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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Monday, 25 July 2011, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Rosacha (Acting Vice-President) (Slovakia)

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Regional Cooperation

Corrections to this record should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

In the absence of Mr. Kapambwe (President), Mr. Rosacha (Slovakia), Acting Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

The President expressed the condolences of the Council to the Government and people of Norway with regard to the massacre that had taken place on Friday, 22 July 2011, which had resulted in the loss of many innocent lives.

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/66/63, A/66/80–E/2011/111, E/2011/73 and E/2011/73/Add.1)

Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/66/78–E/2011/13 and E/2011/L.45)

Mr. Aisi (Representative of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Special Committee on Decolonization)), said that the Special Committee had 16 non-self-governing territories under its purview, to which it provided assistance and support.

He drew the Council's attention to the report of the President of the Economic and Social Council (E/2011/73 and E/2011/73/Add.1) and the report of the Secretary-General (A/66/63), which described how several specialized agencies and other entities of the United Nations system had conducted activities for the benefit of non-self-governing territories in the period from 2010 to 2011, and had engaged those territories in their programmes and activities. Those opportunities for participation constituted an important catalyst for integrating non-self-governing territories into the international development and assistance community, and provided a valuable opportunity for information sharing and networking. He acknowledged the specialized agencies, entities and other organizations that had provided for the participation of non-self-governing territories, and those that had reported on assistance and support provided to non-self-governing territories over the past year.

Recent annual regional seminars convened under the aegis of the Special Committee on Decolonization had identified numerous socio-economic issues related to the decolonization process: the impact of climate change; the global economic and financial crisis; the role of regional cooperation; education and public awareness; the role of civil society and women in particular; the empowerment of vulnerable segments of society; and capacity-building in the private and public sectors. In a context of global economic uncertainty those issues must be addressed for the benefit of the people of non-self-governing territories, in order to help them in the transition to self-governance.

In view of the urgent need to implement the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and since 2011 was the first year of the third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations should intensify their engagement with the Special Committee on Decolonization. At the dawn of the third International Decade it was fervently hoped that United Nations specialized agencies would present new opportunities for participation to non-self-governing territories, in a spirit of openness and support. The Special Committee was ready to engage with the Economic and Social Council in the common endeavour to support and assist non-self-governing territories through the

activities of the United Nations system, in order to help them achieve self-governance and decolonization through a coordinated process to advance their sustainable economic and social development.

Mr. Nour (Director, Regional Commissions Office, New York), speaking on behalf of Ms. Rima Khalaf, Under-Secretary-General, Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, presenting the Note of the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/66/78–E/2011/13), said that while the Arab world was witnessing the dawn of a new era that promised a movement towards freedom and good governance, the Israeli occupation persisted with injustice, human rights violations and devastating economic and social repercussions on the lives of the Palestinian people. The Secretary-General's Note was a modest summary of Israeli policies and measures and their impact on the lives, society and economy of the Palestinian people, highlighting a pattern of collective punishment and illegal dispossession of Palestinians that had continued for decades.

In 2010 over 430 Palestinian homes had been demolished, displacing around 600 people and affecting the livelihood of more than 14,000. Since 2004, at least 21,000 Palestinians had been left homeless as a result of the systematic policy of dispossession, which also included land confiscation, home and other construction restrictions, deportation and population displacement. The magnitude and systemic nature of those policies had been most apparent in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, where the Israeli settler population had increased by 68 per cent between 1997 and 2010, representing more than double the overall natural growth of the population of Israel during the same period.

The report also examined other policies of dispossession, discrimination and violation of Palestinian human rights, including restrictions on the mobility of Palestinians on their own territory. Palestinians wishing to move in the West Bank, for example, faced over 500 obstacles, such as checkpoints, roadblocks, sand mounds and other physical barriers, including the separation wall, which had been deemed illegal by the International Court of Justice. The wall separated Palestinian communities from each other and from their lands and livelihoods, and from basic health and education services. Those measures had also resulted in adverse environmental impacts, including the depletion of water resources. Israel also imposed significant restrictions on Palestinian water use in the West Bank, while itself exploiting over half of the aquifer's potential.

The situation for Palestinian children was particularly alarming: they had been injured and killed in violent acts in defence of Israeli settlers, some had been used as human shields by Israeli security forces, and some as young as 12 years of age were being detained in Israeli prisons. A total of 90 cases of torture against children in Israeli detention facilities had been reported in 2010. The blockade on the Gaza Strip since June 2007 indicated a clear policy of systematic, collective punishment imposed on an entire civilian population, in direct violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The blockade was having a severe impact on every aspect of life for the 1.5 million inhabitants of Gaza. Despite Israel having announced measures to ease the blockade in June 2010, its main parameters remained in place, which included sweeping restrictions on the movement of the people, imports of raw materials and basic construction materials, and the prohibition of the export of many goods.

Palestinians were prevented from accessing much of the agricultural land in the Gaza Strip, as well as from accessing the sea. Over the past year, 98 Palestinians had been killed and 1,871 injured by Israeli security forces and settlers, largely as a result of air strikes and shootings in restricted areas near the buffer zone around the fence that separated the Gaza Strip from Israel. Homes that had been destroyed in previous strikes had yet to be reconstructed, and 26,500 people remained homeless. Unemployment and poverty rates

were soaring, and over half the population lived in a situation of food insecurity. There were fears of environmental and public-health disasters, owing to the deterioration of the quantity and quality of water supplies.

Israel continued its de facto annexation policies in the occupied Syrian Golan, including discrimination against Syrian Arab citizens, in clear violation of United Nations Security Council resolution No. 497. The occupation and the closed crossing into the Syrian Arab Republic constituted the most serious barriers to economic development in the occupied Syrian Golan. Citizens who wished to maintain their Syrian identity faced hardships and severely restricted prospects of earning a decent living. Those abuses of human rights and international law must come to an end, and freedom and dignity must prevail.

Mr. Khabbaz Hamoui (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that more than 44 years had passed since Israel's flagrant attack on the Palestinian lands and the Syrian Golan. Since then, Israel had refused to implement any international resolutions calling on it to withdraw from the occupied territories and enable the residents to return to their land and property. Half a million Syrian citizens had been displaced. One day they would return. Despite the massacres that had been conducted by the Israeli occupying authorities, the displaced would continue their struggle to return and to reaffirm their legal rights. Since the adoption of General Assembly resolution No. 194 in 1948, Israel had demolished more than 150 villages and 200 farms in the Syrian Golan. Only five villages remained inhabited. The inhabitants of those villages had resisted all attempts at eviction. They lived surrounded by Israeli settlements, minefields and military barracks.

Since 1967, Israel had sought to Judaize the residents of the occupied Syrian Golan, in flagrant violation of international human rights and humanitarian law. The number of Syrian prisoners from the Golan increased daily as a result of Israeli campaigns of arrest and ill-treatment. Repressive measures were being taken against farmers, students and workers. The credibility of the United Nations was being brought into question by the international community's abject failure to hold Israel to account. Such double standards should no longer be tolerated. He urged the Council to vote in favour of the draft resolution currently before it (E/2011/L.45), in an expression of support for the long-suffering people of the Syrian Golan.

Mr. Hassan Ibrahim (Egypt) said that the Council was, once again, considering the economic and social impact of the Israeli occupation, rather than discussing ways and means of supporting the Palestinian economy with a view to establishing an independent Palestinian State, or of improving the living conditions of Arab peoples under occupation.

Israel was continuing its practices of repression in the occupied Palestinian territories in violation of international human rights law. Israeli practices were intended to gradually demolish the Palestinian economy. The impacts of those negative practices were reflected in the two reports currently before the Council. As many as 2.4 million Palestinians lived below the poverty line. Israel continued to build blockades and checkpoints, and had constructed a wall that separated families and severely restricted freedom of movement, including access to health services. Palestinian residents of Jerusalem had lost their right to permanent residence. The expropriation of Palestinian land had increased since 2009, and hundreds of Palestinians were being detained in Israeli prisons. Repressive measures used by Israel were having a severe economic, social and psychological impact on the Palestinian people, in particular women and children. Israeli plans for urban development in Jerusalem would expand the Israeli presence to the detriment of the original residents.

Egypt had opened its borders to the Palestinian people, in an attempt to alleviate their suffering. However, that measure was insufficient: the blockades must be removed

and policies in violation of international law must be brought to an end. The Israeli occupation of Arab territories in general must cease. Israel was inflicting a similar degree of suffering in the Syrian Golan. It must withdraw, and peace must be established along with economic and social prosperity for all.

Mr. Alaquil (Saudi Arabia) said that the report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation, prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, gave details of the sufferings of the Palestinian and Arab peoples as a result of the continued Israeli occupation and the violation of their social, economic and other human rights. Their freedom of movement was strictly controlled while humanitarian assistance, in particular to the Gaza Strip, was being blocked. The Israelis continued to evict Palestinians from their homes and destroy their housing; in 2010, more demolitions had been recorded than in any other year since 2005. The collective punishment meted out to the populations had undermined the economy, worsening their social and economic conditions, especially in the Gaza Strip, despite the efforts of United Nations agencies working in the region. The Palestinian people were in dire need of further assistance.

In his message to the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting in Support of Israeli-Palestinian Peace in March 2011, the Secretary-General had said that the occupation must end and that the Palestinians had a right to an independent State. Occupation was itself the greatest violation of human rights but the other violations mentioned in the report only exacerbated the poor living conditions of the inhabitants of the occupied territories. Since the Oslo Peace Process the population of the Israeli settlements in the occupied territories had more than doubled. By expanding the settlements and expelling the original inhabitants, Israel deliberately aimed to change the geographical complexion of the territories in violation of international law, with a view to delaying the establishment of an independent Palestinian State. He called on the Council to take all the necessary measures to alleviate the sufferings of the Palestinian people and the inhabitants of the occupied Syrian Golan.

Mr. Bocar Ly (Senegal) said that the report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation had been unable to take into account the Fatah-Hamas agreement brokered by Egypt and signed in May 2011, which Senegal welcomed. Nor did the report mention the vital role of the Quartet on the Middle East in finding a solution to the issue of Palestine. Nevertheless it described the difficult living conditions of the Palestinians in the occupied territories.

In view of the concerns about the Palestinians' long-term economic prospects, he called for more assistance to be given to diversify the economy, while ensuring access to natural resources and basic services, currently hampered by the restrictions on mobility. The role of donors would be crucial in enabling the Palestinians to offset their budget deficit, currently standing at US\$ 300 million. On an official World Food Programme visit to the Gaza Strip in 2005, he had witnessed the plight of Palestinian fishermen and urged the Secretary-General to pay special attention to them. He condemned the illegal construction of the dividing wall and the degradation of the environment in the occupied territories, and wondered why the report made no mention of the potential role of the United Nations Environment Programme. Moreover, the report lacked any reference to the role of the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies or to the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

In June 2011, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations had said that the Palestinian Authority was above the international threshold for a functioning State yet, as described in the summary of the Secretary-General's report, the continued occupation of their territory constrained the successful functioning of Palestinian institutions. As Chair of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the

Palestinian People and a member of the Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories, Senegal called for the establishment of a sovereign and viable Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital, existing in peace and security with Israel.

Mr. Toro Carreño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela), aligning his delegation with the statement made by the Group of 77 and China, noted that the Secretary-General's report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation referred to the Israeli Government's continued constraints on the functioning of the Palestinian Authority's institutions and the worsening of the Palestinians' economic and social conditions. Moreover, the occupying Power continued to violate international law while impeding the social and economic development of all the occupied territories, including the Syrian Golan.

His country condemned the Israeli blockade of the occupied territories as a collective punishment of their populations, meted out along with serious and systematic violations of human rights and international law. Israel continued to expand its settlements in East Jerusalem while illegally expelling Palestinians from their homes. The United Nations should continue to work towards the realization of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East based on international law and all relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions, putting an end to the occupation and establishing a sovereign Palestinian State. Israel must immediately end its blockade and the international community should take more effective measures to force Israel to stop violating human rights with impunity and the complicity of the imperial Power.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) said that the report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation confirmed that the Palestinian people continued to suffer as a result of the Israeli blockade, which isolated them from regional and international markets and undermined their productive capacity. The limited easing of the blockade on the Gaza Strip in June 2010 had not improved the social and economic situation of its inhabitants; Palestine and its productive base could only be reconstructed if Israel fully lifted its blockade. Long-term improvements were impossible without a lasting solution involving the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Jerusalem as its capital. The Palestinians needed technical and financial assistance to build human resource capacities, develop international trade and enhance their productive capacity. In view of the changing situation in the region, the Council should examine ways of protecting the basic rights of the Palestinian people, providing them with the wherewithal to establish an independent State living in peace and security alongside Israel. He welcomed the clear position of the United States of America on the need to establish a Palestinian State on the basis of the 1967 frontiers. Morocco hoped that it would lead to negotiations on all the final status aspects, taking into account the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Khan (Observer for Indonesia) said that, in December 2010, the Member States of the United Nations had declared the period 2011–2020 the Third International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism. Although 50 years had passed since the General Assembly had adopted the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples and over 20 years since the declaration of the first international decade, 16 territories were still Non-Self-Governing Territories and the decolonization agenda needed to be accelerated. Discussions in the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples had revealed that the populations of those territories were inadequately informed about their rights to free association, full integration and independence. Consequently, raising those populations' awareness of those options and their consequences was of utmost importance. The United Nations should continue to disseminate information about its decolonization programme, which had usefully been

included on the website, while the Department of Public Information should devise new ways of improving access to that information. Moreover, the peoples of the territories, many of which were small islands, should have full access to assistance under United Nations programmes to deal with their many challenges, including the imminent sea-level rise. The Council and its subsidiaries should build on their assessment of the conditions in the territories and step up the coordination of their policies.

The report on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation, prepared by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, had confirmed that, as Israel repeatedly violated international law and United Nations resolutions, the Palestinians and Arab populations in the occupied territories continued to face economic and social hardship. The unemployment rate had doubled in the past decade and the Palestinian economy remained volatile. Since the main obstacle to social and economic development was the Israeli occupation, Indonesia welcomed the recent steps by several States to recognize the State of Palestine within its 1967 borders and urged others to follow suit, either individually or through their regional organizations.

While slow progress was made towards recognition of a Palestinian State, Indonesia encouraged the international community to support the rehabilitation and development of Palestinian national institutions. In June 2011, the World Bank, International Monetary Fund and United Nations had declared that the Palestinian Authority had been found to be above the international threshold for a functioning State. However, the unresolved Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the continuing Palestinian divide prevented the Palestinian Authority from reaching certain locations, including East Jerusalem. Indonesia supported the Strategic Capacity Development Programmes in Support of Palestinian State Building and encouraged donors to contribute to it and other United Nations initiatives. The United Nations agencies working on humanitarian issues in the region, including the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, needed to be further empowered and he hoped that the relevant draft resolution would be adopted.

Draft resolution entitled "Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations" (E/2011/L.45)

The President invited Council members to consider the draft resolution entitled "Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations".

Mr. Guba Aisi (Papua New Guinea), introducing the draft resolution, said that its main purpose was to facilitate cooperation between United Nations organizations and the administering powers so that the Non-Self-Governing Territories could benefit from United Nations assistance. Recognition by the United Nations of the legitimate right of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to self-determination entailed the extension of all appropriate assistance to those peoples. The draft resolution acknowledged with appreciation the contribution made by United Nations specialized agencies and other organizations in implementing the relevant resolutions adopted by the United Nations General Assembly and the Council and urged those organizations that had not done so to follow suit. It also requested the widest possible dissemination of the United Nations information leaflet on assistance programmes available to Non-Self-Governing Territories, including on the Internet. Welcoming the continued liaison efforts of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the draft resolution called on the administering powers to facilitate the participation of the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the relevant meetings and conferences of United Nations organs. It also called on governments to step up assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories through the United Nations system. The President of the Council should maintain close contact with the Chairman of the Special Committee on Decolonization on those matters and report thereon. Requesting the

Secretary-General to follow up on the implementation of the present draft resolution, he urged the members of the Council to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The President announced that China wished to join the list of sponsors.

Action on the draft resolution was postponed.

Regional cooperation (E/2011/15/Add.1 and 2, 16–21, 32 (Part I) and (Part II))

Mr. Nour (Director, Regional Commissions Office, New York), introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled “Regional Cooperation in the economic, social and related fields” (E/2011/15 and E/2011/15/Add.1 and Add.2), said that the report reflected the key issues addressed by the executive secretaries of the regional commissions during their interactive dialogue with the Council at the twenty-second meeting of the current session (E/2011/SR.22). The report highlighted that, although economic growth had been strong in many regions, it had not always translated into poverty alleviation. More inclusive and sustainable economic growth, the adoption of social protection systems, and the right mix of economic, social and environmental public policies promoting equity were therefore imperative.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, historically among the regions with the most unequal income distributions in the world, several governments had introduced policies that had helped reduce inequality between 2003 and 2008. In most member States of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) inclusive economic growth had been stronger. While the income gap had been widening in some countries — particularly transition economies — of the region, poverty had not increased thanks to strong social safety nets.

In the Asia-Pacific region, on the other hand, gains from the strong economic growth had not trickled down to all segments of society. Although some progress had been made in reducing poverty, public policies for income redistribution were needed and social spending must be increased to ensure sustained and inclusive development. Similarly, despite Africa’s overall economic recovery after the global financial crisis, significant regional disparities existed and economic growth had not been translated into social development so that many countries were unlikely to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Egypt and Tunisia were among six African countries that had achieved sustained economic growth over recent decades, but that had not prevented the recent political upheavals. The political uprisings in the Arab world had raised questions about the region’s development models, and about ways to reshape policies for the benefit of all sectors of society. Regional cooperation, including specific regional responses and policy recommendations from the regional commissions, would be an important part of efforts towards sustained, inclusive and equitable economic growth.

Regional commissions, together with member States and other stakeholders, were engaged in devising and promoting youth development policies, notably to address high levels of youth unemployment. They had also made substantive contributions to the successful outcome of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and would lead regional efforts to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action at all levels.

Various major United Nations conferences had recognized the importance of promoting the regional dimension of sustainable development. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development had tasked the regional commissions to facilitate and promote a balanced integration of the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development into their work. The commissions would also work towards a successful outcome of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) by facilitating a common understanding among policymakers on key issues in their respective

regions and by providing substantive and analytical inputs to facilitate decision-making at the global level.

As chairs of Regional Coordination Mechanisms (RCM), the regional commissions promoted coherent United Nations inter-agency policy responses at the regional and subregional levels. The report of the Secretary-General contained detailed information on the outcomes of RCM meetings.

Turning to the joint report by the Executive Secretaries of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on the activities carried out within the framework of the project for a Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar (E/2011/21), he said that the project was another example of cooperation supported by the regional commissions.

Over the past year, the regional commissions had convened Ministerial Sessions and other high-level meetings that had focused on global and regional development challenges and coordinated regional responses. During the reporting period, ECA, ECE and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had adopted several resolutions (E/2011/15/Add.1 and Add.2), four of which required action by the Council.

Mr. Popov (Belarus) said that the regional commissions played a crucial role in promoting the Millennium Development Goals and mutually beneficial regional economic integration. The role of the ECE should be strengthened further, as it helped promote European and Eurasian integration. The ECE should adopt a balanced approach, taking into account the interests of all its members and placing equal emphasis on all aspects of its mandate. Trade, innovative development, energy and transport should be made a priority. Persistent disparities in economic development of ECE member States must be addressed, especially in the light of the continuing impact of the global financial crisis. The capacity of the ECE to respond to those challenges depended largely on adequate funding, which should be commensurate with the economic realities in the region. The activities of the ECE had global reach, as it served the interest of a large number of States in other regions. Stable and predictable funding was thus crucial to enable the Commission to carry out its important mandate.

Mr. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) said that regional commissions played an important role in promoting inter-State integration and stable economic growth. The ECE and ESCAP were key players in strengthening economic growth, external trade and cooperation in the pan-European and Asia-Pacific regions. The ties between the two organizations should be strengthened further. In April 2011, the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan had signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the ECE aimed at strengthening their joint contribution to improving the investment and business climate, and harmonizing the trade and economic regimes of the countries concerned.

United Nations regional activities and the capacity of the regional commissions should be strengthened. The Russian Federation would maintain its role as one of the main voluntary donors to ECE and ESCAP. The United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia (SPECA) also provided unique opportunities for inter-State dialogue in the central Asian region and helped resolve complex cross-border issues. His Government would continue to provide financial and other support to the programme. Regional commissions were well placed to respond to contemporary threats and challenges to the world economy. His Government supported the efforts of the ECE and ESCAP to improve inter-State cooperation in the energy sector and looked forward to a constructive dialogue during the Asia-Pacific Energy Forum (APEF) in 2013.

In the light of the major challenges facing regional commissions, they needed adequate human and financial resources and political support to carry out their mandate.

The 2012 to 2013 budget for the regional commissions should be based on a fair and objective assessment of their activities, taking into account that stable regional development enhanced the stability of the global economy.

Mr. Wang Qun (China) said that, despite overall economic progress, regional development disparities and development gaps within countries in Asia and the Pacific persisted. Enhanced regional cooperation was crucial to inclusive and sustainable development of the global economy and the building of an equitable society. Over the past year, the Asia-Pacific region had seen robust economic growth. The region's economies had been the first to recover from the global crisis and had become an important element in global economic stabilization. However, although annual growth rates were positive, the challenges facing the region were manifold. Economic growth had not benefited all; social protection nets were weak; regional connectivity needed strengthening; food and energy prices remained high; and natural disasters jeopardized economic and social development. High GDP growth rates had not resulted in higher household consumption, as poverty continued to be widespread.

Over the years, ESCAP had made an important contribution to improving living standards, achieving Millennium Development Goals and promoting sustainable economic development in the region. The establishment of subregional offices had injected renewed vitality into its work, which provided guidance to the regions' economies on ways to build the capacity of all sectors in the post-crisis era. His Government welcomed the decision by ESCAP to include social protection, gender equality, development assistance and financing, MDG achievement and regional cooperation opportunities in its future agenda. The promotion of balanced growth should be made a priority, as uneven development between and within countries were a major concern.

ESCAP could also be instrumental in exploring innovative growth opportunities. Many economies in the region were heavily export-dependent, which undermined the environmental sustainability of growth. ESCAP should help its members restructure their economic base, explore new pillars of growth, make innovation a driver of future development, and promote a green circular economy.

ESCAP should play an active role in the regional preparations for the 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development. Most countries in the region had developing economies and the Conference would be of vital importance to their future.

With rapid economic and social development in the ESCAP region, regional cooperation would become more robust and ESCAP, in turn, must become more effective. His Government supported the internal reform efforts of the Commission's Secretariat and called on the United Nations to support those efforts by providing adequate human resources and funding. China supported ESCAP on various levels, including through participation in regional projects and contributions to the China-ESCAP Cooperation Fund.

Mr. Lysák (Slovakia) said that the regional commissions had demonstrated the necessity of regional cooperation and contributed to the strengthening of economic and social development ties between countries in the same region. They had helped to foster growth, investment and sustainable development, and were contributing to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. However, the regional commissions had to streamline their activities and avoid duplication of their efforts. Slovakia encouraged all regional commissions to establish best practices and share them beyond their regions. The activities of the Economic Commission for Europe contributed not only to stability within the ECE region but also to the reduction of disparities between member States.

Mr. Morrill (Canada) underlined the importance of ESCWA and, in particular, of the work done by its Centre for Women. He said that the centre should target women throughout the region rather than concentrating on specific geographical areas.

Mr. Mercado (United States of America) said that his country noted that ESCAP delegates had decided to work towards implementation of the Astana Green Bridge Initiative rather than adopting it at the Sixth Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, which had been held at Astana, Kazakhstan, in 2010.

The United States of America was not convinced of the need to establish a new centre to address risk reduction needs in the ESCAP region, as set forth in resolution 67/4 of ESCAP's report to the Council, and therefore reiterated its decision not to support that resolution.

Encouraged by the efforts of ECA to support regional integration and economic growth in Africa and to coordinate United Nations interaction with the African Union, the United States of America had decided to participate in ECA as an observer with consultative status.

The United States of America welcomed efforts by ESCWA and the League of Arab States to bring together representatives of United Nations agencies and other international and regional organizations in the wake of the Arab Spring, and encouraged ESCWA to broaden the mandate of the Centre for Women in order to foster the participation of women in the political life of their respective countries.

Mr. Lumbanga (Observer for the United Republic of Tanzania) said that the adoption of the draft resolution entitled "African Institute for Economic Development and Planning" (E/2011/15/Add.1) would enable the institute to carry out a capacity-building role that was vital for Africa's development efforts.

Mr. Ly (Senegal) underlined that African countries had expressed their support for the institute at the Fourth Joint Annual Meetings of the African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance and the ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, which had been held in Addis Ababa in 2011.

Draft resolution entitled "Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar"
(E/2011/L.14)

Mr. Orenes (Spain), presenting draft resolution E/2011/L.14 on behalf of Spain and Morocco, said that an independent consortium of consultants had made a favourable assessment of the project for a fixed link between the two countries. The international financial contributions called for in the resolution should be viewed as strictly voluntary and therefore carried no programme budget implications.

The President confirmed that he had been informed that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications and invited Council members to consider the draft resolution.

Draft resolution E/2011/L.14 was adopted.

Action on recommendations contained in Chapter I of document E/2011/15/Add.1

Draft resolution entitled "African Institute for Economic Development and Planning"

The President invited Council members to consider the draft resolution contained in Section A, Chapter I, which had been submitted by the Economic Commission for Africa. It included revisions that had been agreed upon during informal consultations, which he read out.

The draft resolution, as orally revised, was adopted.

Draft decision entitled “Best practice guidance for effective methane drainage and use in coal mines”

The President invited Council members to consider the draft decision contained in Section B, Chapter I, which had been submitted by the Economic Commission for Europe.

The draft decision was adopted.

Action on recommendations contained in Chapter I of document E/2011/15/Add.2

Draft resolution entitled “Promoting regional cooperation for enhanced energy security and the sustainable use of energy in Asia and the Pacific”

Draft resolution entitled “Revision of the statute of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific”

The President said that Chapter I contained two draft resolutions submitted by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and invited Council members to consider the first draft resolution, entitled “Promoting regional cooperation for enhanced energy security and the sustainable use of energy in Asia and the Pacific”. The resolution contained programme budget implications.

Ms. de Laurentis (Secretary of the Council) said that the full implementation of ESCAP resolution 67/2 would require a further US\$ 500,000 in extrabudgetary resources. An additional US\$ 50,000 in regular budgetary resources above the estimate in the proposed programme budget for 2012–2013 would also be required for interpretation and translation services. The Secretary-General had pledged to make every effort to provide the additional US\$ 50,000 from resources allocated under the proposed programme budget for 2012–2013.

The draft resolution was adopted.

The President invited Council members to consider the second draft resolution, entitled “Revision of the statute of the Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific”.

The draft resolution was adopted.

The President drew attention to the following documents: Report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2011/15, E/2011/15/Add.1 and 2); The economic situation in the Economic Commission for Europe region: Europe, North America and the Commonwealth of Independent States in 2010–2011 (E/2011/16); Overview of economic and social conditions in Africa, 2011 (E/2011/17); Summary of the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and Pacific, 2011 (E/2011/18); Latin America and the Caribbean: economic situation and outlook, 2010–2011 (E/2011/19); and Summary of the survey of economic and social development in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia region, 2010–2011 (E/2011/20). If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to take note of those documents.

It was so decided.

Ms. Kvammen Ekker (Norway), speaking on behalf of the Government of Norway, thanked the Council for its expression of condolences in the wake of the attacks that had taken place in Norway on the previous Friday. She said that the country’s response to such attacks would be still more democracy, openness and participation.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.