the regular budget for emergency assistance, since voluntary funding for that purpose had been very disappointing. His delegation would support a further transfer of costs to the regular budget at the end of the 1978-1979 biennium, as part of the continuing effort to stabilize UNDR0's financing. It hoped, however, that voluntary funding would continue to provide support. The relative success of the trust fund's subaccount for technical assistance in disaster prevention and planning showed the willingness of traditional donors to contribute to that activity.

25. UNDR0's close collaboration with UNEP and UNDP was logical, in terms of financial co-operation and co-operation in technical assistance projects of common interest. His delegation, however, would welcome further study of the feasibility of having UNEP and UNDP provide the financial base for UNDR0's assistance programmes. Any permanent arrangement for financing that activity should allow the UNDR0 staff to carry out research projects and to formulate long-term policies for an international strategy of disaster prevention, as well as enabling them to deal with the problems of specific disaster-prone countries. He was glad to note that UNDR0 maintained very close co-operation with all organs of the United Nations family. The memoranda of understanding between UNDR0 and other agencies and bodies concerned would avoid duplication of effort and conflict of responsibility in areas in which their activities overlapped. The efforts to conclude a multiagency agreement, as a basis for a joint programme on disaster preparedness and prevention, were highly commendable.

26. UNDR0's expanding contacts with agencies and organizations both within and outside the United Nations system showed the increased sophistication and forward-looking nature of its policies. Its interest in the possibility of providing assistance in industrial, maritime, aviation and nuclear accidents demonstrated its readiness to widen its responsibilities.

27. Mr. ADUGNA (Ethiopia) thanked the Secretary-General for his report on assistance to the drought-stricken areas of Ethiopia (A/33/195), and the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator for his remarks on the magnitude and urgency of the problem.

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(Mr. Adugna, Ethiopia)

28. A drought emergency had prevailed in Ethiopia since 1973. When it had first struck, the efforts of the Government of the time to conceal it had caused relief supplies to reach the country too late to save hundreds of thousands of lives. Since then, the Government of socialist Ethiopia had established a commission to deal with the problem of natural and man-made disasters. An early warning system had been established, and conditions had been regularly reported to the United Nations system and to States Members of the United Nations. He himself had warned the Committee at the previous session of the threat of famine in Ethiopia unless national relief and rehabilitation efforts received substantial external assistance. In co-operation with the Director-General of FAO, he had invited a multidonor mission to visit Ethiopia. The mission had established that a total of 350,000 tons of cereals and 27,000 tons of high-protein food for emergency relief was needed for a period of one year. Since regular food aid was 100,000 tons a year and 10,000 tons a year of high-protein food was produced in Ethiopia, it had been suggested by the mission that an additional 200,000 tons of cereal and 17,000 tons of high-protein food would be required for relief purposes. The Director-General of FAO had made two appeals for those food items but so far the response had not been encouraging. Only 119,000 tons of cereals had been pledged or delivered.

29. He therefore urged all those States Members which had supported Ethiopia by approving resolutions to help it to translate those resolutions into action. Time was of the essence if precious human lives were to be saved. The multidonor mission had also recommended that 100 trucks and trailers, six mobile maintenance vehicles and two evacuators should be acquired to improve port handling and the logistical situation. So far, only the Netherlands had responded to the Co-ordinator's appeal, with funds for the evacuators. Since the completion of the multidonor mission's report, the situation had deteriorated further. Several regions not affected during the mission's visit had since been ravaged by drought, and it was estimated that more than 3 million people would be affected. Without massive and prompt international assistance, Ethiopia, with its own limited capacity, would be unable to cope with the emergency.

30. At recent meetings of the FAO Committee on Food Aid Policies and Programmes, the Director-General of FAO and the Executive Director of the World Food Programme had both appealed for a greater response from the international community. In a determined effort to mitigate the effects of the impending disaster, his Government had diverted resources previously earmarked for development activities to relief operations. It was well aware that the lasting solution to food problems lay in a sharp increase of food production in the developing countries themselves. A new campaign had been instituted to revive the national economy by attacking the root causes of under-development. However, although the measures taken by the Government would in the end bring about a lasting solution, the relief needs of the moment must be met. If the Government diverted all the funds earmarked for development, it would be mortgaging future development and self-reliance. His Government therefore renewed its appeal for increased and intensified assistance so that the need for relief would not be perpetuated.

31. The problems caused by natural disasters did not end with the provision of temporary relief. The major problem was rehabilitation, and very substantial

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(Mr. Adugna, Ethiopia)

international assistance was required in that respect also. The problem of disaster control, furthermore, was inseparable from the general problem of development. Only through economic development would disaster-prone countries be able to develop their capacity to handle disasters. In his delegation's view, the eradication of poverty in the developing countries should begin with increased food production based on self-reliance. To encourage that effort, donor countries should pursue a policy that would guarantee appropriate sustained assistance to the developing countries, particularly the food-priority countries.

32. In conclusion, he reiterated his Government's deep gratitude to the various donor Governments and voluntary agencies, and to the Executive Heads of UNDR0, UNDP, UNICEF, FAO, UNHCR and ICRC, for their generous and continued assistance.

33. Mr. BASSIN (Finland), speaking on behalf of the delegations of Denmark, Norway, Sweden and Finland, commended the comprehensive account of UNDR0 activities given in the report of the Secretary-General (A/33/82). The slight revision of the report's format had been helpful. However, in future reports a more analytical approach to the subject-matter would be welcome. A comprehensive examination of the Office's strengths and weaknesses in relief co-ordination, disaster preparedness and prevention, based on the experience of its six years of existence, would be most useful to the Committee.

34. With regard to relief co-ordination, he reiterated the view of the Nordic delegations that UNDR0's resources, particularly in respect of staff, did not permit an extension of its activities into operations. Both resource considerations and the Office's mandate pointed to a co-ordinating role, which UNDR0 had performed well. The Nordic countries therefore took a cautious attitude towards UNDR0's involvement in "other disaster situations" (A/32/82, paras. 22-24). They were confident that in the application of the memorandum of understanding between UNDR0 and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, those considerations would be borne in mind. The Co-ordinator had referred in his opening statement (A/C.2/33/SR.34) to possible new arrangements in the area of disaster preparedness, under which UNDR0 would assume full responsibility for project formulation, execution and follow-up; the Nordic countries assumed that there would be an opportunity to discuss those plans at the intergovernmental level before any action was taken.

35. With regard to disaster preparedness and prevention, it was important for UNDR0 to continue the work already under way and to complete the studies that had been started. The emphasis on advisory services to disaster-prone countries should continue, and such activities as the publication of manuals on disaster prevention should be given prominence in the programme of work. Another aspect that merited closer examination was the possibility of including preparedness and prevention activities in UNDP's regional and interregional programmes and projects.

36. Turning to UNDR0's programmes of technical assistance, he stressed the importance of the advisory services for pre-disaster planning. Some of the Nordic delegations had made special contributions for that purpose, and it would be

desirable for an evaluation to be made of the implementation of the pre-disaster plans and the views of the recipient Governments on UNDRO's activities in that respect.

37. The Nordic delegations shared the Co-ordinator's continuing preoccupation with the financing of UNDRO's core programme. It was still an important objective that as many posts as possible in the core programme should be transferred to the regular budget. It was essential that, as the only truly universal organization of the United Nations system dealing with the subject, UNDRO should be able to face its responsibilities with adequate resources and a sound financial basis. It was recognized, however, that for the time being only gradual progress could be made in that direction.

38. With regard to the work of the UNDRO secretariat, he stressed that staff recruitment should receive continuous attention and should, wherever possible, be speeded up. Greater emphasis on long-term planning and internal co-operation could help the secretariat to carry out its difficult task of co-ordination despite limited staff resources and the vast geographical scope of UNDRO's activities.

39. Ms. VARRATI (United States of America) said that the Co-ordinator had given a very clear account in his introductory statement of UNDRO's activities and the problems it had encountered (A/C.2/33/SR.34). Her delegation commended the Co-ordinator for his continuing efforts to expedite international disaster relief assistance and improve co-operation arrangements concerning disaster preparedness and prevention within the United Nations system. Her Government firmly believed in disaster preparedness, not only because lack of it led to serious human problems, but also because of the harmful effect of disasters on economic development. She accordingly urged that disaster-prone countries should consider that element when they were drawing up their economic assistance plans and give it the priority it deserved.

40. Her delegation agreed with the Co-ordinator that if his Office was to carry out its co-ordinating function during disasters, donor countries must keep his office informed of the assistance they were providing, and recipient countries must report the assistance they were receiving or requesting.

41. Turning to the question of assistance to the drought-stricken areas of Ethiopia, she said that the United States had provided more than \$3.2 million in relief and rehabilitation assistance to the Ethiopian Government in response to the Ogaden strife, the famine in the Wollo/Tigre area and the locust emergency. It would remain the policy of her Government to consider contributions to meet the humanitarian needs of persons affected by man-made and natural disaster so long as those needs existed.

42. Mr. RABEMANANTSOA (Madagascar) said that the most notable changes in UNDRO in 1978 had been the establishment of special subaccounts for financing emergency assistance activities and technical assistance activities, and the strengthening of the co-ordinating capability of the Office. There had been serious difficulties in financing the special subaccounts, and they could not be overcome without mutual

(Mr. Rabemanantsoa, Madagascar)

understanding among all donors whether States Members, United Nations organizations, or intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies. Financial uncertainty was hampering the activities of the Co-ordinator, activities which were no longer concerned solely with natural disasters, but were extending more and more to other types of disaster, such as internal conflicts and industrial accidents.

43. His delegation welcomed the steps taken by the Secretariat to implement General Assembly resolution 31/173 by transferring to the regular budget of the United Nations approximately 34 per cent of the UNDR0 costs previously met by voluntary contributions. It was concerned, however, to note that contributions for the financing of emergency assistance activities amounted to only some \$5,000, compared with the target of \$400,000 for the 1976-1977 biennium. That target must be achieved if the international community was to show real compassion for the victims of disasters. The gradual transfer of some of the administrative costs of the Office should have the effect of relieving the burden on donor countries, a development that should enable them to do more in the financing of emergency assistance activities.

44. The funds available for the financing of technical assistance activities were more satisfactory, since some \$500,000 had been contributed in 1976-1977, and the allocation of some \$1.5 million in the 1978-1979 budget provided for a considerable expansion in the programme of technical co-operation in disaster prevention and planning. That imbalance between emergency assistance and technical assistance, which prevented the optimum use of resources, arose because the contributions of some donors were made for specific purposes. Such situations served to show that all efforts being made by the international community would remain limited as long as they remained dependent on voluntary contributions. The Office of the Co-ordinator would have to be given reliable and continuing financing, with the support of UNEP, UNDP and the other United Nations agencies with which it had concluded agreements on co-operation.

45. His delegation endorsed the steps taken to identify and overcome obstacles to the prompt supply of international relief, and considered that it would be desirable to conclude an international agreement to remove the main obstacles and enable the United Nations to respond rapidly and effectively to any demand for emergency assistance. His delegation commended UNDR0's efforts in supplying aid to countries stricken by disaster, in co-ordinating international help in cases of disaster and in providing technical assistance to help the countries concerned to improve their methods of organizing relief. It hoped that the international community would provide generously for financing emergency assistance; the existing level of \$20,000 per country per disaster should be raised to \$30,000. His delegation also considered that, in the sphere of technical assistance, UNDR0 should be able to finance directly projects for making the population more aware of catastrophes which were likely to befall them periodically, such as hurricanes, floods and earthquakes. He hoped that UNDR0 could provide the countries concerned with substantial aid to enable them to meet the heavy burden involved in the support costs of some international aid.

46. Mr. DUVERNEY-GUICHARD (France) thanked the Co-ordinator for the efforts he had made to improve the quality of the aid provided by his Office. In particular France appreciated what had been done for Ethiopia. He hoped that the reorganization of the Office would strengthen the Co-ordinator's role. He was pleased to note that in 1978 the Co-ordinator had submitted a single work plan as part of the medium-term plan. He did not wish to reopen the question of the content of the medium-term plan, which had been fully discussed by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination, but he urged the Co-ordinator to review the plan in the light of the comments and recommendations of that Committee. There were still some problems to be solved, especially with regard to UNEP.
47. With regard to preventive activities, the Co-ordinator should not take on commitments that would involve exceeding the terms of reference originally given to his Office. He hoped that any preventive action taken could be financed by UNDP, at either the country or the regional level. His delegation had always had some misgivings about the Office's development activities and its work on situations other than natural disasters. Care should be taken that any activities undertaken in those areas should not encroach on the competence of the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees or similar bodies.
48. The position of his delegation on the transfer to the regular budget of posts for operational activities, whether direct or indirect, formerly financed from voluntary contributions, was well known. His delegation intended to revert to that question in the Fifth Committee. In conclusion, he assured the Co-ordinator that France supported the work of his Office, and was considering further ways of co-operating with his programme in 1979.
49. Mr. RAMONDI (Netherlands) said that his delegation welcomed the reorganization of the Office with a view to improving its performance, which had come to be highly rated by his Government. He realized that it would be impossible for UNDR0 to recruit qualified people if they were unable to offer contracts of reasonable duration.
50. With regard to the transfer of posts to the regular budget, referred to in paragraph 9 of the Secretary-General's report (A/33/82), he agreed with what the representative of Finland had said on behalf of the Nordic countries. Those transfers represented a step in the right direction.
51. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee had concluded its debate on item 67.
52. Mr. MUNGAI (Kenya) suggested that, in view of the urgency of the matter, draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.25 might be taken up immediately.
53. Ms. VARRATI (United States of America) said that she was not yet in a position to take any decision on that resolution because she had not received instructions from her Government, but she hoped to be able to do so at the following meeting.

AGENDA ITEM 64: FOOD PROBLEMS: REPORT OF THE WORLD FOOD COUNCIL (continued)  
(A/C.2/33/L.26)

54. Mr. MAAMOURI (Tunisia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.26 on behalf of the Group of 77, said that it reproduced the recommendations of the World Food Council as reflected in the Mexico Declaration. The Group of 77 attached special importance to the Mexico Declaration and the Manila Communiqué, referred to in paragraph 3, and hoped that the General Assembly could help to find the necessary solutions to the problems listed in paragraph 5. That task would require action by Governments and international organizations, which were accordingly urged, in paragraph 6, to co-operate fully with the World Food Council. The Group of 77 considered that there was a close link between the world trade situation, with rising protectionism directed against the exports of developing countries, and the deteriorating food position of those countries, and that point was dealt with in paragraph 7. Paragraphs 8, 9 and 10 referred to measures on which the international community had already agreed, and urged that they should be implemented.

55. The Group of 77 attached special importance to the call to donor countries in paragraph 12 to preserve the nutritional value of their food aid. The request to the World Food Council, in paragraph 13, to undertake a review of the implementations of recent decisions on food problems was based on the undeniable relationship between development and food problems.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.