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New York

DEC

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HARLAND (New Zealand)

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AGENDA ITEM 82: TRAINING AND RESEARCH

- (a) UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH
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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 80: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued)

(e) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT: REPORT OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT

1. Mr. RIPERT (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation),\* speaking on behalf of the Secretary-General, said that in pursuance of resolution 3 (VI) of the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development, a preparatory meeting had been convened on 30 and 31 October 1984, inter alia to enable Governments to indicate their contributions to the United Nations Financing System for Science and Technology for Development.
2. Before the preparatory meeting, he and the Administrator of UNDP had undertaken a series of consultations with individual Governments and with major groups, at which the significance of science and technology for development and the usefulness of the Financing System in that regard were emphasized. Several participating Governments had stressed the importance they attached to the long-term legislative arrangements for the Financing System that had been worked out over the past few years and some Governments had indicated their willingness to approach the issue in a flexible manner. The Administrator of UNDP had indicated that resources existed to meet the Financing System's administrative budget requirements until the end of 1985. However, both the Administrator and he himself had reiterated that in the absence of progress towards meeting the long-term resource targets and without adequate operational funds it would be neither desirable nor responsible to maintain the current Financing System as an administrative entity only.
3. In response to the invitation to Governments to indicate their intentions regarding financial commitments to the Financing System for 1985 and beyond, 16 Governments and the interested member States of the European Economic Community had announced their readiness to contribute a total sum of about \$10 million for the first year of the Financing System. Three of those Governments had also indicated that they would make financial contributions for the following two years. Another 12 Governments had stated that they intended to contribute, but would announce the amount at a later time. A few Governments indicated their interest in providing substantial amounts of non-core resources to the System.
4. Most Governments had stated that their contributions were conditional on the requirements of the relevant legislation being met. Another Government had expressed the view that contributions should not be subject to preconditions. Despite those differences of approach, a desire on the part of interested Governments to ensure the establishment of a viable System with a good chance of functioning effectively over the long term had been apparent.

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\* The full text of the statement will be issued as document A/C.2/39/CRP.2.

(Mr. Ripert)

5. As the total amount of contributions was likely to be substantially less than the envisaged target and as an important requirement for launching the System on a long-term basis would therefore not be met, the suggestion had been put forward that an informal open-ended intergovernmental working group should be established to continue the negotiations on long-term arrangements. Such a working group would, with the assistance of the Secretariat, prepare recommendations for consideration by the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development at its seventh session. A large number of Governments had indicated their support for the proposal and it had been recommended that the working group should begin its deliberations as soon as practicable during the current session of the General Assembly and that, if necessary, it could continue its work beyond the end of the session. Since the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Committee was scheduled for May-June 1985, there was some urgency for the General Assembly to consider those suggestions at its current session. In the meantime, he and the Administrator of UNDP had reiterated the Secretary-General's appeal to Governments to make adequate contributions to the current Financing System at the 1984 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, to be held on 7 and 8 November.

AGENDA ITEM 83: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)  
(A/39/3 (Parts I and II), A/39/133, 236, 581; A/C.2/39/5)

- (a) OFFICE OF THE UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/267 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2)
- (b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/380-386, 388-392, 393 and Add.1, 394, 404, 598)
- (c) IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MEDIUM-TERM AND LONG-TERM RECOVERY AND REHABILITATION PROGRAMME IN THE SUDANO-SAHELIAN REGION: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued) (A/39/211 and Add.1)

6. Mr. CHEKAY (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the campaign against disasters was a long-term economic and social development objective and that its effectiveness depended not only on the ability to deal rapidly with the adverse consequences of disasters but also on reducing the vulnerability of stricken countries and of their economies. In that regard, the Soviet Union had direct experience, acquired mainly in the fight against desertification, since a fifth of its territory consisted of arid or semi-arid regions and 60 to 70 per cent of its arable land was in dry-farming areas. The measures that had been adopted, which included the construction of a large number of dams and a wide network of irrigation canals, had enabled much arid land to be transformed and cultivated, so that there had been a considerable increase in grain production.

7. The Soviet Union provided considerable assistance to countries afflicted by natural disasters, both bilaterally and multilaterally, especially through the United Nations system and in particular through UNEP and WMO. Assistance took various forms and included the provision of vehicles, medicines, etc., as required

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(Mr. Chekay, USSR)

in each case. The report of the Secretary-General on the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) contained data on disaster relief assistance and indicated that the USSR had provided some \$13 million in one year for that purpose (A/39/267, annex VII). That represented only part of the resources allocated by the USSR to assistance of that type. During the period covered by the report the Soviet Union had provided assistance to many countries afflicted by disasters, among them Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Argentina, Colombia, Costa Rica, Yemen, Afghanistan, Iran, Ethiopia, Guinea, Togo, Botswana, Sao Tome and Principe, Uganda, Kenya, Burma and Sri Lanka. In addition to humanitarian assistance, the Soviet Union offered aid to developing countries for irrigation works, the processing of foodstuffs, geological studies, groundwater studies and other activities.

8. The Soviet delegation had always advocated concerted efforts to resolve development problems and to eliminate the adverse consequences of natural disasters. In that connection, it had to be reiterated that as long as racism and the vestiges of colonialism remained in southern Africa, the front-line States could not take full advantage of the assistance provided.

9. Concerning the information contained in the report on UNDRO (A/39/267 and Add.1), the USSR reiterated the position stated, in particular, at the time of the adoption of General Assembly resolutions 36/225, 37/144 and 38/202. The Soviet Government considered that inter-agency meetings to co-ordinate disaster relief should be subject to the authority of the competent bodies and be convened at the request of interested countries, especially where non-natural disasters were concerned. In such cases, the Secretariat should act exclusively in accordance with the relevant decisions of the Security Council and the General Assembly, without attempting to take over the functions of those bodies. In addition, some of the proposals contained in the above-mentioned report needed to be more explicit, in particular those relating to the dispatch of inter-agency assessment missions. As currently worded, those proposals would only lead to increased budgetary expenditure and would not necessarily strengthen UNDRO's activities.

10. With regard to the proposed draft convention on expediting the delivery of emergency relief (A/39/267/Add.2), the Soviet Union wished to point out that only one consultant and an informal group of legal experts had had the task of drawing up that convention and no mandate had been given to any intergovernmental body for that purpose. That practice violated the norms governing the elaboration of international legal instruments and was unacceptable to most delegations.

11. In the opinion of the Soviet Union, disaster relief should be provided on the basis of humanitarian considerations, and impartiality, without interference in the internal affairs of stricken countries, with due respect for their sovereignty, and through official agencies.

12. Mr. MOKKADEM (Tunisia) welcomed the activities carried out by UNDRO, despite the limited means at its disposal, to alleviate the economic and social effects of the natural disasters afflicting developing countries and, in particular, African

(Mr. Mokkadem, Tunisia)

countries, most of which were among the least developed. An added problem was the persistent drought that was undermining the development of those countries and preventing them from taking action themselves to respond to the exceptionally serious situation they were experiencing.

13. UNDRO, as the co-ordinating centre of the United Nations system, played an important role in the mobilization and co-ordination of relief. It must therefore be given the necessary financial, technical and human resources to fulfil its mandate, improve the dissemination of information on the needs of affected countries and on potential donors, and organize more meetings and agency missions for the establishment of concerted relief programmes. There was a need for increased financial contributions in order to meet the urgent needs of the stricken countries and for more suitable administrative procedures to respond to emergency situations.

14. UNDRO should also play an important role in planning for and preventing disasters so as to minimize the tragic consequences of natural disasters. It should provide the necessary assistance to the developing countries so that they could establish national structures capable of acting immediately in those situations and thus reduce the loss of human life and property to a minimum.

15. His delegation supported the specific proposals of the Secretary-General in document A/39/267/Add.1, which would undoubtedly strengthen the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to natural disasters. With regard to the draft convention on expediting the delivery of emergency relief (A/39/267/Add.2), it considered that the draft reflected the will and capacity of the international community to provide rapid and effective emergency humanitarian aid to the countries affected. Before the draft convention was adopted, an intergovernmental group of experts should be given the task of editing the final text.

16. Mr. DIEME (Guinea-Bissau), referring to the statements made by his country's Minister for Foreign Affairs, said that the burden of foreign debt, aggravated by high interest rates, cut-backs in production and exports, the continuing deterioration in the terms of trade, the food crisis and the lack of sufficient resources to realize their economic potential, placed the developing countries in a dramatic situation.

17. The imbalances in the current economic and financial order, and the additional burden of natural disasters affecting the peoples of developing countries, required immediate remedial measures. In order to remedy Guinea-Bissau's current situation, the Government had redefined its development strategy on the basis of economic austerity, economic and financial stabilization, a balanced economy, and independent economic development. All those activities would be included in a stabilization programme (1983-1984) providing for economic and financial recovery, restructuring of the commercial sector, control over the economy and careful use of foreign assistance.

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(Mr. Dieme, Guinea-Bissau)

18. In the first four-year development plan priority was given to the production sector (rural development, forestry, fishing and mining). The basic objective was to achieve self-sufficiency in food in the near future and to increase exports in order to obtain the necessary foreign currency to meet the need for imports essential for economic recovery. In the commercial sector, the objectives set included the guaranteed provision of consumer goods and inputs, the formulation of a price policy to promote economic activity, substantial reduction of parallel trade, the promotion of national economic integration, the gradual elimination of the rural exodus and the reorganization of distribution networks. To improve the economic and social situation, the authorities had put into operation the 1983-1984 economic and financial stabilization plan, devalued the currency, increased wages and consumer prices of primary products and especially of non-essential imported goods, readjusted producer prices, taxes, customs duties and bank interest rates.

19. In May 1984 Guinea-Bissau had organized, with UNDP assistance, a donors' round table at Lisbon, in order to initiate a discussion between the Government and the principal donors on the economic and social strategy that the Government proposed to implement over the short and medium term, to study ways of improving economic management and the use of external resources, and to permit the mobilization of the financial resources needed to implement measures and policies under the stabilization programme so as to achieve the objectives of the first four-year development plan.

20. A request had been made for assistance not related to specific projects as well as assistance for specific projects. The first type of assistance (\$130.9 million) should make it possible to re-establish essential economic mechanisms. The second type of assistance, which amounted to \$118.2 million, would be used for priority development activities under the first four-year development plan (1983-1986). The total amount of assistance requested thus amounted to \$249.1 million. After examining the documents presented at the round table and acknowledging Guinea-Bissau's efforts to overcome its economic and financial crisis, the participating donor countries and organizations had pledged contributions totalling \$70.4 million, which was 53.7 per cent of the amount requested.

21. The first measures implemented by the Government, which had entailed great sacrifices on the part of the population, had already produced positive results, especially with regard to increased land areas under cultivation. Nevertheless, the grain deficit for 1984-1985 still amounted to approximately 41,000 tons. The supply of consumer products and producer goods to the rural population continued to be one of the main obstacles to a recovery in agricultural production. Although the Government of Guinea-Bissau was profoundly grateful for the co-operation of the donors, it was concerned at the delay and the non-fulfilment of the majority of contribution pledges and hoped that the situation could be remedied.

22. In conclusion, he expressed his Government's wish to act as host, the following year, to a Secretariat mission to assess the results of the round table and the progress made in organizing and implementing the special programme of economic assistance to Guinea-Bissau.

23. Mr. BASAGA (Turkey) said that the earthquake that had struck his country in 1983 had taken the lives of 1,400 people and rendered some 33,000 people homeless. The generous action of the international community and the prompt co-ordination of UNDRO had enabled the Government to alleviate the hardship caused by the disaster in one month and then launch reconstruction activities. Besides, that example was not the only one, as could be seen from document A/39/267. The efficiency of UNDRO's co-ordination activities during those incidents underscored the importance of strengthening the capacity of the system to respond to disaster situations, especially at a time when developing countries were experiencing serious economic problems.

24. His delegation noted with satisfaction the steps taken by UNDRO to improve the mobilization and co-ordination of disaster relief assistance within the United Nations system and from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and the initiatives of the Co-ordinator towards the establishment of a small consultative group in compliance with General Assembly resolution 38/202. He hoped that the first meeting of the group would contribute to the increased effectiveness of UNDRO in the assessment of relief needs and in the preparation and execution of concerted relief programmes.

25. He emphasized the importance of disaster preparedness and its role in minimizing loss of life and material damage, and he therefore approved of UNDRO's assistance activities towards the establishment of disaster-preparedness projects at the national, subregional, regional and international levels, as well as various programmes it had carried out in co-operation with United Nations agencies, Governments and intergovernmental bodies in the field of disaster prevention.

26. UNDRO had to face many financial difficulties. Although the number and intensity of disaster situations had grown substantially over the years and relief activities had become more complex, UNDRO was still vulnerable when it came to finding sufficient resources to co-ordinate those relief activities. A more flexible mechanism should be found to solve the problem. In that connection, the generous contributions of the Governments of Australia, Canada, Italy and Norway to the UNDRO Trust Fund deserved mention. His own Government had itself decided to make a modest contribution of \$US 5,000 to the same Fund. Finally, his delegation especially commended UNDRO for the concerted relief plans to combat drought in Africa.

27. Mrs. KALM (World Health Organization) said she would like to provide additional information on WHO activities in Lebanon to complement the description in document A/39/390. Assistance to the development and rehabilitation of health services in Lebanon, which had started early in 1983, had been interrupted by the new outbreak of hostilities, creating a tragic state of emergency. The plan for the reconstruction of the health services of Lebanon proposed by the joint mission of WHO and the League of Red Cross Societies was currently in abeyance because of the military situation.

28. A health working group led by the WHO representative in Beirut had been established, within the Co-ordinating Committee composed of representatives of international organizations, to co-ordinate relief operations with governmental and

(Mrs. Kalm)

non-governmental organizations providing assistance to more than 500,000 displaced persons in Lebanon. In the situation prevailing in that country, the principal focus of WHO activities had become the provision of emergency relief assistance to victims of the fighting and violence, and the organization had provided 20 WHO emergency health kits at a cost of \$US 100,000, each of which contained pharmaceutical and laboratory relief supplies to serve 10,000 people for three months. WHO had also provided other supplies and equipment in response to specific requests and had contributed \$US 200,000 worth of medicaments for displaced persons. Similarly, WHO had allocated \$US 72,760 for the purchase of urgently needed medical and surgical supplies, had purchased locally about \$US 45,000 worth of drugs and medical equipment for use by the Ministry of Health, and had prepared a list of 100 medico-surgical kits which had been purchased with funds provided by UNICEF.

29. The UNDP decision to suspend temporarily all projects receiving the Programme's assistance in Lebanon had affected in particular the national health laboratory project executed by WHO. Implementation of phase II of the national water management project, which was to be executed by the Government, had still not started.

30. The WHO presence had been maintained in Lebanon and the organization was actively co-ordinating medical and health related assistance in close collaboration with UNICEF, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) and UNDRO. The World Health Assembly had adopted a resolution (WHA/37/25) which called upon the specialized agencies, the organs and bodies of the United Nations and all governmental and non-governmental organizations to intensify their co-operation with WHO and, in particular, to put into operation the recommendations of the report on the reconstruction of the health services of Lebanon. The resolution also called upon Member States to increase their technical and financial support for relief operations and the reconstruction of the health services of Lebanon in consultation with the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs of Lebanon.

31. Mr. OULD SID'AHMED VALL (Mauritania) said that, as he had already indicated in connection with item 141, drought and desertification had disrupted the rural sector in his country, whose economy was founded on subsistence farming and cattle raising. An unprecedentedly massive exodus from the countryside had aggravated the situation. Despite mobilization of the country's limited resources to alleviate the sufferings of the most seriously affected inhabitants, international assistance, though still insufficient, was a very valuable adjunct to the nation's efforts.

32. His country had always tried to act in concert with other countries of the region affected by drought and desertification and had supported the activities of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office since its inception. He called on all Governments to increase the resources available to the Office, whose role had been so vital, so that it could respond to the most urgent needs of the region. He also wished to express his country's gratitude for the UNDRO effort, the visit of the inter-agency mission between 14 and 21 February 1984 and the periodic reports on the plight of his country.

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33. Mr. SAVIC (Yugoslavia) praised the activities of UNDRO and suggested that, in conformity with the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, the arrangements for providing timely and adequate assistance to developing countries in case of disaster should be strengthened and a global programme should be drawn up covering danger assessment, preventive measures, advance planning for cases of disaster, security systems, damage appraisal and emergency relief to the hardest-hit areas.

34. He expressed appreciation for the co-operation extended by UNDRO in the area of physical planning to lessen the dangers of seismic risks in the Socialist Republic of Crna Gora, Yugoslavia, which had been hit by a tragic earthquake in 1979.

35. The report of the Secretary-General submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 38/202 (A/39/267/Add.1) contained useful proposals and offered a solid basis for future measures. The special programmes of economic assistance by which the international community could help the least developed countries to overcome their short-term problems and so contribute to their long-term development needs should be further strengthened. Since, unfortunately, only meagre resources had been received for the fund set up to provide finance to the least developed countries, Yugoslavia supported the holding of a conference and round tables of donor countries with a view to the mobilization of additional funds, a more thorough consideration of the development needs of those countries and the definition of projects that would ensure the most efficient utilization of resources and square with their development programmes and plans.

AGENDA ITEM 82: TRAINING AND RESEARCH

(a) UNITED NATIONS INSTITUTE FOR TRAINING AND RESEARCH

(b) UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY: REPORT OF THE COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY

36. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it the Committee agreed that the list of speakers for the general debate on agenda item 82 should be closed on Thursday, 8 November at 6 p.m.

37. It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 11.50 a.m.