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President: Ms. Gallardo Hernandez (Vice-President) (El Salvador)

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In the absence of Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg), Ms. Gallardo Hernandez (El Salvador), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Operational activities of the United Nations for international development cooperation

- (a) Follow-up to policy recommendations of the General Assembly and the Council** (E/2009/103, A/64/75-E/2009/59, E/2009/61, E/2009/68, E/2009/75, E/2009/76 and E/2009/85)
- (c) South-South cooperation for development** (A/63/39)

The President, opening the operational activities segment, said that its agenda provided a timely opportunity to reflect on how the United Nations could help countries to deal with the multiple crises confronting them while continuing to pursue their national priorities and internationally agreed development goals. As emphasized by the recently convened United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, the global crisis must not be used as an excuse to avoid meeting prior commitments.

The clear principles and guidelines established by the General Assembly in its 2007 triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities (TCPR), which had underscored the value of the universal, neutral, multilateral and voluntary nature of United Nations system operations, should guide the system's support to programme countries. One of the Council's key tasks during the present segment was to ensure that the United Nations continued to forge ahead in implementing the TCPR while responding to new challenges. A special focus would be placed at that session on the resident coordinator system, financing, human resources at the country level, and simplification and harmonization of the United Nations system procedures.

The draft resolution before the Council relating to operational activities provided clear and action-oriented guidance to the United Nations system, and she hoped that it could be adopted rapidly.

The Secretary noted that, the sixteenth session of the High-level Committee on South-South Cooperation having been postponed until January 2010, review of

the Committee's report could take place at the Council's next substantive session in 2010.

Keynote address and introductory statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

Mr. Sha Zukang (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that, given the crises confronting it, the world was in danger of failing to achieve its internationally agreed development goals. The international community must seize the opportunity to revisit what had been overlooked or neglected; undertake systemic changes reflecting more equitable arrangements; develop creative solutions to pursue goals more cost effectively; and identify time-bound actions for addressing priorities. As the panel discussions would elaborate, the United Nations had made substantial progress in its efforts to work more coherently and to harmonize country-level operations while reducing transaction costs for partners.

The Secretariat had prepared six reports for the operational activities segment. The first report highlighted the progress made and obstacles encountered over the past two years in implementing the recommendations set out in the triennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities. Considerable progress had been made in involving a greater number of actors in the management of operational activities, in country-level planning, in strengthening mutual accountability within the resident coordinator system and in promoting national ownership and leadership. On the other hand there was a continuing need to address the imbalance between core and non-core resources, to strengthen the support for capacity development and South-South cooperation and in situations of transition from relief to development, and to ensure greater consistency in the quality of development assistance frameworks.

The second report reviewed the support by the United Nations system to the functioning of the resident coordinator system and the multiple functions of the Resident Coordinator. It recommended that United Nations system organizations provide stronger, better coordinated and more transparent support to the resident coordinator system and underlined the need to develop methods of assessing the actual benefits and costs of coordination.

The third report set out the challenges of dealing with multiple human resources policies and procedures across the United Nations development system at the country level. It stressed the need to take a strategic look at human resources policies in order to improve the response to the needs of programme countries. Maintaining a strong pool of candidates for resident coordinator posts was an urgent requirement.

The fourth report, providing a comprehensive statistical analysis of the financing of operational activities for development, highlighted the persistent imbalance between core and non-core resources and the heavy reliance on a limited number of donors.

The fifth report, reviewing trends in development cooperation financing, pointed to the growing importance of South-South cooperation, regional development banks and global funds (in the case of health and environment funding). The economic crisis was putting pressure on aid budgets underlining the critical importance of helping the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries.

The sixth report covered the actions taken by the governing bodies of funds, programmes and specialized agencies to harmonize cost-recovery policies, rationalize United Nations country presence, and simplify and standardize rules, procedures and business practices. While significant progress had been made in all three areas, the United Nations system procedures remained complex and greater harmonization was needed.

He concluded by noting that cohesion was greater when there was a shared understanding of the need for a unified United Nations response to national issues. The difficulties facing the world today were sufficiently compelling for the United Nations to work harder and more effectively together.

The meeting was suspended at 10.40 a.m. and resumed at 10.45 a.m.

Thematic panel: "The current economic, food and climate change crises and their effects on the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals: the role of United Nations system's support to national efforts"

The President said that the economic and financial crisis was heightening the challenges of tackling the global food crisis and climate change and

was compromising the timely achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. Developing countries, heavily dependent on remittances, exports and foreign aid and lacking the necessary capacities and resources, were the hardest hit by the combined impact of the crises.

Member States at the recent United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis had proposed further development of the system's comprehensive crisis response in support of national development strategies through a coordinated approach at the country level. The response should be led by programme countries, address vulnerabilities and strengthen national ownership. In response to the food crisis, the United Nations system had been working closely within the comprehensive framework for action of the High-Level Task Force on the global food crisis; it was also clustering its work on a number of major issues highlighted in the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

The thematic panel would focus on how the United Nations was helping countries to address those crises while remaining on track towards realizing their national development priorities and internationally agreed development goals.

Mr. Reyes (Dominican Republic) said his country's economy had been growing rapidly for two decades, achieving average growth of 8.4 per cent a year in the period 2005-2008, while average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita had been increasing by 4 per cent a year since the 1950s. However, as a result of the international economic crisis growth in 2009 was not expected to exceed 3 per cent, with negative consequences for job creation and poverty reduction. Unemployment had increased by 0.9 per cent between April 2008 and April 2009, even though the economy was still growing. The struggle to combat poverty and hunger was far from over, not only because the most dynamic sectors of the economy were failing to generate sufficient employment, but also, and in large part, because of gross income disparities. The Gini coefficient for the Dominican Republic was 0.54, close to the average for Latin America and the Caribbean, itself the most unequal of the world's regions. Given the recent fall in government revenue, the country's ability to finance the social expenditure necessary to make progress in achieving the MDGs was now limited.

Climate change and accompanying natural disasters were expected to have significant effects on the Dominican Republic, which had already suffered serious damage to its infrastructure and agriculture, and economic losses amounting to 1.3 per cent of its GDP, as a result of tropical storm Olga and hurricane Noel in late 2007. The country's sustainable development, and its attainment of the MDGs, suffered serious setbacks when such disasters occurred.

The United Nations system should use its capacities and its leadership to impel leading Governments, and the multilateral finance institutions, to rescue the prospect of sustainable development reflected in the MDGs. More and better trade was needed, together with more and better investment, more resources for financing development, including official development assistance, and more effective financing instruments.

Mrs. Heyzer (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)), speaking also in her capacity as coordinator of the regional commissions, said that 350 million people in the Asia-Pacific region had been freed from extreme poverty over the period 1990-2004. The region as a whole was on track to meet the MDG target of halving the proportion of those living in income poverty. However, as a result of the economic crisis an additional 60 million people in the region might fall back into poverty in 2009. As for the health-related MDGs, at least one third of children in the region were undernourished, and 240,000 mothers died every year in childbirth or from complications of pregnancy. Almost half the population lacked improved sanitation, and more than one third of the growing urban population lived in slums. Poverty in East Asia had fallen from 80 per cent to 18 per cent over the period 1981-2005, owing to China's dramatic progress, and in South Asia from 60 per cent to 40 per cent; however, in South Asia 600 million people were still living on less than US\$ 1.25 a day. The number of people in the region affected by natural disasters was almost 50 per cent above the global average, and women were 14 times more likely than men to be victims of natural disasters. With rising unemployment, it was anticipated that 24.8 million people could lose their jobs in 2009. Those most at risk now were the poor, women working in the manufacturing sector, casual and agricultural workers, the young and the old, and low-skilled migrants. It was believed that an

additional 40 million people were going hungry as a result of lost income and rising food prices, with lasting negative effects on educational attainment, health, hygiene and sanitation. Although economic growth for countries in the region was expected to reach over 2.8 per cent in 2009, full recovery from the crisis would take over a decade.

ESCAP supported its member States through strategic analysis, policy options and technical cooperation. It served as a platform for regional dialogue and consensus-building and the sharing of solutions and experience, while boosting trade through improvements in infrastructure and financing and in energy and water supply. Over 50 member States had endorsed the policy reforms proposed in the ESCAP publication "Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 2009". Through its social development division, ESCAP promoted more inclusive societies and sustainable social protection systems. Recommendations from the High level Regional Policy Dialogue in December 2008 on "The food-fuel crisis and climate change: Reshaping the Development Agenda" formed a framework for action by member States to deal with the impact of the crisis. At ESCAP's sixty-fifth session in April 2009, Governments had resolved to implement regional South-South cooperation measures.

ESCAP collaborated actively across the United Nations system in its region. It was engaged in a tripartite partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) to monitor progress in the region towards the MDGs. Its 2009 report would address the economic crisis and its impact on the MDGs, including the effects of high food prices and the increased vulnerability of weaker population groups and countries. Gender equality and data and analysis for women's empowerment would be embedded in the entire report. The report would contribute to the proposal for a United Nations Vulnerability Monitoring and Response Mechanism, which would promote the effective coordination of multilateral responses to the crisis by drawing upon information from the whole of the United Nations system, including the relevant funds, programmes and agencies. As chair of the United Nations Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM), ESCAP had led efforts in the Asia-Pacific region to improve coordination among the work programmes of United

Nations system organizations. The RCM had thematic working groups on hunger and poverty reduction, environment, gender equality, health, education, disaster management and international migration, all intended to ensure policy coherence and to support United Nations country teams.

ESCAP also promoted green growth by developing capacity, building consensus and sharing experience at the regional level. It promoted sustainable production and consumption and eco-efficiency, through pilot projects and the adoption of green growth principles in national development plans.

Mr. De Mistura (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)) welcomed the pledge given at the recent G-8 meeting to invest US\$ 20 billion in food security and agriculture. The World Food Programme, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the three United Nations agencies dealing with food and agriculture, stood ready to play their part, especially in achieving food security. As a result of rising food prices, now 20 per cent higher than they ought to be, WFP had an extra 106 million people to feed, especially in urban areas. There were 66 million malnourished children of school age. Reduced household budgets and malnutrition prevented many children from attending school, but there were already school feeding programmes for 60 million children. The crisis in food prices was aggravated by climate disasters, the victims of which had grown in number since 1980 from 170 million to 250 million a year. In Ethiopia, children under five born during a drought were 36 per cent more likely to be malnourished, and in Kenya 56 per cent more likely. The twin crises were naturally affecting attainment of the MDGs.

WFP had decided to adopt monitoring measures in order to detect coming changes, and to emphasize food security, not merely food assistance. One of its innovations was to buy more food locally, in order to stimulate agriculture. In Palestine, following a price increase of 70 per cent for basic foodstuffs, it had introduced food vouchers and a scheme called "Purchase for Progress" by which it bought food from local small farmers to form reserve stocks for use in the same country. The three food and agriculture organizations, having headquarters in Rome, were able to coordinate their operations effectively. As for United

Nations system-wide coordination, while serving as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Iraq over the past three years he had seen how United Nations agencies could work together. A new programme to be introduced in Iraq in 2009, called "Food for Stability" would improve upon the existing food distribution system, which identified the beneficiaries from the electoral registers, but which now needed fine-tuning in order to reach those in need and to promote local agriculture.

Mr. Dragnich (Executive Director for Social Dialogue, International Labour Organization (ILO)), said that according to the annual Millennium Development Goals Report for 2009, current crises had sharply reversed some previous achievements, especially the reduction in the numbers living in extreme poverty from nearly one third to 19 per cent between 1990 and 2004. Earlier in the year, the World Bank had estimated that nearly 50 million people in the developing world would fall back into abject poverty. According to the Asian Development Bank, the crisis would result in an additional 80 million vulnerable persons in 2009, and possibly 130 million more in 2010, in the Asia-Pacific region alone. That region, hitherto known for its "emerging markets", accounted for half the anticipated 50 million lost jobs. The ILO now estimated that even if a recovery began during 2009, the global jobs crisis could last for six to eight years. More than half the global workforce, some 1.6 billion workers, were already clinging precariously to low-wage jobs which could disappear overnight.

The tripartite Global Jobs Pact, adopted by over 180 member States of ILO and their corresponding trade union federations and employer organizations, was designed to help countries shorten the recovery phase. At its 2008 annual conference the ILO had adopted the Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization, which emphasized the social dimension of globalization and warned against the unequal distribution of economic gains. The entire multilateral system must now rethink the type of globalization needed to produce a fairer, greener and more sustainable world.

Thanks to the United Nations World Summit of 2005, the first Millennium Development Goal now contained a target of "full and productive employment and decent work for all", recognizing that to address both income poverty and human poverty, a job must provide meaningful employment. The ILO was fully

involved in meeting all the MDGs, and was committed to working with its partner agencies and with donor countries to achieve them. It had recently joined the United Nations High Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis. In 2008, its annual conference had spelled out a policy framework to stimulate economic growth and social progress in rural areas. In his role as Executive Director for Social Dialogue, he had facilitated discussions between employer representatives and trade union federations on the creation of synergies in rural employment, for instance by helping to establish food-processing industries in the developing world, where nearly a third of harvested crops rotted or were infested by vermin before they could be transported to markets. Since 2004 the ILO had had a memorandum of understanding with the FAO, with which it had collaborated for many years on fisheries and forestry. It also worked with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and other agencies on climate change, in the framework of the Green Jobs Initiative, and with the United Nations Development Programme. The 2009 International Labour Conference had focused on gender equality and HIV/AIDS, the workplace being the key to improving well-being for both men and women. In Africa, it had been approached by WFP to help recruit trucking companies and trade unions to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS along relief corridors.

The comparative advantage of the United Nations system was its ability to deliver assistance to member States according to their own assessed needs, without using “tied aid”. Better liaison was needed with UN-Habitat on urban housing, with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) on creating new enterprises, and with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) on fostering entrepreneurship and generating new jobs.

Ms. Faieta (United Nations Resident Coordinator and Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in El Salvador), accompanying her statement with a computerized slide presentation, said that despite being the smallest country in Latin America, El Salvador had a population of over 6 million. A further 3 million lived in the United States of America, making El Salvador’s gross domestic product (GDP) 17 per cent dependent on remittance flows. 46.4 per cent of Salvadorans lived under the poverty line, with half the active population unemployed. El Salvador was undergoing a historic

transition; after two decades of right-wing rule, a left-wing Government had come into power, determined to advance the MDGs. The country’s progress on the health-related goals were more or less on track, and advances had also been made on the literacy front.

On a less positive note, primary school drop-out rates remained a problem area. Poverty had increased by 10 per cent over the past two years, reversing a decade of eradication efforts, and 30,000 jobs had been lost since September 2008 alone. The country’s social budget had stagnated and household incomes were falling, making health and education less affordable for families.

An inter-ministerial committee and technical team had been established to support the Government’s efforts in pursuit of the MDGs. Special emphasis was being laid on education, since it would have the longest-term impact on poverty. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had provided support to the Government by helping it to develop a costing and data analysis tool for MDG 2; the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) had helped by strengthening school feeding programmes to encourage school attendance; the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) had developed policies to raise academic success rates, with a focus on failing schools; while the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) had strengthened national capacity through training.

The key success factors for the United Nations country team in El Salvador had been the Government’s commitment to the MDGs and the team’s focus on its own comparative advantages. The strong technical capacity of United Nations staff had been crucial, as had the Organization’s unique ability to mobilize a variety of stakeholders and resources. Plans were now under way to establish a local United Nations MDG Support team — to be coordinated by UNDP — to tackle urban poverty and make progress on health targets.

Mr. Butler (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that lower food prices did not mean that the cost of world food production had fallen. Fertilizer prices remained high, and farmers experienced difficulties accessing credit. Market volatility also affected planting decisions, as well as the ability to store and move food resources. FAO had taken an early lead in addressing the global

food crisis, framing a global, inter-agency response under the Comprehensive Framework for Action and FAO Initiative on Soaring Food Prices.

Despite the food, fuel and financial crises, several countries had made remarkable progress on hunger reduction, with FAO providing much-needed policy support. In Ethiopia, that support was for sustainable land management and natural ecosystem conservation; in El Salvador — for agroforestry on sloping lands, improved food production, storage and household hygiene; in the Dominican Republic — for improved water management, crop and livestock productivity; and in Afghanistan — for a dairy farming project that had increased participating families' incomes fivefold.

Ghana had managed to fight the global hunger trend by significantly reducing undernourishment, but rising inflation and climate-related shocks had inevitably slowed progress. WFP and FAO would be joining forces in the “lean season” to enhance food security in the country's vulnerable northern regions. In Mozambique, one of the pilot countries for the “Delivering as One” initiative, inter-agency programmes to build commodity value chains and market linkages for farmers' associations were being implemented with great success. In the Lao People's Democratic Republic, government capacity to tackle the threat of influenza A(H1N1) was being strengthened by an inter-agency task force with valuable input from civil society.

The global food crisis would have long-lasting effects on the poor, and merited no less attention from the international community than the financial crisis, which was currently in the spotlight. The economic, political and social ramifications of prolonged food insecurity posed a significant threat to world peace and security, as evidenced by food riots in various countries.

Preparations were currently under way for a World Food Summit to be held in Rome in November. The aim was to achieve broad consensus on a rapid and definitive eradication of global hunger, on relevant food security policies and on a more coherent and efficient system of global food governance.

Mr. Skau (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the European Union, reaffirmed the Union's commitment to help developing countries meet the MDGs, and appealed to other donors to do likewise. The European Union would implement targeted, counter-cyclical

measures to protect the most vulnerable countries and groups while boosting economic activity and employment. The Union was also committed to enhancing aid effectiveness in line with the Accra Agenda for Action principles. It would also continue its efforts to promote good governance, stability and gender equality, as well as an open world economy and more efficient and inclusive global institutions. The ongoing crises made it all the more crucial to realize agreed official development assistance (ODA) targets. He was pleased to announce that the Union's collective contribution had exceeded 49 billion euros the previous year.

The European Union would do its bit to reduce the appalling levels of global hunger by striving for increased investment in agriculture and food security, with a focus on small-scale farmers and rural women. It welcomed progress on the Global Partnership for Agriculture and Food Security as well as the recent food security initiative of the Group of Eight. The Union was already committed to providing 1 billion euros for food security infrastructure and world agricultural development. That sum would directly benefit a number of developing countries, as well as relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations. The United Nations must continue to play a central role in helping developing countries tackle global challenges while fostering sustainable development in all its dimensions. Its capacity to “deliver as one” should be strengthened, and an effective mechanism established to monitor the impact of the global crises on the poor.

Mr. Ukec (Sudan) said that hunger eradication, food security and the mitigation of the economic crisis and of climate change must remain high on the Organization's agenda. ODA commitments had not been met by donor nations, despite progress achieved by developing countries. Meanwhile, the international financial environment continued to lack transparency and stability. It was essential, in that context, to ensure that global economic growth benefited the poorest. The economic downturn that had originated in the developed world threatened to stagnate global growth and further marginalize the poorest of the world's people, reversing progress towards the MDGs. International financial institutions must establish adequate strategies to mitigate its impact on vulnerable countries. Despite their commitment to increase coherence, the development efforts of those institutions

remained fragmented. ODA had fallen, moreover, despite improved absorptive capacities in developing countries.

Developed countries must be assessed not only on their implementation of the Monterrey Consensus, but on their progress in developing a global partnership for development. MDG 8 was a priority concern for African countries, Sudan included. Clear benchmarks should be elaborated to monitor its attainment.

Sustainable solutions to the food crisis depended on international support for policies to strengthen social safety nets, and on the rapid and effective delivery of emergency food aid.

Ms. Al-Taani (Iraq) asked what WFP and United Nations system as a whole were doing to address the sandstorm emergency in Iraq.

Mr. Castro (El Salvador) said that the current international economic crisis had shown that even a 1 or 2 per cent drop in economic output could have severe effects on trade, employment and the well-being of societies. Climate change too would negatively affect such areas as health, the economy, tourism and agriculture. The developing countries were dependent on increased trade and direct foreign investment for growth and were especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change and lacked the resources for effective mitigation efforts.

International assistance for meeting those challenges must be well conceived and coordinated. He asked what financing commitment the international community was prepared to make to national efforts to meet those challenges and also achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Given the economic crisis, food security and the effects of climate change, he wondered what role the United Nations system and the agencies represented on the panel should play in the 2010 review of progress towards the Millennium Development Goals, and whether it might be necessary to revise those goals or review country-level efforts in that regard.

He echoed Ms. Faieta's concern about lack of progress in El Salvador towards Millennium Development Goal 2, achieve universal primary education. He noted that at the recent International Labour Organization (ILO) International Labour Conference it had been pointed out that as unemployment levels rose so did the prevalence of

child labour. He called on UNDP to also focus on job creation, in accordance with the Global Jobs Pact adopted at that Conference because job creation was an important tool for providing people with income and for poverty eradication.

Ms. Schwabe-Hansen (Norway) underscored that the current financial and economic crises provided opportunities to accelerate the process of strengthening coherence and coordination within the Organization and between the Organization's activities and other international initiatives, in particular at the country level. She noted the efforts of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in that regard. She enquired whether there had been any progress towards establishing a joint World Bank/United Nations crisis response system at the country level.

The current crisis should not be used as a pretext for decreasing funding for development. It would however be useful for donors to be offered options or alternatives for allocation of their assistance with a view to choosing the most effective intervention. She wondered what the United Nations system was currently doing at the country and global levels to facilitate donors' decisions with regard to assistance to countries.

More information on the establishment of a global monitoring mechanism on the effects of the crisis would be welcome, including how it would function in practice. She requested more information from Ms. Heyser on how regional commissions could best coordinate their work.

Mr. Arias (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) recalled that over the past 10 years his Government had developed new strategies to eliminate such problems as hunger and poverty, promote development and end social exclusion. Much work had been done in cooperation with like-minded countries. With the assistance of Cuba and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) illiteracy had been eliminated; also thanks to the assistance of Cuba health indicators and access to basic health care had been greatly improved. Many of the Millennium Development Goals, for example relating to hunger, infant and maternal mortality had been achieved and the others would be met by 2015.

He stressed that while development assistance was, quite rightly, sought from the developed

countries, that assistance should be in addition to South-South cooperation. The South countries could help each other. Venezuela had benefited from the assistance of Cuba and was currently a partner with Cuba in providing assistance to Bolivia for efforts to eliminate illiteracy. Its Petrocaribe programme helped the Caribbean countries meet their requirements in oil. Those were examples of how regional initiatives could limit the effects of the current crisis and strengthen local capacity and development.

Ms. Phipps (United States of America) said that her delegation shared concerns about food insecurity and welcomed the commitment of the G-8 countries in that regard. She wondered if the “deliver as one” model would be effective in promoting rural development and agriculture and asked how the Council could strengthen its efforts to promote increased cooperation for the promotion of food security.

Mr. Hani (Arab Commission for Human Rights), referring to the statement by Mr. Misura that the World Food Programme’s efforts were aimed at compensating for vulnerabilities and furthering capacity-building, said that the provision of large quantities of foreign wheat for example might in fact negatively affect local capacity. He asked whether the transport of food aid involved and reinforced local transportation and logistical infrastructure and enquired what proportion of food assistance was provided in kind and whether such aid was compatible with the aim of reinforcing capacity.

He asked Ms. Heyser whether the most vulnerable groups and regions were in fact targeted for assistance in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. He wondered if Ms. Faieta could indicate what role the United Nations system assigned to civil society in its efforts to help countries achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. Reyes (Senior Economist, Dominican Republic) said that Venezuela’s Petrocaribe initiative had provided more than a billion dollars of assistance to the Dominican Republic since its inception. That assistance was most welcome, but he stressed that no single country could promote development. He called on all free nations to keep their commitments with regard to development and the Millennium Development Goals and likewise urged the G-20 group of nations to follow through on their commitment to

increase trade finance because currently not enough was being done to ensure sustained development.

Ms. Heyzer (Executive Secretary, Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)), speaking also as coordinator of the regional commissions, said that achievement of the Millennium Development Goals had become a race against time. In order to win that race the international community must stop the decline in development assistance, establish the foundations for a rapid recovery and seize the opportunity for systemic reforms to eliminate the obstacles to progress and their root causes. The international community must not only look at how to promote increased wealth and growth but also how to manage risk and vulnerabilities with a view to preventing people from falling into poverty.

In response to the representative of Norway, she recalled the regional coordination mandate of the Council and its work with the regional team in terms of monitoring and responding to the MDGs in the region’s countries. In the Asia-Pacific region there was a single report that indicated which countries were on track or not and what more needed to be done. Where no capacity existed in specific areas at the country level, the country team could call on the regional commission for technical support taking advantage of the resources of specialized agencies and the data and analysis functions of the Commission. In Myanmar for example there had been no capacity at the country level team level to undertake statistical work for the joint country assessment but the Commission was able to provide the support of statistical experts. Lessons learned in various countries could also be shared thanks to the efforts of a high-level expert group that shared the experiences of countries in for example post-disaster recovery and medium-term development. In that regard the ESCAP could often go beyond the scope of work of specialized agencies because it had a mandate to support all its member States.

Another example was work on transnational issues, for example energy, people smuggling, trafficking, trans-border infrastructure, which were beyond the narrower United Nations Development Assistance Framework country-specific mandate. If invited to do so with regard to specific issues, the Commission could provide valuable and timely assistance where appropriate across the entire system.

Mr. De Mistura (Deputy Executive Director, World Food Programme (WFP)) said that one response to the increased severity and frequency of sandstorms in Iraq could be to develop a green belt around the affected cities, for example Baghdad. Any such project would however have to be a joint programme; Iraq had financial, water and human resources that could be allocated to that end in cooperation with and co-financed by international partners.

He agreed with the representative of Norway that the current crises provided an opportunity to increase coordination, make better use of financial resources, ensure the Organization delivered as one, and help donors make appropriate choices for allocating resources. The High-Level Task Force on the Global Food Security Crisis was an example of the system working as one. He suggested that in the future the number of reports on various topics could perhaps likewise be reduced to a single report.

In response to the representative of the United States of America, he said the “deliver as one” model could indeed be used and re-used effectively; having one agency deliver for all United Nations agencies for example helped reduce costs. The current crisis should provide an added incentive to accelerate implementation of that model. With regard to the questions from the representative of the Arab Commission for Human Rights, he stressed that WFP did contribute to strengthening local capacity. For example, local African logistics and transport companies were called upon to transport food and other goods and more than 1.2 billion dollars had been spent for purchases at the local level.

Mr. Dragnich (Executive Director for Social Dialogue, International Labour Organization (ILO)), in response to the representative of the Arab Commission for Human Rights, concerning the role of civil society in the Organization’s development assistance, recalled that ILO was the only United Nations agency whose governing structure included representatives of employers and trade unions. Employers’ organizations and trade unions were working closely to promote a viable agribusiness sector in the developing countries. ILO in fact worked closely with many civil society partners.

ILO was a partner in the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Committee on World Food Security Committee, and he stressed that international

bodies as well as States had an important role to play in promoting food security. ILO also cooperated with the Special Rapporteur on the right to food. He noted that the increase in the number of urban residents requiring food assistance was a reflection of loss of jobs or lack of decent work, areas which were at the core of the work of ILO.

Ms. Faieta (United Nations Resident Coordinator in El Salvador) underscored the importance of the “deliver as one” concept and the need to maintain and even increase assistance financing. She noted that the mid-income countries were often forgotten by donors but recalled that they too were vulnerable because they had significant pockets of poverty and reductions in poverty reduction assistance could negate any gains made to date.

While Governments had some technical expertise, the specialized and focused assistance that the United Nations system could provide was invaluable. The Organization could for example draw on lessons learned elsewhere to support the “deliver as one” approach. A proactive resident coordinator could draw on the expertise of other agencies, even if those agencies had no operations in the country. She had for example sought the advice of the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on issues relating to rural development.

In El Salvador the United Nations had targeted programmes involving several agencies to help strengthen agricultural capacity with a view to contributing to food security. It had focused in particular on helping small producers increase production. It was important to stimulate job creation, especially for the young; that would be an important factor in reducing the level of violence in the country. ILO and UNDP had prepared a human development report that contained proposals for job creation and underscored the link between infrastructure-building and job creation. As a result the Government was implementing a programme in cooperation with those organizations to reduce urban unemployment and strengthen infrastructure for job creation and was also trying to encourage children to stay in school, which would increase their prospects of obtaining employment. She agreed with the representative of Venezuela that South-South cooperation had an important role to play but reiterated that the United Nations system likewise could play an important role,

for example by sharing best practices and lessons learned as appropriate.

Mr. Butler (Deputy Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that for the first time in recent history food security was on the minds of policymakers and the press. That provided an opportunity for countries to hold the United Nations system accountable for meeting that challenge. He expressed concern that development assistance for agriculture had fallen from approximately 18 per cent to only 3 per cent. There were however indications that trend was reversing. He reiterated that the current crises provided an opportunity to strengthen cooperation and coherence. He welcomed the new willingness on the part of the private sector, NGOs and civil society to work together in that regard.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.