



Economic and Social Council

Provisional

8 September 2011

English

Original: French

Substantive session of 2011

Provisional summary record of the 22nd meeting

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, on Friday, 8 July 2011 at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. Kapambwe (Zambia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Dialogue with the executive secretaries of regional commissions on the theme “Regional cooperation as an accelerator of development: examples from the regions”

1. **The President** recalled that in its recently adopted resolution 65/285 the General Assembly had urged the Economic and Social Council and the regional commissions to consider the recommendations contained in the report of the President of the General Assembly on the review of the implementation of resolution 61/16 on strengthening the Economic and Social Council (A/65/866), including one addressed to the Council’s Bureau asking it to organize a dialogue on regional cooperation with the regional economic commissions during the debate on coordination issues, starting with the substantive session of 2012 (para. 132 (g)(iii)). The Chairman stressed the timeliness of the theme of dialogue and added that the role of regional commissions in promoting economic growth and sustainable development was increasingly recognized in such key documents as the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011-2020 (A/CONF.219/3) or the report of the Secretary-General on Regional Cooperation in the Economic, Social and Related Fields (E/2011/15).

2. **Ms. Bárcena** (Deputy Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC)), speaking in her capacity as Coordinator of the regional commissions, said that the commissions would like to brief the new groups that had been set up at the regional level by the Council’s Member States on ways of enhancing development processes at upcoming global conferences, including the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). They would like to see the priorities identified at the regional level expanded to the international level, and lessons learned and best practices spread from one country to another but also from one region to another.

3. Drawing attention to the above-mentioned report of the Secretary-General, Ms Bárcena said that the presentations would focus on the specific problems outlined therein, including growth that does not always serve the fight against poverty, inequality in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, or the approaching 2015 deadline. It was important to make youth

unemployment a priority, as it was twice the rate for adults in many areas, and had been one cause of the riots in the Middle East and North Africa.

4. **Mr. Sha Zukang** (Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said he was counting on the regional commissions to contribute to the preparatory process of Rio+20, and welcomed their participation in the Secretariat study on the institutional framework for sustainable development. As they were firmly field-based but also in close touch with the global political process, the regional commissions had great unifying power, multidisciplinary analytical capabilities and their own information and awareness resources. In addition, their savvy use of concepts, mechanisms and instruments was particularly instructive at all levels of action. Nationally, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme worked together to support developing countries in their preparations for the Rio+20 Summit, but the regional commissions could in turn ensure that national activities fed into the regional processes planned for the Summit.

5. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)) said that her statement was based on the recent 2011 study of the economic and social situation of Asia and Pacific. The Asia-Pacific region, which was showing the world’s highest growth rates (8.8% in 2010 and 7.3% expected in 2011 for developing countries in the region; 9% for China and 8% for India), was a real source of growth in the global economy with its support for recovery in other regions. Its growth was, however, attended by risks and difficulties.

6. First, rising food and energy prices were liable, in 2011, to affect Singapore, the Philippines, India and Thailand primarily, plunging 42 million more people into poverty in addition to the 19 million already affected in 2010 (the most at risk being Bangladesh, India, the Lao People’s Democratic Republic and Nepal). Regional initiatives such as the emergency rice reserve established by the Association of Southeast Asian Nations plus China, Japan and the Republic of Korea (ASEAN+3) and the food bank created by the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) were important in this context. The second difficulty was the high risk the region is subject to due to the volatility of capital flows. The securities markets of the Republic of Korea, the Philippines and Thailand, for example, had already returned to their pre-crisis

peaks; hence the need to promote measures to control capital flows, as promoted by ESCAP, which were increasingly used. The third challenge for the region related to the rebalancing of growth, which worked by stimulating local and regional demand to mitigate the expected decline in demand in developed countries. A contribution could certainly be made by taking advantage of the vast opportunities for regional economic cooperation.

7. The growth of intraregional trade, facilitated by complementarity within, but also between, subregions, was a welcome development. Many subregional groups set up over the years—in particular ASEAN, SAARC, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multisectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation, the Asia-Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA), and the Pacific Islands Forum—offered a framework for regional economic integration, but these initiatives must be strengthened and extended to create a broader regional framework. Because of the importance of transport to trade, ESCAP was facilitating intergovernmental agreements for the establishment of the Asian Highway Network and Trans-Asian Railway and, soon, of inland terminals linking the two networks, in order to provide the region with a multimodal logistical network. Trade facilitation also involved the national single window, whose proper operation required acceptance by the partner authorities of electronic data and documents from other countries. Finally, beyond the multilateralization of the Chiang Mai Initiative, the Asian Bond Fund and the Asian Bond Markets Initiative, ESCAP was laying the groundwork for a true regional financial architecture that would guarantee financial cooperation, and would in particular bridge infrastructure gaps, which were especially marked between Singapore and Japan on the one hand and Papua New Guinea on the other.

8. **Mr. Janneh** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)) reported on the African continent's encouraging economic results, with an average growth rate of nearly 6% since 2000, and clear resilience in the face of the global economic crisis (growth of 2.4% in 2009, as against 2.2% worldwide). Six of the ten countries with the highest economic growth rate were in Africa. These good results were partly due to regional cooperation activities aimed at reducing conflict and improving governance (African peer review mechanism, the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)). The continent's characteristics—15 landlocked countries, 13 countries

with an area of less than 40,000 square kilometres, 32 countries with per capita income of less than 500 dollars, 39 countries under 15 million people, but also arbitrary boundaries inherited from the colonial era, high transaction and transportation costs and physical infrastructure that was still rudimentary—made regional cooperation imperative. If reduced to a single economic unit, Africa would represent a GDP of 1,543 billion US dollars, close to that of Brazil; its billion-strong population was comparable to China's or India's; and it had over 60 transboundary river basins as well as 90% of the world's reserves of platinum, palladium and rhodium.

9. Through the establishment of institutions for regional integration (Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community), Africa was expanding its development opportunities. In terms of infrastructure, large projects such as the Inga dam, which should meet 60% of the continent's demand for hydroelectric power, were suffering financial difficulties; hence the need for a partnership between governments and private banks. African countries were also expecting great things from the recommendations of the G-20's high-level Group on investment in infrastructure. Trade was being facilitated by a pilot "single window" border post project conducted with ECA support in Zimbabwe, which reduced waiting time for commercial trucks from five days to just one, and protocols for free circulation had been negotiated, particularly within the East African Community and the Economic Community of West African States.

10. In terms of cross-border cooperation, regional power pools had been set up and joint river basin management was being pursued (Niger Basin Authority, etc.). In the field of education, various pan-African initiatives were being conducted, particularly the establishment of a Pan-African University and the Arusha Convention, which aims to encourage mobility of students and teachers on the continent. The private sector was also actively involved, concluding agreements in the fields of communications, aviation or banking. Finally, regional cooperation had led to greater African participation in global economic processes; the African Trade Policy Centre (ATPC) and Climate Policy Centre (ACPC) were models in that regard.

11. **Ms. Bárcena** (Executive Secretary of ECLAC) noted that trade had been the engine of economic recovery in the region through trade with countries of

the Asia/Pacific region, particularly China. For countries that are net importers of commodities, price increases tend to create inflationary pressures, reduce the food consumption of the poorest, and cause unsustainable imbalances in current accounts, while for net exporters of commodities, they result in an increase in capital inflows and drive up the value of the currency.

12. As regards poverty, after the crisis of the 1980s, described as a “lost decade”, and the challenges that marked the 1990s, significant progress had been made since the turn of the millennium, as poverty and extreme poverty had increased less than expected in 2009 and had declined in 2010.

13. Among the challenges faced by the region faces, the Executive Secretary drew attention to the need to revise macroeconomic policies to limit volatility, boost productivity and enhance inclusion; to do so, a balanced budget needed to be achieved in the medium term and financial arrangements made that would be more conducive to national savings and investment. Innovation and productivity must also be combined to ensure sustainable and equitable growth. The main obstacles were the slow progress in reducing poverty and inequality, regressive tax systems, changes in demographic trends, gender inequality, vulnerability to climate change, and the need to move towards a low-carbon economy, improve energy efficiency and make greater use of renewable energy sources.

14. To meet those challenges, international and regional cooperation was crucial. Hence, the international community should increase official development assistance (ODA), distribute it more effectively and efficiently by strengthening institutional capacity, and combine it with innovative financing methods and other cooperation mechanisms, such as technology transfer, to advance sustainable development. At the regional level, cooperation and integration were essential in order to increase exchanges on cross-cutting issues and let the region’s voice be heard in international fora, to improve coordination of development strategies at the regional and national levels, and to strengthen South-South cooperation and subregional integration programmes.

15. More investment was needed, too, in education and human capital in the region, building on regional and interregional partnerships to improve the quality of education, fight against traditional and emerging inequalities, and improve the management of social

spending. The Executive Secretary cited various examples of regional cooperation and integration in the areas of trade, energy and infrastructure, including the Union of South American Nations, Mercosur and other regional and international entities.

16. The concept of an “average-income” region masked significant inequalities in poverty and income distribution, institutional development, national savings, access to international capital markets, and vulnerability. The applicability of that criterion for the allocation of ODA resources therefore needed to be rethought.

17. **Mr. Kubiš** (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)), emphasizing the exceptional level of cooperation and integration in Europe, considered it reasonable to suppose that the European Union would one day encompass all the former centrally planned economies of Southeastern Europe. That integration had not been without difficulties, as could be seen from the crisis in the monetary union and the euro. The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) had fewer members than before but was still very dynamic, especially in terms of giving nations in transition the benefit of its support and expertise. The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) too was increasingly concerned with cooperation and reintegration. It was true that reactions reflecting national self-interest were not unknown either in the Union or the CIS, which would have to try to establish institutional arrangements combining cooperation and autonomy.

18. Among the many reasons for the extent of cooperation in Europe, the Executive Secretary cited historical reasons, the level of economic development, the fact that Europe was made up of relatively small countries with an interest in joining forces, and the multiplier effect of success.

19. For the former centrally planned economies of Central and Eastern Europe, the prospect of accession to the European Union had created a dynamic of political and economic reforms that had resulted in so much economic growth that an economic convergence had been noted. The creation in 2008 of the Regional Cooperation Council, of which UNECE was a founding member, had further strengthened cooperation.

20. UNECE’s normative work had played an important role in promoting economic integration and Pan-European and transatlantic cooperation by establishing a

coherent regional economic space. It had also contributed to integration within the European Union.

21. With regard to cooperative efforts across the CIS, although the trend was more toward the strengthening of national sovereignty and political consultation rather than integration, various recent events reflected enhanced cooperation and integration. Thus, the crisis response fund established in 2009 with a \$10-billion endowment had been used to help Belarus to overcome the crisis, while a customs union agreement had been signed between Belarus, Kazakhstan and Russia. In April 2011, UNECE and the secretariat of the new Customs Union had signed a memorandum of understanding to promote economic cooperation and integration in Europe, strengthen regional and international cooperation on regulatory matters, and facilitate trade, in particular through the single window principle.

22. In the landlocked States of Central Asia the need to strengthen economic cooperation to promote growth was particularly pressing. UNECE had acquired experience and knowledge that would be useful in meeting the needs of those countries, which were among UNECE's poorest member States. The United Nations Special Programme for Central Asia (SPECA), established in 1998 and supported jointly by UNECE and ESCAP, offered a neutral forum for the discussion, under United Nations auspices, of policy issues related to regional cooperation.

23. **Ms. Khalaf** (Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA)) said that many pan-Arab institutions had been established in almost all areas. Over 80% of Arab ODA went to Arab countries. Initially focused on infrastructure, it now extended to agriculture, social development, debt relief, emergency assistance and capacity building. Intra-Arab tourism generated a large share of tourism income in some countries such as Jordan (40%), Syria (90%) and Lebanon (43%).

24. The Greater Arab Free Trade Area and other regional trade agreements had had relatively little effect on intraregional trade. As for the Gulf Cooperation Council, increased integration seemed to reflect the progress made towards the harmonization of standards in some areas, particularly in commodity and factor markets. Formal integration and cooperation between governments still lagged behind the informal integration

seen between their peoples, particularly with regard to civil society, trade unions and cultural activities.

25. The Arab world was rapidly changing, and the events that had shaken the region, which had come to be known as the "Arab Spring", provided opportunities for strengthening regional cooperation. Most of the uprisings had been sparked off by three basic demands, namely, more freedom, respect for dignity, and greater social justice. Faced with uncertainty about the nature of the regimes that would arise from those upheavals, the United Nations must consider the role it could play and how to foster democratic transitions, to take advantage of existing partnerships and establish new ones.

26. The countries where those events had occurred could be divided into four categories. The first was countries like Tunisia and Egypt, where an uprising had led to the overthrow of an authoritarian regime, and where efforts were underway to build a democratic culture and democratic institutions. The second category comprised countries where leaders sought to remain in power and met the demands of the people with repression and violence, causing displacement and an influx of refugees into neighbouring countries, affecting the entire region. The third category comprised countries such like Morocco, where changes were being negotiated and the government was beginning to implement genuine reforms that would allow progress towards democracy, or was committed to doing so. A fourth category consisted of countries where the authorities had responded to the demand for greater freedom by making social transfers in the form of grants, wage increases and job creation. The fact that the countries fell into those different categories would have an impact on regional cooperation as they would, in the short term at least, take different roads and encounter different difficulties. Countries in the first category were facing significant challenges, including the establishment of a new social contract, the establishment of democratic institutions and the resolution of the problem of counter-revolutionary forces. States experiencing violent transitions, meanwhile, were facing humanitarian crises and must rebuild their infrastructure and build new institutions, often from scratch.

27. ESCWA expects that in the long term regional cooperation would increase at all levels. Regional integration offered great promise for countries in the region, particularly because of their complementarities in terms of energy, water resources and manpower. They also shared a common cultural heritage and, with similar

sociopolitical histories, had common problems to which the solutions could be the same or similar. Regional cooperation could help address a number of shortcomings that still affected many Arab states, including the inefficiency of public institutions, poor social policies, especially in social welfare, low-quality education and an inadequate regulatory framework, all of which impeded the flow of capital and investment.

28. Faced with those problems, ESCWA deemed it appropriate to help the countries involved to establish greater transparency in economic matters, to develop integrated social programmes, and to lay the foundation for an open civil society. To support the region's countries in their transition, ESCWA was seeking in particular to help create conditions more conducive to business by addressing inadequate infrastructure, for example by helping countries to develop integrated transport systems and electrical grids. It was also helping member countries to achieve internationally agreed development goals and working to promote social development and the establishment of knowledge-sharing networks. With regard to the sustainable management of natural resources, it was developing a legal framework for shared water resources—an extremely important concern given that 80% of the region's resources are shared between two countries or more. With respect to enhanced legislative institutions, it was cooperating with the parliaments of Arab countries and supporting capacity building efforts, particularly to improve legislation on women and to develop youth programmes. Finally, ESCWA was helping member countries to prepare for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to be held in 2012. Finally, in the IT field, it was working to harmonize cyberlegislation.

29. **Mr. Rosenthal** (Guatemala) said he welcomed the role played by regional economic commissions, which promoted inclusion of global issues at the regional level while relaying the concerns expressed in the regions to United Nations international bodies. Guatemala was extremely appreciative of ECLAC's work and recalled that the latter had played a historic role in creating the Central American Common Market, which now accounted for a third of foreign trade in the region. Guatemala also welcomed the work done during the past year on the equality issue and the means of ensuring not just development but equitable development, which was not always in evidence in Latin America.

30. Mr. Rosenthal noted that the Executive Secretary of ECLAC had said that the changes in the Latin American economy were relatively favourable. Now, while that was true if one considered averages, things were otherwise if one looked more closely at the situation of the two subregions most economically dependent on North America, namely Central America and the Caribbean, which was why those areas were placing great hopes in the development of cooperation with the rest of Latin America.

31. One of the most important issues facing humanity today was climate change, whose effects could wipe entire Latin American regions off the map. ECLAC also played an important role in the area of climate change, as it was helping countries in the region to work together in preparation for the Rio+20 Conference.

32. Finally, Guatemala believed interregional cooperation within the United Nations was inadequate. The various regions had much to contribute to each other, and it would be good for the regional commissions to do more to promote cooperation between them.

33. **Mr. Nahid** (Bangladesh) commended the role played by ESCAP in the Asia-Pacific region and its support for Bangladesh in its efforts to deal with multiple crises, including the global economic crisis, the food crisis and the energy crisis. Hopefully, ESCAP would continue to work closely with all countries in the region. Bangladesh had a number of expectations in that regard. On the one hand, it expected ESCAP to follow up the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the end of the high-level debate (E/2011/L.28) and work to implement it. On the other hand, it would like ESCAP to play a leading role in the follow-up and implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action and to work closely, for that purpose, with national governments and subregional bodies such as SAARC and ASEAN. Finally, he felt that ESCAP should play a catalytic role in the preparations for the Rio+20 Conference.

34. **Mr. Seck** (Senegal), referring to the many partnerships in Africa and the various initiatives proposed—in particular the China-Africa forum, India-Africa forum, Africa-EU summit, Africa-South America summit, and the World Bank's Partnerships for Health initiative—asked whether ECA had conducted an assessment of the impact of those multiple projects on subregional integration. He feared that those initiatives were too numerous and asked whether ECA,

inter-African financial institutions and NEPAD were coordinating their actions to take advantage of the opportunities they offered in terms of strengthening inter-African cooperation.

35. **Mr. Birichevskiy** (Russian Federation) said that Russia set great store by the activities of the regional commissions, which catalysed the regional integration process and enabled the implementation of agreements around the world. Their endeavours were essential in ensuring not only prosperity but also peace, security and political stability. The Russian Federation welcomed the strong links between UNECE, ESCAP and the main integration structures in the post-Soviet space: the customs union between Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan, the Eurasian Community and the Eurasian Economic Community (EurAsEC)—as well as cooperation programmes set up by UNECE and ESCAP to develop infrastructure.

36. Enhancing intergovernmental relations in the field of energy was also a prime concern of the Russian Federation, which believed it was particularly important to enhance cooperation in order to ensure energy security in the Asia-Pacific region and pursue the dialogue on energy security in the UNECE region.

37. The Russian Federation would spare no effort to bolster the activities of the regional economic commissions and would continue to support them financially. In that connection, Russia emphasized the importance, given the commissions' mandates and the ambitious targets they have been set, of providing them with adequate human and financial resources. It would be important, in establishing the 2012-2013 budget, to objectively assess the effectiveness of the commissions' work and to consider the importance of ensuring sustained regional development.

38. **Mr. Oyarce** (Chile) said that the regional commissions could strengthen not only regions' economic architecture but also their socioeconomic architecture, thereby contributing to strengthening democracy and political institutions. In addition, they promoted consideration of regional peculiarities and concerns at the international level.

39. Regional cooperation was essential in enhancing the United Nations' development activities. Though Chile was aware of the United Nations' current budgetary constraints, it believed it was important to avoid an excessive weakening of those activities, which were essential to ensure peace, security and stability.

Regarding Latin America specifically, ECLAC had helped reinvigorate the dynamic of regional integration that was at work there. Mr. Oyarce would, accordingly, like some clarification of ECLAC's increasing cooperation with the inter-American system, in particular as regards environmental matters.

40. Chile deemed it appropriate, in future, to pay particular attention to two issues, namely how to better coordinate the various regional commissions and ways of enhancing cooperation in Latin America, including within the inter-American system, while avoiding duplication of effort.

41. **Mr. Wannamethee** (Thailand) said it was not easy for ESCAP to meet all expectations in the Asia-Pacific region, which was not homogeneous in terms of development and was facing many challenges—the economic crisis, food insecurity, the energy crisis, health problems, the effects of climate change and the consequences of natural disasters, to name only a few. ESCAP was nevertheless working tirelessly to enhance collaboration between countries in the region and to implement many commendable initiatives to make that collaboration more dynamic and better able to meet Member States' needs. Mr. Wannamethee noted in that regard that the sixty-seventh session of ESCAP, held recently, had been on social welfare and had laid the groundwork for the actions needed in that area.

42. Thailand had always put people at the centre of its economic development policies. It would continue to strengthen its partnership with ESCAP and the international community and to promote the sharing of knowledge and experience in the fields of education, health, agriculture and fisheries so as to improve the well-being of people in the region.

43. **Ms. Nemroff** (United States of America) said she had noted with great interest the comments of the Executive Secretary of ESCWA on events in western Asia, and the challenge posed to ESCWA by providing support to countries where, in many cases, institutions would have to be built from scratch. She believed the same could be said of ECA, as the creation of a new African state, Southern Sudan, was also creating new challenges and new opportunities. In that connection, Ms. Nemroff would like some details from the Executive Secretaries of ESCWA and ECA on the strategic planning they were doing to cope with those new challenges.

44. **Ms. Kage** (Germany) noted that the General Assembly had last week discussed the issue of global governance and had concluded that in a multipolar world, regional cooperation had an important role to play. She would like to know the thoughts of the regional commissions' executive secretaries as to the role that would be played by regional organizations in global governance over the next ten years.

45. **Ms. Ndong-Jatta** (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) sought clarification from the ECA Executive Secretary: on the reasons why African countries were unable to create a monetary union, though the idea was so enticing; on the value of cross-sectoral strategies, which ECA was particularly well placed to promote—at the level of ministers of education, health, or finance for example—as a way of organizing regional cooperation in Africa; and on the initiatives that could be taken to reflect the views of African youth on topics such as social justice and integration of youth into society.

46. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Secretary of ESCAP), responding to questions raised during the debate, said that ESCAP had held consultations at the regional level to prepare for the fourth United Nations Conference on LDCs; the outcome of these consultations was reflected in the final Conference document, and ESCAP meant to play an active role in Conference follow-up activities. The agreed target of halving the number of LDCs over the next ten years would probably be achieved in Asia.

47. ESCAP would be playing a catalytic role in the run-up to the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), organizing a preparatory meeting in Seoul which would be open to representatives of civil society and governments. Ms Heyzer thanked Thailand for its role at the regional level, especially during its presidency of the ASEAN—Thailand had worked closely with ESCAP to promote the connectivity project, which was now on track—and for its support for the trust fund for tsunami victims, which should be converted into a multi-risk fund for natural disasters and disaster preparedness. The issue of resilience lay at the heart of ESCAP's concerns; the Commission's last annual meeting (19–25 May 2011) had had as its theme the development of basic social protection for the vulnerable to shield them from the consequences of crises.

48. Ms. Heyzer thanked the Russian Federation for its valuable contribution to ESCAP activities in the context

of road safety and energy security activities, among others. Responding to the Guatemalan delegation's question with respect to interregional cooperation, she said that ECLAC and ESCAP had begun discussions to explore the possibility of closer cooperation between the countries situated on either side of the Pacific Rim. The idea had been approved by the ASEAN foreign ministers and discussions were to continue at a future meeting in Argentina. The question of the role of regional organizations in global governance was a fundamental one for ESCAP, owing to the shift of economic power to Asia; many Asian countries were asking to be better represented, not only in the G-20 but also in IMF bodies. ESCAP too was seeking greater involvement of countries outside the G-20 in the latter's deliberations, to give them more say in its decisions.

49. **Ms. Khalaf** (Executive Secretary of ESCWA), responding to the delegation of the United States, said there were two categories of countries. The first category comprised countries with no real democratic culture and whose institutions were weak or almost nonexistent. The textbook case was Libya, virtually all of whose state apparatus was based on people's committees, whose central bank and finance ministry were weak, and whose army was a coalition of tribes. Libya was not a member of ESCWA. In dealing with the Libyan situation, the United Nations system was at present focusing on humanitarian assistance, issues related to political reconciliation, and violations of human rights. The second category comprised countries like Tunisia and Egypt, whose institutions—Central Bank, Ministry of Finance, army—were functional, and where good regulatory bodies also operated to some extent, but which lacked democratic institutions. ESCWA's priority in those countries was to help establish a democratic culture. In particular, it was working with young people in the area of capacity building, striving to help them take part in the transition period. ESCWA was also working with other regional commissions to take advantage of their members' experience of issues such as democratic transition, national reconciliation, the subordination of military to civil power in a democracy, the role of religion in emerging States, etc. That collaboration would for example take the form of contributions by experts and workshops. It should be noted that the transition to democracy was a very delicate process that would take time, four or five years at least.

50. Economically, the countries in question faced serious difficulties in the short term. In the longer term, it was generally agreed that transparency and participation could add at least half a percentage point of annual growth to the historical forecasts. But there too the people had many questions, including the relevance of the liberal economic model, which was associated with the old regimes' corruption and the economic difficulties met with while they had been in power; the question was whether the problem was intrinsic to the model itself or arose from the way it had been implemented.

51. **Mr. Janneh** (Executive Secretary of ECA) said in response to a question from the Senegalese delegation that African cooperation initiatives by countries such as China, the United States and India, though they had been poorly coordinated at first, were now running more smoothly, in particular thanks to the African Union's good offices. ECA had just completed a project with India that focused on such things as education, agriculture and infrastructure. Responding to the representative of the United States, Mr. Janneh said that ECA had already initiated discussions with the future Government of Southern Sudan, which would on 9 July 2011 become the fifty-fourth African State, on topics such as institution building and airspace management for civil aviation. ECA's role would be to provide support to the country's authorities or to tell them where to find such support if ECA could not help.

52. ECA had taken note of African countries' increasing willingness to be associated with global processes, in particular in order to contribute to the rationalization of the international financial architecture and to participate in institutions such as the G-20, where their voice was now being heeded thanks to the increasing integration of the African continent. Africa was also represented at the climate change negotiations through a group of 10 heads of state with whom ECA was working to establish Africa's position on various issues related to climate change.

53. Mr. Janneh said, in response to the UNESCO representative, that the complex issue of a monetary union was so far being dealt with at the subregional level, where countries were discussing issues of convergence. Meanwhile, institutions were being discussed at the continental level with a view to facilitating monetary cooperation; thus, an African central bank with its headquarters in Nigeria was being mooted. In the area of intersectoral cooperation,

meetings were being held, for example, between finance and health ministers to discuss health sector funding as part of the annual ECA ministerial meeting; further meetings were planned. A meeting of ministers of the environment and the economy on the themes of a green economy and green growth was also to be organized in the context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20). ECA regularly organized youth initiatives and consulted with young people in order to understand their expectations and involve them in its strategies. A study was also underway at the five regional commissions on how to take into account the views of youth in socioeconomic development.

54. **Mr. Kubiš** (UNECE Executive Secretary), speaking to the issue of how the development of certain types of activities in various regions could be accelerated to be useful in certain global processes, said certain UNECE activities were already part of that process. For example, the United Nations Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (the Aarhus Convention) was a direct result of the implementation of the tenth principle of the Rio Declaration. That convention was an inspiration to many other regions, and the Conference of Parties to the Aarhus Convention had decided to open participation to non-UNECE countries. Similarly, the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention) was the only legally valid international instrument on that issue. Some non-UNECE countries were already using certain approaches and principles of the Convention in their bilateral cooperation on the management of transboundary watercourses and international lakes.

55. Regarding interregional cooperation matters, the five regional commissions had adopted a common strategy on trade facilitation and were working on a joint capacity building project under the United Nations Development Account, covering the next ten years, which sought to give developing countries and countries in transition greater access to global supply chains by reducing trade barriers. A joint conference of the regional commissions was scheduled for December 2011 on the theme of transformation of world trade and global supply chains over the next ten years. In addition, interministerial cooperation at the regional commission level was already a reality. At UNECE, a process was

underway on environment and health in Europe; the participants had decided to institute a governing body for it, which had recently met for the first time at the ministerial level.

56. **Ms. Bárcena** (Executive Secretary of ECLAC) said the regional commissions had made many contributions to global deliberations on the vital issues of the day. A common reflection was needed on how to define strategies for the transition to a new model to replace the current one, which concentrated wealth and promoted excessive consumption and exploitation of natural resources. The regional commissions' activities on energy, water and soil issues provided useful elements for the management of very complex processes at the global level, particularly in the area of climate change, and made it possible for solutions found to certain problems at the national level to be passed on.

57. Ms Bárcena endorsed the idea of guaranteed minimum rights suggested by Chile; the United Nations, as a rights-based organization, had a responsibility to guarantee all inhabitants of the planet the exercise of fundamental rights in areas such as health, education and nutrition. In terms of how regional cooperation could contribute to the global governance model, the model that ECLAC promoted to its various regional partners, including the Southern Common Market (Mercosur), the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Central American Integration System, was a truly multilateral and much fairer cooperation that would enable them to better cope with the problems of the moment, as was already being done successfully, in Europe in particular.

58. ECLAC regularly cooperated on concrete inter-American development projects, particularly infrastructure projects, in an attempt to address regional problems like the fact that 40 million people in Latin America lacked access to electricity. In Central America, which had a serious human security problem because of its vulnerability to climatic hazards, drug trafficking and violence, ECLAC had been working with El Salvador and the United States, which had announced a US\$400 million fund for the sub-region. She also defended the idea of a wealth tax such as did not exist in many countries of the subregion, since those taxpayers able to pay such a tax also stood to benefit by greater security, which would spur economic activity.

The meeting rose at 5:55 p.m.