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49th meeting

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at 3 p.m.

New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 49th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MWANGAGUHUNGA (Uganda)

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30 November 1978

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

AGENDA ITEM 67: OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR:
REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

1. Mr. BERKOL (United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator) said that a very destructive cyclone had struck the east coast of Sri Lanka on 24 November; the Secretary-General had already dispatched a message of sympathy to the President of that country. The latest information indicated that more than 500 lives had been lost, over a million people had been left homeless, and 80,000 houses had been damaged; the situation was probably even more serious, however, as a number of outlying areas had been completely cut off by the cyclone.

2. When preliminary reports of the disaster had reached Geneva a few hours after the cyclone had first struck, UNDRO had made contact immediately with the UNDP Resident Representative in Colombo, telexed an "alert" situation report to donor Governments and organizations and, at the request of the Permanent Representative of Sri Lanka in New York, had placed its services at the disposal of the Government. A member of the staff of UNDRO had been sent to Colombo, and he and the Resident Representative had had meetings with government officials and with the representatives in Colombo of eight donor Governments (Australia, Canada, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States), of the Sri Lankan Red Cross and the League of Red Cross Societies, of other voluntary agencies and of UNICEF, the World Health Organization and the World Food Programme. The contributions so far announced to UNDRO by donor Governments and organizations would meet most of the initial emergency relief needs, but reports on new requirements were still arriving, including requirements for helicopters, generators and communications equipment. In that connexion, he drew attention to the recent appeal to Governments and international organizations in draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.35/Rev.1 to co-operate with UNDRO by furnishing detailed information on their current and intended relief contributions as expeditiously as possible. The machinery of UNDRO was at the disposal of all concerned to provide up-to-date information on needs and on contributions so that the needs could be matched, the supply of essential items ensured, and duplication and waste avoided. He was sure that he could count on the help of Governments to bring succour to the people of Sri Lanka.

3. Mr. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka) said that Sri Lanka had been doing its utmost to build a better life for its people, despite its limited resources, and had been striving to set aside as much as possible for the rapid development of the economy. The 100-m.p.h. cyclone which had struck the island on 24 November had caused enormous devastation and incalculable human suffering. Out of a total population of 14 million, 1 million had been left homeless, without food, shelter or clothing, 500 had died and many more were missing; many towns and villages had been marooned so that food supplies had to be dropped from the air. Property in much of the country had been devastated, and communications, power, road and rail and health services had been severely disrupted; in many areas the destruction had been total. About 100,000 houses and essential public buildings had been completely destroyed and many others urgently required reconstruction.

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(Mr. Fernando, Sri Lanka)

4. The tragedy had brought forth the value of international co-operation; Sri Lanka had received unprecedented assistance from many Governments, several United Nations agencies and even non-governmental organizations. He expressed the deep gratitude of the people and Government of Sri Lanka for the immediate assistance that had been provided and the commitments for further assistance. Further urgent assistance was required in form of food, clothing, drugs and housing. At the same time, Sri Lanka faced the task of long-term rehabilitation, particularly in respect of housing, irrigation, electricity, roads, telecommunications, buildings, schools and hospitals. He appealed to members of the Committee to draw the attention of their Governments to the catastrophe and to Sri Lanka's immediate and long-term requirements.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/33/3; E/1978/98; A/C.2/33/L.43)

5. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.43, announced that Colombia, Ecuador, India, Mexico, Nepal, Nigeria, Portugal and Togo had become sponsors. The draft resolution was a follow-up to General Assembly resolution 32/157, on the same subject. The World Tourism Organization was one of the newest bodies in the United Nations system, and the sponsors hoped that it would become an effective component of that system. Paragraph 3 reiterated the invitation made in General Assembly resolution 32/157; so far only about 100 Member States had become members of the World Tourism Organization. The sponsors hoped that the draft resolution could be approved by consensus.

6. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Committee approved draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.43 without a vote.

7. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 68: HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (continued) (A/C.2/33/L.18 and Corr.1, L.36, L.41)

Draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18 and Corr.1

7a. The CHAIRMAN announced that Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Cuba, India, Kuwait, Qatar, Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Viet Nam had become sponsors of draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18 and Corr.1. He drew attention to the statement of administrative and financial implications (A/C.2/33/L.36).

8. Mr. SMIRNOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet Union had always supported the just demands of the Palestinian people, and considered that the prerequisites for successfully solving the Palestinian problem, of which the refugee problem was a component part, were the withdrawal of Israeli troops from all the territories occupied in 1967 and the guarantee of the inalienable rights of the Arab people of Palestine, including their right to self-determination and to the creation of their own State. The attainment of that right in the context

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(Mr. Smirnov, USSR)

of a comprehensive and just settlement of the Middle East conflict would enable them to leave the refugee camps, free themselves from the yoke of the occupying forces and build their own State in their homeland. On the basis of its position of principle of supporting the just demands of the Palestinian people, whose only legitimate representative was the PLO, his delegation supported draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18 and Corr.1.

9. Mr. ORON (Israel) said that he felt bound to reiterate his Government's position on General Assembly resolution 32/171 which, like General Assembly resolution 31/110 and previous resolutions adopted in the international forums listed in the preamble to draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18, was politically motivated and based on tendentious assumptions. His Government had stated its belief that since General Assembly resolution 32/171 prejudged the issue involved, it obviated any possibility of preparing an objective report about the living conditions in the areas administered by Israel since 1967. Israel, and the territories under its administration, were open societies, and in 1977 alone they had been visited by nearly 1 million people, including some 150,000 nationals of Arab States. Moreover, data on those areas were published periodically, and had indeed been published by the United Nations and other international organizations as well as by scientific institutions. If the Committee was to deal seriously with the subjects before it, it must not allow its attention to be diverted by the ritual introduction by some delegations of extraneous and politically motivated issues.

10. Israel's policy in the administered areas was to normalize living conditions on the basis of economic prosperity and social stability with the minimum of interference in the lives of the inhabitants. The economy of those areas was developing rapidly, and there had been a substantial improvement in the standard of living; the annual increase in per capita gross product had been 14 per cent in real terms since 1967 and the basis of a modern economy and modern industry had been established. Agricultural output had increased by 20 per cent a year since 1967 and the Government of Israel had invested some 4 billion Israeli pounds in the administered territories in 1968-1977. A high standard of health and sanitation services had been introduced. Unemployment in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip had been completely eliminated. His Government appreciated the efforts made by ILO to discover the truth about the situation and its refusal to be misled by one-sided resolutions.

11. Israel was aware that economic and social issues could not be divorced from political factors, but until political solutions were found in appropriate forums, it would continue to do its utmost to promote economic growth and social progress in the administered areas. One-sided and politically motivated resolutions would contribute nothing to the well-being of the Palestinian Arab population or to the ongoing process of peaceful negotiations. His delegation would therefore vote against draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18 and Corr.1.

12. Mr. KHADER (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) thanked the delegations that were sponsoring draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18 and Corr.1 and delegations which had spoken in support of the people of Palestine.

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(Mr. Khader, Observer, PLO)

13. Those who occupied another country's territory always claimed that the people and country benefited from the occupation. In South Africa the apartheid régime was claiming that it had improved the social, economic and cultural life of the African peoples, just as the old colonizers had claimed that they had brought civilization to the countries they had seized. Similarly, the occupiers of Arab lands who were oppressing and exploiting the population were claiming that they had brought them economic prosperity. There was no people anywhere in the world that would accept occupation by an aggressor, even if they were living in Utopian conditions. There might well be people in prison somewhere in the world who were better off than some people in parts of the third world, but no inhabitants of the third world would willingly accept prison conditions, however good.

14. The international community was being called on to decide whether an expert and impartial group should be asked to report on the situation and needs of the Palestinian people. It was not for the occupiers to object to that proposal. In 1977 the General Assembly had adopted resolution 32/171 because the international community had felt the need to make a report on the people of Palestine. The Zionist occupiers were again refusing to agree to a visit by three experts, on the pretext that millions of visitors had seen improvements in the economic and social conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories. In fact, prices had soared, and Palestinians had lost work because they had lost their land, their houses had been dynamited, and people had been expelled or forced to emigrate because of lack of work, since the occupying forces had robbed them of their means of existence.

15. The occupiers claimed that the situation was good, and the proposal before the Committee was to ask an expert group appointed by the Secretary-General to go to the occupied territories, there to examine the situation and speak freely with the people. If, when the group returned, it reported that the economic and social situation under the occupation was good, the Committee would not need to approve another such resolution in 1979.

16. A UNESCO group had visited the territory to study the cultural situation, and its report stated that although the Israelis had permitted its members to enter the territories, they had been accompanied everywhere by a representative of the Military Governor and had not been able to meet any Palestinian representative without that representative being present. There should be a committee of inquiry, consisting of impartial international experts appointed by the United Nations who could work freely in the territories and give a true and factual report of the circumstances of the Palestine people, so as to provide sound documentation for discussion in the Committee at the thirty-fourth session.

17. The CHAIRMAN invited the Committee to vote on draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18 and Corr.1.

18. At the request of the representative of Iraq, the vote was taken by roll-call.

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19. Botswana, having been drawn by lot by the Chairman, was called upon to vote first.

In favour: Afghanistan, Algeria, Argentina, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burma, Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic, Cape Verde, Central African Empire, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Democratic Yemen, Ecuador, Egypt, Gabon, German Democratic Republic, Ghana, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Liberia, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Qatar, Romania, Rwanda, Senegal, Singapore, Somalia, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Cameroon, United Republic of Tanzania, Upper Volta, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Yugoslavia, Zaire.

Against: Israel, United States of America.

Abstaining: Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Federal Republic of, Honduras, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Luxembourg, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, Portugal, Sweden, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay.

20. Draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18 and Corr.1 was approved by 89 votes to 2, with 23 abstentions.

21. Mr. TERADA (Japan) said that his delegation had voted in favour of draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18, even though the first preambular paragraph referred to the recommendations of Habitat: United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, some of which Japan could not support. His delegation did not interpret paragraph 3 as limiting the Secretary-General's consultations to consultations with the Palestine Liberation Organization.

22. Mrs. VARRATI (United States of America) said that the views of her Government on the issues underlying the draft resolution just approved were well known. Her delegation regretted the injection of highly controversial political issues into bodies concerned with economic and social matters, and had consequently voted against the draft resolution.

23. Mr. BARCELO (Mexico) said that his delegation had voted in favour of the draft resolution, without prejudice to its position that the solution of the Palestine problem could in no way be divorced from the solution of other aspects of the Middle East problem, as laid down in Security Council resolution 242 (1967).

24. Mr. DRAMOU (Guinea) asked that it should be recorded in the summary record of the meeting that his delegation had intended to vote in favour of the draft resolution.

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25. Mr. SAUNDERS (Bahamas) said that his Government supported the ideas in draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.18, and had accordingly voted in favour of it, although it had strong reservations about the implications of paragraph 3.

Draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.41

26. Mr. ZACHMANN (German Democratic Republic), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.41, said that the document was the result of intensive informal consultations based on the draft resolution (A/C.2/33/L.20) by the representative of Tunisia on behalf of the Group of 77. He expressed his gratitude to the representatives of that Group for the constructive approach they had taken to the informal consultations and to the amendments proposed during the consultations. He also expressed his appreciation of the efforts made by other representatives to achieve consensus on a revised version of the earlier draft resolution. Those taking part in the consultations had had to deal with a complicated problem arising out of General Assembly resolution 32/162, and it had been a difficult task to devise a formulation satisfactory to everybody.

27. A number of changes had been made to the original text, and paragraph 5 of the document before the Committee was new. He urged the Committee to approve draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.41 by consensus.

28. The CHAIRMAN said that he understood that document A/C.2/33/L.20 had been withdrawn, and invited the Committee to approve draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.41 without a vote.

29. It was so decided.

30. Mr. TERADA (Japan) said that he had not objected to the approval by consensus of document A/C.2/33/L.41, but he wished the record to show that his Government reserved its position regarding voluntary contributions to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation.

31. Mr. JODAHL (Sweden) said that his delegation had joined in the consensus on document A/C.2/33/L.41, and was in full agreement with the basic objective of strengthening international co-operation in human settlements. The resources available to the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation needed to be expanded, and he welcomed the addition of paragraph 5, concerning recommendations to be made on the basis of proposals by the Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) in accordance with paragraphs 5 and 6 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1978/66.

32. However, with respect to the provisions in paragraph 3 calling for more international development assistance, his delegation considered that the decisive role in financing human settlements activities belonged to UNDP and to the international development banks, although the Centre could act as the executing agency. As he had previously stated, his delegation had serious reservations about the existing orientation of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation.

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33. Mr. FREYBERG (Poland), speaking on behalf of the Byelorussian SSR, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Hungary, Mongolia, the Ukrainian SSR, the Soviet Union and Poland, reiterated the refusal of those countries to recognize the validity of fixed targets for voluntary funds.

34. Mrs. DERRE (France) said that although her delegation had not opposed the consensus on draft resolution A/C.2/33/L.41, it repeated its reservations, already stated in other United Nations bodies, regarding the orientation and function of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation.

The meeting rose at 4.35 p.m.