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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Tuesday, 14 July 2009, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Soborun (Vice-President) (Mauritius)

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

Coordination segment (*continued*)

The role of the United Nations system in implementing the Ministerial Declaration of the High-Level Segment of the Substantive Session of 2008 of the Economic and Social Council (item 4 on the agenda) (*continued*) (A/64/64-E/2009/10, A/64/87-E/2009/89 and E/2009/56)

Panel discussion: "Effective sustainable development strategies: country level experience"

The President, before giving the floor to the moderator of the discussion, expressed the hope that the discussion would enable the Council to achieve a better understanding of the challenges that countries faced in formulating and implementing sustainable development strategies and of how the United Nations system might be of assistance in that regard.

Mr. Pintér (Director of Measurement and Assessment, International Institute for Sustainable Development, moderator), after a brief introduction of the three panellists, said that the meeting aimed to afford countries better insight into the complex inter-linkages between economic, social and environmental factors; to enable them to be in a better position to achieve an integrated assessment of sustainable development initiatives; to improve inter-sectoral coordination; and to promote cross-sectoral approaches to ensure that their domestic strategies complemented one another.

Mr. Khijjah (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania) first retraced the different stages of efforts to implement the sustainable development paradigm since 1992 and Agenda 21. He then explained how his country, Tanzania, which depended heavily on natural resources, had incorporated the concept into its policies. Tanzania's sustainable development programme formed part of its Development Vision 2025 and of Zanzibar's Development Vision 2020. To implement that programme, the Government had adopted a number of policies and strategies, an environment management law had been promulgated in 2004, and a National Environment Management Council had been established.

Tanzania was having difficulty implementing a sustainable development policy. It still had to strengthen community-based natural resource management programmes, reduce vulnerability to ecological hazards, compile data on poverty, refine environmental indicators, and draw up monitoring and evaluation reports. Another problem, which appeared to be shared by other countries as well, was the short-term nature of economic policies, which was detrimental to sustainability. Finally, absolute poverty posed a problem that could only be overcome within the framework of a global response.

The new National Action Plan for the Environment 2008-2012 established several priority areas for action. It aimed to address, first, land degradation, especially by preparing coordinated and detailed land use and land development plans, by drawing up environmental inventories and conducting environmental impact assessments. The Action Plan also envisaged measures to overcome water shortage and pollution, including drawing up plans to exploit water resources and develop catchment areas; to expand sewage systems; and to amend legislation, strengthen regulations, and progressively ban hazardous and toxic chemical products. It was also a matter of stemming the deterioration of aquatic resources caused by demographic pressure by monitoring aquatic ecosystems, enforcing regulations in effect and encouraging participatory management of fishing. To combat the erosion of biodiversity on land, the Action Plan contemplated, among other things, re-examining the entire national network of protected areas and promoting international cooperation. A number of other measures were also envisaged to address deforestation and urban pollution.

Global warming was another obstacle to sustainable development. Its effects were already being felt in Tanzania, which in recent years had endured prolonged drought and serious flooding, with catastrophic consequences for the economy, especially agriculture. A National Action Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change had been prepared in order to establish and promote measures to meet the pressing needs of the different sectors (agriculture, water, energy, health and forestry) to adapt to climate change.

Sustainable development was, finally, being undermined by the current economic and financial crisis. In Tanzania, economic growth was unlikely to exceed 5% in 2009, compared to 7.4% in 2008. The

Government had taken steps to mitigate the impact of the crisis, particularly in agriculture, tourism, and the small- and medium-sized enterprise sector, by mobilizing Tanzania's own resources and with the help of its partners. Mr. Khijjah concluded his remarks by declaring that sustainable development was possible but, given the growing number of obstacles, required concerted action on a global scale.

Mr. Kartakusuma (Special Adviser to the Minister for Technology and Sustainable Development of Indonesia) provided an overview of actions undertaken by his country to promote sustainable development. Since 1972, Indonesia had taken part in the major world summits on the environment and, at the national level, had prepared a number of documents, including, in 2008, a national sustainable development strategy. In 2004, it had organized a National Conference on Sustainable Development and had set about refining sustainable development indicators. The Ministry of the Environment supported the incorporation of sustainable development principles in sectoral policies when conducting strategic environmental assessments and improving environmental impact assessment methods. It had enhanced the Clean Cities programme, especially by publishing a list of the dirtiest cities. It was attempting to build capacity and awareness in local parliaments and to improve the criteria for evaluating industrial effectiveness. The Indonesia Green programme was aimed at promoting re-plantation and reforestation. Green economy principles were being devised: alternative forms of energy were being used and a green energy policy had been adopted, even though Indonesia would remain largely dependent on fossil fuel energy until 2025. Finally, a fast mass transportation policy had been put in place.

Indonesia was, nevertheless, facing a number of challenges in promoting sustainable development. The decision-making process was not sufficiently intersectoral. Political leaders were limited by the electoral process to a five-year term, even though sustainable development required a long-term view. Ecological externalities would be perceived in the long term. Meanwhile investment costs were high and the technologies expensive. Finally, energy security goals were sometimes hard to reconcile with food security objectives.

It was advisable to increase the population's awareness of the effects of climate warming in order to promote sustainable development measures. The

country also needed to boost its technological capabilities and to have the necessary political resolve, which, hopefully, it would find in its new president. The recently established National Council for Climate Change could help to promote a more inter-sectoral decision-making process. Looking to the future, it would be necessary to mobilise the highest levels of the Government and establish a National Sustainable Development Council. It was necessary to take advantage of the increasing awareness shown by the ministries responsible for economic affairs to mainstream sustainable development principles systematically in national economic policies and long-term plans. Research and development activities needed boosting so that Indonesia could acquire much more affordable appropriate technologies. It was necessary to take a much closer look at the concept of a green economy and its applications. Stakeholders should be associated with promoting implementation of sustainable development principles in economic activities. Finally, from a food security point of view, and to reduce poverty, care should be taken to avoid farmland being used for other purposes.

Mr. Banuri (Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) briefly summarized the origins and development of the sustainable development concept and noted that, since that idea had emerged, considerable effort had been devoted to implementing it. Much headway had been made but numerous challenges remained to be overcome. Many countries had moved to adopt a national sustainable development strategy in the broad sense. The next step was to establish a strategy for each economic sector and to make sure that the sectoral strategies were properly integrated into the overall strategy. Analytical tools had also been developed, including environmental impact assessments, analyses of different scenarios and resource evaluation. Concrete steps were being taken in every sphere of activity. Companies notified each other of their efforts to further sustainable development and they were investing in "green funds". Civil society, too, was pro-active, particularly in pro-poor programmes and it had plenty of experience to offer. In the public sector, new institutions had been established. Nowadays almost all countries had a Ministry of the Environment. Government action manifested itself in the creation of aid funds, support for research and development, regulation and the introduction of new instruments, such as the eco-taxation.

Numerous initiatives were underway, but the outcomes were often scant. Efforts should focus on overcoming that gap. Currently only 82 countries claimed to have implemented a national sustainable development strategy; 16 countries were in the process of developing their strategy; and a few admitted that they were interested in doing so. There were no data on the extent to which sustainable development principles had been built into national policies. On the other hand, it was encouraging to observe that the proponents of sustainable development were now being recruited at the most senior levels in government, which was a sign of increased awareness. The communication principle had taken root in private enterprises as in the different levels of government, and the Department of Economic and Social Affairs had published directives on the subject. Numerous countries were now conducting environmental impact assessments and putting structures in place to manage their water resources. Subsidies were being granted to targeted projects in developing countries. Some successes had been recorded with regard to air quality and forest management.

For a country to make progress on the road to sustainable development, it was necessary to step up awareness of the need for it in political circles, strengthen governance capabilities and consolidate the role of the State. Internationally, it was necessary to implement the decisions taken by the Sustainable Development Commission; replicate convincing local initiatives with the support of institutions; promote research and development; disseminate know-how; invest in renewable forms of energy so that they became affordable for developing countries; and establish long term objectives. Finally, it was important to note that equity was a key principle in connection with sustainable development.

Mr. Pintér (Moderator), before giving the floor to the delegations, commented that it was important to be able to draw lessons from the strategies implemented and to understand what made them effective, by using some of the tools that had just been presented. That was what the International Institute for Sustainable Development did with its country studies and by establishing apprenticeship networks in Asia and the Pacific and in Latin America.

Mr. Steeghs (Netherlands) noted that in Tanzania and in Indonesia sustainable development was largely looked at from an environmental perspective. However,

there were three pillars to take into account: the environment, the economy and society. What steps had been taken to strike a balance between those three facets of sustainable development?

Mr. Kartakusuma (Special Adviser to the Minister for Technology and Sustainable Development of Indonesia) explained that the Government of Indonesia had sent an economist to the Stockholm Conference on the Environment in 1972. In 1978, that economist had been appointed Minister of the Environment when that ministry was established. It was that Ministry that played the leading role at that time, because the ministries responsible for economic and social affairs were not really tuned in to the sustainable development issue. Today, the Ministry of the Environment reported to the Minister in charge of coordinating social affairs. In practice, the Ministry of the Environment worked closely with the Minister of the Economy. For that reason, Indonesia wanted the latter to play the lead role in future. Eventually, Indonesia would like all three ministries to work in tandem, exploiting synergies.

Mr. Banuri (Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) considered that sustainable development needed to be approached gradually. One could see that countries began by equipping themselves with an environmental strategy. They then developed a sustainable development strategy, implementation of which was entrusted to the Ministry of the Environment. At a later stage, they devised development strategies based on sustainability-related principles. One should not forget that a similar process had taken place at the global level, from one conference to another. The pace varied from one country to another, depending on the degree of interest in the subject, the commitment of leaders and civil society determination.

Mr. Khijjah (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania) said that, although the environmental, economic and social factors were closely intertwined, it was sometimes difficult for a country like Tanzania to address the problem of poverty at the same time as protecting the environment. The livelihood of many people depended, for instance, on cutting forests and if the Government intended to combat deforestation, it had to provide alternative sources of income, which took time. The population

also had to be taught that deforestation caused environmental hazards and that issue needed to be included in school curricula. In 2008, the Government had banned the use of charcoal for cooking, but since it did not have the funds needed to subsidize all households and thereby enable them to shift to another source of energy, it was not in a position to ensure a transition to the use of new fuels. Today, charcoal was sold on the black market and its price had tripled because those who marketed it faced prison.

The Government had understood that, in its environmental policy, it needed to take into account the real level of social development. As a result, it was now planning its strategy with that in mind. Awareness campaigns were very important in that context: thus, those exploiting the forests had orders to plant two trees for every one they cut. The Tanzanian authorities were therefore fully aware of the problems they had to solve. It was just that they had not yet found the concrete solutions that would enable them to correct the situation.

Ms. Mugwe (Kenya) said her country suffered the consequences of climate change and was familiar, in particular, with floods and drought. The rate of flow of water from Mount Kenya and Mount Kilimanjaro, as well as the water flow in rivers, had diminished and affected the hydroelectric energy output on which the country depended for 60% of its electricity. Ms. Mugwe would like to hear about Indonesia's experience with addressing the effects of climate change.

Mr. Kartakusuma (Special Adviser to the Minister for Technology and Sustainable Development of Indonesia) said that climate change had led to increased erosion in Indonesia – with repercussions for the population living in the affected areas – and to ground and forest fires, which had financial as well as health-related repercussions. In 2007, the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, had experienced very severe flooding. That disaster had cost several billion Indonesian rupiahs. Such events had made certain private sector enterprises aware that their activities dependent on deforestation or changes in land use facilitated natural disasters, the consequences of which were felt not just by the population but by the economy of the country as well. That was why Indonesia had espoused the principle of sustainable development. It was not always easy to build an environmental protection policy into sector policies, but economic agents were beginning to

realise that they, too, had to think in terms of the impact of their activities on the environment.

Mr. Khijjah (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania) noted that Tanzania faced the same challenges as Kenya. Climate change delivered a mix of severe drought, torrential rain, and floods. The snow atop Kilimanjaro was melting. To address that issue, Tanzania had established a Disaster Management Department financed by the Government and by NGOs. Despite the droughts, Tanzania's rivers and lakes still had enough water for the Government to envisage developing irrigation. Farming in Tanzania depended almost entirely (90%) on rainfall and the country had been hit by drought for the third consecutive year. It was therefore a matter of investing in vast, and therefore very costly, installations. For the Tanzanian Government, developing agriculture was a priority because 80% of the population depended on it for its livelihood.

Mr. Banuri (Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said there was a fundamental difference between a sustainable development approach geared to solving a problem and a classical approach – the banning of charcoal without giving thought to the consequences of that prohibition being a good example of the difference. An intermediate strategy (consisting of an attempt to attain the objective without forbidding charcoal) would be an investment strategy making it possible to overcome a difficult situation without sacrificing development and bearing in mind the needs of the poor. Implementing such a strategy took time.

Mr. Banuri emphasized that energy was a key issue. Developing countries consumed little energy. Kenya, for instance, used less than 15 kWh per person per day, whereas in a country with a satisfactory Human Development Index, consumption would normally exceed 100 kWh. Thus Kenya needed six times more energy than it currently consumed. In Kenya, nobody could afford to spend more than 15 cents per kWh because per capita income was around US\$15 a day. So it was necessary to produce low-cost energy. In the short term, external support would be needed to establish a renewable energy production system and, in the long run, it was necessary to develop a strategy for reducing the cost of producing those forms of energy. Because of climate

change, today it was preferable to emphasize wind or solar energy, rather than hydroelectric energy. Yet those new forms of energy would remain unaffordable for developing countries until a global energy investment program was worked out and implemented. It was best therefore to seek transitional solutions.

Mr. Pintér (Moderator) wondered to what extent it was possible to take advantage of a crisis – and climate change was such a crisis – to introduce changes in the direction of sustainable development.

Mr. Banuri (Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that climate change would be the easiest problem to solve in the 21st century, the most serious one being the exhaustion of natural resources, which were not renewable. It was therefore vital to make the transition to truly sustainable development. Climate change was linked to forms of energy, for which technological solutions existed, even if ways had to be found to make them more affordable. In that regard, it would be advisable to put in place North-South cooperation aimed at lowering the cost of the transition to renewable forms of energy. According to some experts, that changeover could be achieved in 10 years; others said 20. It would make it possible to solve numerous other problems and, in particular, to reduce consumption of all other resources, achieve better recycling of waste, and produce goods and services more efficiently. Addressing the effects of climate change could therefore serve as a vector for transforming the economy in the direction of more sustainable ways of producing and consuming energy. The main hurdle had to do with fact that the major international cooperation required for that was not yet in place, or only peripherally. One could only hope that climate change negotiations and agreements would lay the foundations for much more targeted, concerted and effective partnerships.

Mr. Faiz Bouchedoub (Algeria) said that certain specialists had noted considerable overlapping between the activities of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and those of the Sustainable Development Commission. Furthermore, when one analyzed the various statements of principle adopted at conferences on the environment and development, organized by the United Nations, it transpired that the term “environment” was being used less and less. Many experts believed that the notion of sustainable development had only been introduced in the United

Nations system to give a certain primacy to economic growth over environmental protection.

Mr. Banuri (Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) acknowledged that one could indeed detect a certain amount of overlapping between different programmes because numerous agencies endowed with specific mandates intervened in such a vast field as the one referred to. For several years, efforts had been made to try and bring those programmes under one umbrella. The idea had been to distinguish clearly between the tasks in the remit of the Division for Sustainable Development, whose function was primarily to prepare standards and policies, and those pertaining to UNEP, the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), which play a more operational role. As regards development, Mr. Banuri recalled that per capita income in the rich countries was 20 times higher than in the poor countries and that reducing that gap – a goal pursued by the international community since 1945 – required higher economic growth rates in developing countries. Over the past 10 years, prior to the start of the crisis, the gap was being narrowed relatively rapidly. The question of sustainable development, for its part, had to do with growth not just in the developing countries but for the world as a whole and it presupposed a new paradigm of progress, including social progress, which took resource and environmental constraints into account. For the developed countries, it was a matter of preserving their level of wellbeing without consuming more resources, while for the developing countries it was a question of finding a way to attain the same level of wellbeing and comfort without using the same volume of resources. That constituted one and the same programme and it was impossible to envisage the development issue separately from that of the environment.

Ms. Basilio (Philippines) said that, in 2008, all the members of the Sustainable Development Committee had recognized that unsustainable forms of production and consumption exacerbated climate change and engendered crises. During the current session of the Council some had argued that the current crisis could provide an opportunity to change the development model and lead humanity towards sustainable development. Given the fact that some countries consumed more than others and were an

engine of global output, how could a global financial and economic crisis have a beneficial effect? Moreover, could one even measure the consequences of a decline in consumption and a change of life style in those countries following a loss of purchasing power by their populations?

Mr. Banuri (Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) recalled that the issue of sustainable consumption and production formed part of the programme of the next biennium and would be the core focus of sustainable development throughout the 21st century. For both, bridges had to be built between different programmes and different concepts, as well as between North and South. Thought had to be given to ways of establishing a joint approach by invoking technology and aid, including financial aid, and by undertaking joint actions. It was a matter of reaching, in the next two years, solid agreements on certain aspects related to sustainable consumption and production; the fact that awareness had been generated on the crisis and climate change should help the world reach those agreements.

Mr. Kartakusuma (Special Adviser to the Minister for Technology and Sustainable Development of Indonesia) pointed out that the countries that consumed least were mainly the developing countries, whose economic growth imperatives would require increased consumption of resources. Experience acquired by other countries had shown that developing countries could promote their economic growth while at the same time seeking to strike a better balance between development, protection of the environment and social protection.

Mr. Khijjah (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania) said that the situation was complex because of the combined effects of the financial and economic crises and climate change. For instance, the latter prevented developing countries from producing certain products because of drought. It was thus no longer a consumption issue, but rather a problem of a slowing down of the production of a product that no other country was in a position to deliver to them. At the same time, there was a historical problem: most developing countries produced goods that they either barely consumed or did not consume at all, such as certain raw materials for the industrialized world or certain staple crops difficult

to market in times of crisis. As a result of the crisis, those countries had therefore learnt that they should depend less on exports to the developed countries and adapt their crops to climate change.

Ms. Bloem of CIVICUS noted that the full impact of the financial and economic crisis had not yet been felt in the developing countries. Referring to the question of trade-offs, she wondered whether there was not a risk of reproducing the same crisis exit and structural adjustment strategies as had been used in the past and whether today one could adopt a balanced approach toward all sectors in solving the crisis.

Mr. Banuri (Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that he was certain of only one thing, namely that the very existence of trade-offs signalled a failure of governance. He gave as examples the way the Great Depression had been handled in the United States and, more recently, the oil shock of the 1970s. To emerge from the current state of affairs, it was necessary to adopt counter-cyclical measures in both developed and developing countries, as the G-20 had confirmed. As for sustainable development, the only way to avoid reverting back to trade-offs was to look at it as a matter of synergies among the different sectors.

Mr. Khijjah (Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs of the United Republic of Tanzania) wished to point out that developing countries had already been hit by the financial crisis, albeit perhaps in the form of a ricochet effect. Tanzanian banks, for instance, had lost a lot of money because they had granted loans for the purchase of farm products that had not been sold for the past 18 months because of the crisis. As the loans had not been paid back, they were threatening to withhold new loans that farmers needed for their activities. Yet agriculture, directly and indirectly, provided subsistence to 80% of the Tanzanian population.

Mr. Arias (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) explained that his country had attempted to save marine species in danger of extinction and, for that reason, had been the butt of attacks in the media orchestrated by very powerful economic groups. A decision had been taken, as in other countries, to ban trawling, which would, in addition, benefit traditional small-scale fishing. Despite the favourable outcomes, the decision had been highly criticized by the media

and political circles. Mr. Arias wished to know what initiatives had been undertaken elsewhere with respect to fishing and the safeguarding of certain species.

Mr. Kartakusuma (Special Adviser to the Minister for Technology and Sustainable Development of Indonesia) stressed that, globally, the problem lay less with decision-making than with the enforcement of decisions. The protection of certain species often involved demarcating protected areas; yet, often enough, villagers needed those areas for their subsistence. To protect certain species of fish, it was sometimes necessary to issue legislation on the size of fishnets. Politicians were wont at times to interfere and try and manipulate fishermen as potential voters. That was all part of the job at hand.

Mr. Banuri (Director of the Sustainable Development Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that opposition by the media was not confined to the protection of species or biodiversity. When it came to fighting pollution, industrial groups were often up in arms, invoking development. That was what Pakistan had wanted to avoid, for example, when it engaged in dialogue with manufacturers in order to establish a Pollution Charter. Thanks to consultation mechanisms, joint solutions had been found. Such procedures were possible and often necessary, particularly when the people left out were the poor: for example: small-scale fishermen or small local communities. Given that, sooner or later, the law had to be enforced, it was best first to embark on a period of transition and dialogue.

Mr. Pintér (Moderator) highlighted a number of key points that had emerged in the panel discussion. Sustainable development and the strategies related to it made it possible to exploit synergies in the quest for solutions to problems. While numerous initiatives had been undertaken, the way they had been implemented left much to be desired and their results were still a long way off. Some that had been conceived as small-scale initiatives deserved to be mainstreamed, particularly since it would appear that government players – minister of economy, finance or even development – nowadays increasingly recognised the importance of taking environmental and social aspects into account in the broader framework of sustainable development. Climate change, over and above the problems it posed, could also serve to lever interest in sustainability issues, provided countries were given real opportunities to cope with it.

Technically, specific indicators and tools were needed to discern what projects and policies could be described as important for sustainable development. Given that, by definition, the notion of sustainable development was forward-looking, it was becoming almost a commonplace that integrated planning of sustainable development had to be based on analysis of multiple scenarios. One of the core principles of sustainable development was equity both within current generations and vis-à-vis future generations; failure to take equity into consideration in the formulation of strategies was tantamount to jeopardizing their chances of success.

Finally, the outlook for sustainable development depended to a large extent on investment and technological development, areas hit hard by the economic crisis.

The President thanked the participants for the instructive, fruitful and interesting exchange of ideas that had served to take stock of progress made with respect to coherence, coordination and cooperation among the different follow-up mechanisms of the United Nations system with regard to development. Several findings had emerged from the discussion. Faced with the impacts of the financial crisis, it was necessary to respond in a coherent and well coordinated fashion by adopting economic, social and environmental measures geared to sustainable development. The United Nations system had an important role to play in that process. Parallel to that response, governments, too, had to set about strengthening coherence and cooperation in their own decision-making processes. It was necessary to take full advantage of sectoral inter-agency mechanisms, such as UN-Water, while increasing their effectiveness in such a way that they helped the units in the system to be truly “United in action”. Finally, the current crisis was the right time to totally rethink the issue of economic growth, failing which it would be necessary to face the dire consequences of climate change. The United Nations system had to step up its activities to promote sustainable development and help Member States embark on that road. The draft decisions being prepared would provide useful guidelines.

The session was adjourned at 5.50 p.m.