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Chairman: Mr. HARLAND (New Zealand)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/39/3 (Parts I and II), 97, 118, 128, 133, 161, 223, 265 and Add.1, 269, 271, 272, 289 and Add.1, 290, 295, 303, 312 and Corr.1 and Add.1-2, 326, 331, 347, 356, 452, 474 and Corr.1, 477, 554, 559, 581, 590 and Corr.1; A/C.2/39/2, 6, 7; A/C.2/39/L.2; E/1984/9/Add.2; E/1983/71)

1. Dr. BERTAUX (World Health Organization) said that the World Health Organization (WHO) attached high priority to the protection of populations against potentially harmful chemical products, including pharmaceuticals. In 1963, it had set up an international system for the exchange of information on the safety of pharmaceutical products moving in international commerce. A quarterly WHO publication, the Drug Information Bulletin, containing information on newly approved or withdrawn products, restrictions on the use of products and drug safety, was disseminated to member States in several languages. Among other WHO programmes was the Certification Scheme on the Quality of Pharmaceutical Products Moving in International Commerce enabling the participating countries to obtain certification from exporting countries on whether a given pharmaceutical product had been approved for sale in the exporting country and, if approved, if it had been produced in accordance with the manufacturing practices recommended by WHO.

2. Despite those programmes, it appeared that the less developed countries did not have the necessary expertise to take advantage of the information available to them at the international level. WHO had therefore established a programme of essential drugs as a component of a national programme designed to integrate drug policies within the general development plans of countries. The selection of essential drugs, one of the most important aspects of national policies, was made by countries on the basis of their own needs and after careful assessment of the risk/benefit ratio. WHO co-operated with Governments in the selection process and had a model list of essential drugs for assisting countries in making their own selection. Drug evaluation was, of course, a function of national authorities, as recently reaffirmed by the States members of WHO.

3. In 1981, an action programme on essential drugs and vaccines had been set up in order to ensure a regular supply of safe and effective drugs of acceptable quality at the lowest possible cost. Since 1981, emphasis had been laid on, for example, the formulation and implementation of national drug policies and legislation, manpower development and a more rational use of drugs. Since the inception of the action programme, more than 70 countries had developed lists of essential drugs for the public sector based on the WHO model, and more than 30 country studies had been undertaken at the request of member States on drug supplies, policies and management. Another example of recent progress was the designation of national focal points for the collection and utilization of information on drug efficacy and safety.

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4. Mr. TAYLOR (Liberia) said that since the 1974 Conference held at Bucharest, world population had increased by approximately one fifth. The international community had gathered once again in Mexico City in August 1984 to consider the current and projected population situation. The massive increase expected during the second half of the twentieth century had made population one of the most crucial problems of the day. What made the situation even more critical was the fact that the population problem was most severe in the poorest countries and that, by the year 2000, four out of every five inhabitants would be living in the least developed countries. Population issues were therefore a fundamental element in development planning.

5. His delegation shared the concerns expressed in the Mexico City Declaration concerning population growth, high mortality and morbidity and migration problems. Research findings showed that among the prerequisites of a decline in high fertility levels were overall socio-economic development, a low level of infant and child mortality and the full participation of women in the development process. Improving the living conditions in developing countries and long-term goals in world population trends were mutually reinforcing.

6. The total fertility rate of Liberia, estimated at 6.7 per thousand, was high and slightly above that of Africa as a whole. The Government had therefore made provisions in its formal and informal education programmes to inform the people of the consequences of that rate. Reducing its rate of mortality and morbidity was one of Liberia's priority goals.

7. Another demographic trend affecting the developing countries, in particular, was the massive migration to urban areas. It was estimated that, by the end of the century, 48 per cent of the world's population would live in cities. Integrated urban and rural development strategies should therefore be an essential part of population policies. Accordingly, in formulating its second four-year national socio-economic development plan, his Government had provided for the expansion of rural development projects to discourage migration to the cities.

8. Liberia's population density, on the other hand, was low. Its problems therefore were those of growth rate, uneven distribution, fertility control, health and education. A well-educated, healthy population was the most effective weapon against underdevelopment, and population policy must be directed first and foremost at combating such obstacles as poor health, malnutrition and illiteracy.

9. In his country, since the early 1980s, the economic growth rate had fallen far behind that of population, which had led to a decline in the level of living. His Government had therefore made economic recovery the corner-stone of its development policy and was conducting a national population and housing census, the results of which would provide planners and researchers with useful information.

10. His delegation expressed satisfaction at the achievements of the Mexico City Conference and reaffirmed its commitment to its Declaration.

11. Mr. QUINLAN (Australia), said that the fact that a broad consensus had been reached at the 1984 Conference on so many basic questions concerning ways of strengthening the Plan of Action and recommitting the international community to its implementation was a reflection of the fundamental importance of the population issue. His country's delegation to the Conference had sponsored a number of amendments to the draft recommendations focusing, in particular, on the role and status of women, the basic human rights of individuals, indigenous minorities and refugees, and the role of non-governmental organizations.

12. One recommendation of special interest to the Committee was recommendation 83. A number of ideas had begun to emerge as to how the Secretary-General might implement it. Clearly, all aspects of United Nations involvement in population matters were relevant and the views of Governments were also important: the Secretary-General was best placed to examine the question of strengthening UNFPA and his hands should not be tied. His delegation also looked forward to a wider examination of the Conference's recommendations as a whole by member Governments, through the relevant organs of the United Nations.

13. Mr. AL TURKI (Kuwait) said that the report of the Secretary-General (A/39/326) had drawn attention to Israel's illegal exploitation of the natural and human resources in the occupied territories in violation of international law and conventions, in particular Convention IV of The Hague of 1907 and the 1949 Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. That exploitation was part of the Israeli policy to upset the demographic and ecological balance of those territories with a view to their annexation. Kuwait attached great importance to the principle of sovereignty over natural resources and called for immediate steps to end the violations of The Hague and Geneva Conventions and for the implementation of General Assembly resolution 38/144.

14. The international community should devote more attention to finding lasting solutions to population problems. His country had done its part by participating in international and regional meetings, including the Mexico City Conference. Its policy was designed to respond to the needs of individuals, families and society and to raise the level of living of the population as a whole. It also sought to upgrade the role of women and health and education programmes. One population problem of special concern was the situation of foreign migrant workers: the labour-exporting countries should be called upon to settle that problem through bilateral or international conventions with countries, like his own, which were hosts to foreign workers.

15. Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) expressed his concern at the unsuccessful outcome of the Economic and Social Council's deliberations on matters of such importance to the developing countries as the review and appraisal of the implementation of the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade, the declaration on the critical economic situation in Africa and negotiations on the code of conduct on transnational corporations. However, the Mexico City Conference had been recognized by the international community as a major success. It had adopted by consensus an updated global population strategy and had garnered strong and enthusiastic support for its Declaration which would provide useful

(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

policy guidelines for all organizations and individuals involved in population activities throughout the world. Its wide-ranging recommendations had identified areas where further action was needed to achieve the goals of the World Population Plan of Action. His country strongly believed, as reaffirmed by the Conference, that the principal aim of social, economic and human development, of which population goals and policies were integral parts, was to improve the level of living and quality of life of the people.

16. Since the success of the Conference would be measured by the extent and effectiveness of implementation of its recommendations, the international community should take all possible steps to implement both those recommendations and national population policies and programmes. His delegation attached particular importance to the recommendations relating to the role of the United Nations system and the strengthening of UNFPA. A group of experts should be established by the Secretary-General to examine the questions involved and put forward clear recommendations.

17. His delegation also attached great importance to the activities of the regional commissions and to the unanimous outcome of the fortieth session of ESCAP, held in Tokyo in April 1984, which had adopted the ESCAP/Tokyo Plan of Action on Technology for Development and a resolution on the launching of the Transport and Communications Decade for Asia and the Pacific, 1984-1985. It had been unanimously agreed at Tokyo that those initiatives could be extremely useful as "prime movers" for intensifying related activities at the regional and international levels. The ESCAP region, which contained more than half of the world's population, many of whom were poor and undernourished, was seriously handicapped by its inadequate infrastructure.

18. He hoped that the General Assembly's deliberations on the critical economic situation in Africa would enable the international community to alleviate the difficulties faced by the African countries and to set them on a course of sustained development. His delegation emphasized the need for the international community's continued support for further implementation of the Transport and Communications Decade in Africa.

19. The international community should also render assistance and support to the peoples engaged in liberation movements. In particular, assistance to the Palestinian people should continue at a higher level and be extended with the co-operation of the PLO and with the consent of the concerned Arab host Governments. Bangladesh was deeply concerned at the continuing exploitation of natural resources in the occupied Arab territories, and regretted the Israeli authorities' refusal to permit international experts to visit those territories.

20. As a developing country, Bangladesh attached importance to the early conclusion of negotiations on the formulation of the code of conduct on transnational corporations. The fact that the negotiations required years of concentrated effort should not be an excuse for prolonging them indefinitely. For the code to be an effective instrument for promoting development co-operation, a

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(Mr. Chowdhury, Bangladesh)

constructive balance and a forward-looking approach must be maintained in the negotiations. The developing countries had repeatedly displayed that approach, but it unfortunately remained to be reciprocated.

21. The progress so far achieved on the draft guidelines for consumer protection had been encouraging, and the General Assembly should make a serious effort to finalize them at its current session.

22. Bangladesh attached importance to the success of the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development, held in Rome in June and July 1984, and strongly recommended the early implementation of its recommendations.

23. The views of certain delegations on the work of the Committee for Development Planning (CDP) could compromise and seriously limit the mandate of that Committee which, as an expert body, was supposed to function in an independent capacity and establish its own programme of work, and he therefore hoped that the General Assembly would safeguard its mandate.

24. Mr. LE SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that his Government had been increasingly concerned with product standards and fair practices, and had enacted consumer protection legislation. In that connection, further efforts should be made to finalize the draft guidelines for consumer protection (A/C.2/39/L.2), taking into account the views of Member States.

25. The ultimate aim of the International Conference on Population had been to review and appraise the implementation of the World Population Plan of Action during the past 10 years. While the validity of the basic principles and objectives of the Plan of Action, adopted at Bucharest in 1974, remained unchanged, new trends kept emerging which required reviews and reassessments of programmes and strategies within the framework of national policies and international efforts. The United Nations system could and should complement national efforts to achieve national objectives.

26. The report of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) on reporting to the Economic and Social Council (A/29/281 and Add.1) focused on the "crisis" in the United Nations in the economic and social fields. While the Organization continued to be a forum for discussion, it had almost ceased to be an effective forum for negotiating on the most important world problems. JIU had brought to the attention of the Council the problems and implications of the current method of functioning in the Council and had made recommendations for improving the Council's effectiveness in particular, and that of the United Nations system in general. The issues in the JIU report should be examined carefully with a view to identifying possible areas of agreement on changes or reforms in the working of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

27. Economic growth and a significant improvement in the social indicators of many Asian and Pacific countries should not create the illusion that development problems had been solved or that poverty had been eliminated in that region, which

(Mr. de Silva, Sri Lanka)

accounted for more than half of the world's population. The people of Sri Lanka had demonstrated a willingness to shoulder burdens imposed by protectionist policies, trade barriers, denial of fair prices for primary commodities (which accounted for a substantial share of the export earnings of many developing countries) and other impediments to development. In an interdependent world such external inequities could wipe out the benefits of domestic efforts.

28. Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) pointed out that much of the report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/39/265 and Add.1) merely repeated what had been said in previous reports. The fact that an organization was mentioned did not mean that it provided assistance to the Palestinian people. A case in point was the World Bank. Because of pressure from the United States the Bank continued to deny the PLO observer status, although it had accorded such status to a group of Arab bank employees situated in London. He hoped that future reports would contain purely factual information on operational assistance.

29. The meeting called for in General Assembly resolution 38/145 to develop a co-ordinated programme of economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people had been rather hurriedly organized and therefore disappointing. The PLO intended to request that a further meeting be organized, and he hoped that it would be better prepared. Assistance could never make up for the loss of freedom or of a homeland. The best way of assisting the Palestinian people was to enable them to exercise their right to self-determination and to return to their land, Palestine.

30. Mr. RIPERT (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation) said that during the deliberations attention had been drawn to recommendation 83 in the report of the International Conference on Population (E/CONF.76/19), which invited the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly on the further strengthening of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities. On behalf of the Secretary-General, he confirmed that, in preparing the report, all the suggestions made in the debate would be carefully taken into account.

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

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

31. Mr. FARAH (Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Questions and Co-ordinator for Special Economic Assistance Programmes) said that a wide range of adverse economic and climatic events and conditions had jeopardized the development

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(Mr. Farah)

goals of many developing countries, including the countries covered in the Special Economic Assistance Programme. Nine additional countries (Bolivia, Ecuador, Guinea, Kiribati, Madagascar, Peru, Swaziland, Tuvalu and Vanuatu) had been added to the Programme over the past year, bringing the total up to 25, and reports on 20 of them were before the Committee. The report on Guinea was under preparation.

32. Of the 18 African countries in the Programme, 14 had been classified by the United Nations as least developed. The effects of the prolonged and intense drought had compounded their situation.

33. Many of the countries in the Programme were taking action to bring their policies into internal and external balance. Heavy servicing burdens had oblied a number of them to request rescheduling of their external debts. Austerity measures had been courageously pursued and the international community should support the determined efforts being made by the Governments and peoples of the countries concerned by increasing the flow of financial and other assistance. A number of countries in the Programme had been actively mobilizing additional external resources through the organization of donor conferences and round tables to which the international community should lend its full support.

34. Following an appeal from the Head of State of Guinea and in response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1984/59, the Secretary-General had arranged for a mission, headed by the Assistant Administrator of UNDP, to visit Guinea in August 1984. The mission had reported that approximately half of Guinea, which had been classified as a low-income, food-deficit country, had been affected by drought and the overall situation had been further complicated by a massive and spontaneous return of Guinean refugees following the Government's liberalization measures, and that, although the Government had already undertaken some valiant remedial efforts, the support of the international community was essential.

35. In consultation with the Government, the mission had proposed a two-pronged approach. First, it called for a 12-month emergency programme of humanitarian assistance to help overcome some shortages of food, agricultural inputs and veterinary, medical and school supplies. UNDP was working with the Government and relevant United Nations agencies on a list of specific requirements under the emergency programme. The list should be finalized by the end of November and could serve as a basis for an appeal by the Secretary-General. It was hoped that the emergency programme would be financed by grants and donations. In addition, a request for emergency assistance with regard to Guinean refugees was being reviewed by the High Commissioner although a substantial amount had apparently already been made available.

36. Secondly, the mission had reported that the Government required assistance for the formulation and launching of an interim rehabilitation programme for 1985-1987, including technical assistance to ministries and for the preparation of a conference of principal economic partners.

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(Mr. Farah)

37. A second mission had visited Guinea in October to help the Government programme its external assistance requirements for preparing the interim rehabilitation programme and its key technical assistance needs. It had reported that UNDP would provide Guinea with \$312,000 for those purposes.
38. The countries themselves were making an all-out effort to fulfil their development aspirations, but timely and adequate external assistance was essential if they were to succeed. On behalf of the Secretary-General he appealed to bilateral and multilateral donors to respond with generous support.
39. Mr. DAWIT WOLDE-GIORGIS (Ethiopia) pointed out that, owing to the drought which had afflicted it for the past 10 years and the paucity of development assistance it had received - Ethiopia had received the least assistance measured in per capita terms of any country in the world - his country had been unable to break out of the vicious cycle of under-development. In 1984, the drought situation had become even more critical for almost the entire country was affected. The Government had decided at a very early stage to assign the highest priority to the situation and had allocated money for the purchase of grain on the domestic and international markets and the handling and transport of incoming aid shipments. A special campaign was being launched to combat the drought and its effects.
40. The number of people requiring assistance had risen to 6.4 million; of those 42.7 per cent were under 14. A total of 1.2 metric tons of food - including 1.1 million tons of grain - was required for the 1984/1985 season. In addition, \$50 million was needed to replace the oxen used for ploughing and to purchase seed for the next harvest season. The Government had announced its requirements for surface and air transport and other purposes.
41. It was encouraging to see that his country's present appeal was attracting more urgent attention than the one it had made earlier in the year. The response of the ordinary public was particularly touching. He pledged his Government's full co-operation in ensuring that international assistance reached the affected people most expeditiously.
42. In light of past experience, his Government had concluded that drought would be a recurrent phenomenon and it would have to bear that in mind in planning its development. He therefore urged the international community not just to provide short-term emergency relief but also to contribute to Ethiopia's medium-term and long-term rehabilitation and development efforts so that it could achieve food self-sufficiency.
43. Mr. TOURE (Guinea), after referring to the causes of Guinea's problems, said that the situation had recently been aggravated by the drought and the return of large numbers of refugees following the liberalization measures introduced by the new Government.
44. The economic fact-finding mission sent to Guinea had worked out a two-pronged approach consisting of an emergency humanitarian programme covering such areas as

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(Mr. Toure, Guinea)

food, agricultural inputs and schools supplies and an economic recovery programme covering the period 1985 to 1987. The precise needs for the humanitarian programme were soon to be determined by the World Bank and he appealed to the international community to provide the necessary economic and technical assistance. The Government had asked the World Bank and UNDP to organize a conference in 1985 in order to mobilize the necessary financing. Significant amounts of technical assistance would also be needed for the preparation and implementation of short-term and medium-term projects.

45. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) welcomed the information in the report on assistance provided by the United Nations system (A/39/393); his Government was grateful for the assistance received by Ecuador from the system.

46. The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator had proved invaluable in channelling timely aid to his country. However, although immediate needs had been met, it would take time to repair the damage caused by floods to agriculture, housing and the transport and communications infrastructure. The Government had declared several of the affected provinces to be disaster areas and was giving priority to rehabilitation of its coastal areas. Multilateral assistance efforts should also be focused on those areas.

47. His delegation was prepared to endorse the assistance projects outlined in the reports of the Secretary-General and would also support the disaster co-ordination, prevention and information measures.

48. His Government had carefully considered the proposed draft convention on expediting the delivery of emergency relief contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/39/267/Add.2). He supported the proposed draft convention and believed that it should be further reviewed by a group of governmental experts, as suggested in paragraph 9 of the report.

49. His delegation reserved the right to speak on other aspects of the item.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.