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SECOND COMMITTEE  
48th meeting  
held on  
Wednesday, 21 November 1984  
at 10.30 a.m.  
New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 48th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. HARLAND (New Zealand)

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27 November 1984

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

AGENDA ITEM 83: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

(b) SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL  
(continued) (A/C.2/39/L.72)

1. Mr. HUERTA-FLORES (Mexico) announced that Brazil, Lesotho and Nepal wished to co-sponsor draft resolution A/C.2/39/L.72. Introducing the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors, he said that its purpose was to urge all Governments and organizations of the United Nations system to continue to contribute to the reconstruction and development of Nicaragua. Such special treatment would be necessary until the country's economic situation returned to normal. It was to be hoped that, as in previous years, the draft resolution on that question would be adopted by consensus.

AGENDA ITEM 81: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (A/39/3 (Part II), A/39/118, 131 and Corr.1, 133, 236, 590 and Corr.1)

(a) OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/39/417)

(b) UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/39/80 and Add.1, A/39/308; A/1984/20)

(c) UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (E/1984/20)

(d) UNITED NATIONS FUND FOR POPULATION ACTIVITIES (A/39/537; A/1984/20)

(e) UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS PROGRAMME (E/1984/20)

(f) UNITED NATIONS SPECIAL FUND FOR LAND-LOCKED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

(g) UNITED NATIONS CHILDREN'S FUND (A/39/292; E/1984/19)

(h) WORLD FOOD PROGRAMME

(i) TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (DP/1984/42 and Add.1-3; E/1984/20)

(j) LIQUIDATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS EMERGENCY OPERATION TRUST FUND AND ALLOCATION OF THE REMAINING BALANCE: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/39/284 and Add.1)

2. Mr. RIPERT (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation), introducing his annual report on operational activities of the United Nations system (A/39/417, annex) said that developments over the past year had shown that the organizations of the system had been adapting their programmes to meet the new requirements of the developing countries. There was nevertheless a

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(Mr. Ripert)

need to modify some existing programmes and to consider social issues more explicitly in the formulation of appropriate adjustment and economic recovery programmes. The critical economic situation in many developing countries also called for flexibility in aid programmes, the adaptation of aid procedures to national realities in order to meet urgent needs and greater delegation of authority to local representatives.

3. Recent resource constraints had adversely affected the system's capacity to assist developing countries. Contributions to all operational activities had amounted to \$2.5 billion in 1983, a decline in nominal dollar terms from the 1982 level. However, in 1983 and again in 1984, a number of countries, in particular developing countries, had increased their contributions in national currencies. Estimates of the "loss" in contributions arising from the appreciation of the United States dollar against other currencies varied among organizations but was significant. It was encouraging that a number of Member States had announced larger national currency contributions at the recent 1984 Pledging Conference, but the overall situation gave no ground for complacency.

4. The critical situation confronting the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Development Association (IDA) were a matter of concern to the United Nations. Unless negotiations for its second replenishment were completed soon, the future of IFAD would be in jeopardy. In the case of IDA, further efforts were still required in order to reach an agreement on additional resources which would enable it to maintain the momentum of its lending operations, especially in Africa.

5. In response to a General Assembly request, the report contained an analysis of the issues affecting the relationship between administrative and programme delivery costs together with information on those costs. Moreover, data on procurement activities were included for the first time in such a report.

6. In the past year, renewed interest had been shown by bilateral aid agencies, developing countries and multilateral institutions in making co-ordination more effective. The United Nations system sought to facilitate co-ordination by recipient countries in two principal ways: firstly, it promoted complementarity among its operational activities and, in agreement with the Governments and parties concerned, with bilateral and other multilateral assistance programmes; secondly, through its organizations, it was in a position to provide support to Governments, at their request, in making effective use of external resources. It was of course the responsibility of host Governments to co-ordinate aid and determine the local co-ordination arrangements that best reflected their particular requirements. The United Nations was helping Governments to improve their own capacity to administer and absorb external aid through the provision of technical assistance to the central co-ordinating ministries.

7. Special emphasis was being placed on co-ordination in the context of the Secretary-General's initiative for Africa, for which bilateral and multilateral aid agencies exercised considerable responsibility. It was important for them to support Governments by openly sharing information on aid problems and prospects and

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(Mr. Ripert)

by seeking to adapt existing programmes to new requirements and improve the quality of aid. In its assistance for co-ordination in Africa, the United Nations was paying particular attention to improving the impact of UNDP-sponsored round tables as a critical element in the process of aid co-ordination and resource mobilization, to enabling the resident co-ordinators to carry out their functions effectively and to enhancing collaboration between UNDP and the World Bank. The resident co-ordinators also helped to improve collaboration among organizations by supporting the efforts of Governments to co-ordinate external assistance, by furthering co-ordination arrangements among organizations of the United Nations system and by seeking to improve relations between the United Nations system and the donor community. In their annual reports, the resident co-ordinators had highlighted the importance of open exchanges of information as an indispensable means of facilitating better co-ordination at the country level.

8. The General Assembly had stressed the importance of collaboration between the technical co-operation organizations of the system and the multilateral development banks in view of the need to improve complementarity between technical co-operation and capital assistance. There had been considerable progress in that area, particularly with regard to the World Bank's lending operations for technical co-operation. The developing countries were finding it advantageous to make use of United Nations organizations for ensuring such technical co-operation. He was confident that collaboration of that type would continue to grow in the interest of developing countries, organizations of the system and the multilateral development banks.

9. Mr. BRILLANTES (President, Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme), introducing the report of the Governing Council (E/1984/20), said that there had been a gradual evolution of the work of the Council and an impressive expansion of the scope of its activities: it was the governing body not only of UNDP, but also of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development, the United Nations Fund for Population Activities and 12 other funds and programmes.

10. During its thirty-first session, the Council had strengthened and expanded UNDP's evaluation activities to make its programmes more effective and provide regular feedback on ongoing projects. It had agreed to focus its 1985 high-level debate on the subjects of the co-ordination of external technical co-operation at the country level and the examination of steps taken by UNDP to strengthen co-ordination in practice. Moreover, it had noted the readiness of UNDP to examine and adjust its established policies and practices so as to respond effectively to the changing technical co-operation requirements of developing countries. It had also considered the Administrator's proposals concerning the best means to ensure a balanced approach in meeting current technical co-operation requirements and to make the programming and implementation process more effective. Those decisions would improve the Programme's flexibility, adaptability and responsiveness in serving the international community. The Council had welcomed the grass-roots approaches to development and the initiatives suggested by the Administrator with a view to improving the Programme's efforts to assist recipient Governments and had also appealed to participating organizations of the United Nations system to join

(Mr. Brillantes)

with UNDP in supporting the efforts of host Governments to bring about wider and more effective development co-operation at the country level.

11. In June 1984, as part of a three-year experimental period, the Council had met for the first time as a Committee of the whole to deal, inter alia, with country programmes. The deliberations of that Committee had thus far served to confirm the merits of, and the need for, an effective central funding and co-ordination arm for the technical co-operation activities of the United Nations system. Both the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council had repeatedly expressed their support for UNDP as the central co-ordinating and funding authority for such activities, but that role could be jeopardized by inadequate resources.

12. There were disturbing signs of a shift from multilateralism to bilateralism in solving development problems. If Governments wished to avert that shift, and if the capacity of UNDP was to be sustained and its role as central co-ordinator enhanced, member Governments must take the necessary decisions at the national level to invigorate UNDP by providing the required financial resources. He hoped that there would be complementarity between the level of commitments and the eloquence of pronouncements and appealed to the delegations to extend and improve multilateral development co-operation and recognize the value of UNDP as a centre-piece of the multilateral process.

13. Mr. MORSE (Administrator, United Nations Development Programme) said that it was regrettable that the international community had watched the crises in Africa develop for 10 years or more, applying patchwork remedies with wholly inadequate resources. The problems of drought control, food supplies and development would persist unless addressed as a whole.

14. There was, however, reason for optimism: the international community stood at a new and more positive beginning in terms of its response to human needs and of its commitment to operational activities for meeting them. One indicator was the continuing improvement in the resource outlook of UNDP: at the recent Joint United Nations Pledging Conference for Operational Activities for Development, the pledges announced by major donors to the Programme for 1985 had reflected an increase of more than 7 per cent. Some 21 developing countries had raised their pledges by 10 per cent or more. The result had been an impressive demonstration of continued general support for UNDP.

15. During the current economic recession and resource stagnation, UNDP had moved vigorously to improve its effectiveness. In 1983, for example, it had established a Central Evaluation Office, which had already drawn up and distributed for field testing new policies and procedures for monitoring and evaluating UNDP-supported projects.

16. UNDP had been regularly providing emergency and long-term assistance of various kinds to African countries. In December 1983, the General Assembly had transferred funds from the liquidated United Nations Emergency Operation Trust Fund to a UNDP trust fund for developing countries stricken by drought, famine and malnutrition, and UNDP had promptly committed 95 per cent of the \$27 million

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(Mr. Morse)

earmarked for sub-Saharan Africa to meet pressing needs, and was continuing to apply the small remaining balance to priority needs as they arose.

17. UNDP had continued to work with its Latin American partners, the countries of the Asian and the Pacific region and the Arab States. Over the past year, it had continued to strengthen its ties with the World Bank and regional development banks, and had continued similar collaboration with UNFPA, UNICEF and WFP.

18. Over the past year, it had initiated a number of management and administrative improvements. It had been working hard to overcome resource constraints, improve its programming and co-ordinating, enhance its field-office capabilities and improve its operational effectiveness and evaluation capacity. It faced serious new challenges, including the need for improved field-level co-ordination, new opportunities for grass-roots approaches to development and a more active role for UNDP in Africa. In close co-operation with the World Bank, UNDP would be working with the donors of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development to help developing countries in co-ordinating technical inputs for the 15 most severely stricken countries in Africa and, in roughly half of those countries, to assist in the co-ordination of all external inputs - both technical and capital - at the request of the developing countries. Because of its extensive experience as lead agency for donor conferences for least developed countries, the Programme was uniquely equipped for those added responsibilities. Six of those conferences had been organized since January 1984, and eight more were scheduled to be held by the end of 1985.

19. Human resources played a vital role in the development process and the neglect thereof would significantly retard long-term development prospects. In October 1984, he had established within UNDP a Human Resources Task Force to advise him on steps required to initiate a world-wide process for enhancing the role of the human factor in development. The Task Force would co-operate with Governments, United Nations agencies, the scientific community and other interested institutions in preparation for its various activities. He intended to convene a group of knowledgeable operational and academic experts to explore the subject of generating public awareness of the vital importance of human resources development, and would consult closely with agencies of the United Nations system.

20. In February 1985, the Governing Council would resume its discussion of fourth-cycle targets and allocations. There was broad agreement on the needs of developing- and particularly of low-income-countries, which already had top priority in UNDP allocations. The key element was the overall target or amount of resources to be allocated. Growth in UNDP's central resources was absolutely essential, since the overall size and rate of increase in UNDP funding would be critical in meeting at least part of the enormous needs of the developing countries in the years ahead and in enabling UNDP to meet its heavier responsibilities.

21. Mr. INGRAM (Executive Director, World Food Programme) said that global food aid constituted some 10 per cent of total development assistance. Wisely used, food aid offered a real opportunity for making a substantial and effective contribution to development. It was no panacea, but it could be a very valuable

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(Mr. Ingram)

investment resource for helping to finance development and improve the condition of the poor. In order to improve food aid, it must be integrated into the mainstream of development.

22. Food aid had long been used in emergency situations, but its two uses ought to be more closely linked. Not only could food aid for development be used to prepare for, or even to prevent, certain emergencies; when aid used for emergency operations, it could also be used to encourage countries to promote national food security. The most pressing and important issue was how to use it to deal more effectively with the most difficult development challenge: the problems of drought, desertification and economic development in sub-Saharan Africa.

23. Food aid as a resource for development had a number of implications, the broadest being that it must be combined with other inputs, since by itself its effectiveness was seriously reduced, whereas technical assistance, financial assistance and food aid could reinforce each other if co-ordinated. WFP needed more technical assistance from the United Nations agencies to help make food aid as effective as possible. Food aid must be provided in support of recipient countries' national development plans, rather than on an ad hoc basis. It had to be programmed as carefully as any other kind of development assistance in order to achieve lasting benefits. Good co-ordination was fundamental to using food aid for development and WFP had therefore made a determined effort to improve co-ordination in the search for more effective programmes.

24. The Programme had very good relations with the World Bank, and both were committed to measures for combining the Bank's financial and technical resources and WFP's food resources in specific projects. It was also seeking to forge closer ties with the African Development Bank and the International Fund for Agricultural Development with which it shared a number of important joint projects. UNDP was increasingly tending to view its own responses to Africa's needs in the context of food aid, and UNDP Resident Representatives were the field representatives of WFP. WFP looked to the UNDP resident co-ordinators not only to enhance complementarity and avoid overlap, but also to facilitate systematic communication among agencies for the benefit of more co-ordinated programming.

25. Emergencies should, as far as possible, be treated in a development context. The problem in sub-Saharan Africa must be recognized as basically a structural one. Sub-Saharan Africa had had the slowest rise in food production and the fastest growth of population in the past 20 years. It seemed to be losing the race between food and population and all resources must therefore be used to the fullest to tackle the basic development problems. If the underlying causes remained, the emergency would be permanent.

26. There was a particular need for more co-ordination of donor efforts in emergency situations. Although WFP's food resources were valuable, its greatest contribution in major emergencies might be its increasingly important role in helping to co-ordinate all food aid. The information that WFP collected through its field offices was vital to the planning of food allocations and shipments. More and more donors and recipients expected WFP to play an even more important

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(Mr. Ingram)

part in emergency co-ordination, but such co-ordination was a specialized and complex task, and WFP's capabilities were limited. As the only multilateral organization specializing in food aid, WFP must be strengthened in order to ensure operational co-ordination.

27. with regard to the potential lines of action for food aid in sub-Saharan Africa over the next decade or so, a number of important measures were needed. First, food aid should be increasingly used as a means of providing direct and indirect support for agricultural and rural development. Secondly, in the case of human resources development, it had development potential only partly realized. Thirdly, in the case of famines, which were likely to be a feature of the African scene for a long time, better ways must be found of meeting immediate needs without making the underlying situation worse. Fourthly, it could be used more effectively to support price stabilization schemes and other measures for the proper management of a country's food resources. Finally, it could help countries to pursue new development policies. One part of the solution to Africa's problems was a policy dialogue that would lead to explicit commitments on the part of the affected countries and the donors.

28. For that purpose, WFP needed an administrative framework appropriate to an action-oriented programme. Its favourable record would be difficult to maintain unless it, and the system of which it was a part, were viewed as an efficient means of using the resources provided. Despite its imperfections and all the pressures to which it was subject, the United Nations system played the key role in the international effort to meet the needs of the developing countries. WFP would do its best to become more efficient and to co-operate more actively with others of common purpose.

29. Mr. BI Jilong (Under-Secretary-General, Department of Technical Co-operation for Development) associated himself with the expressions of deep concern at the critical situation in Africa, noting that, in 1983, some 40 per cent of the programmes of his Department had been delivered in Africa where strenuous efforts were being made to develop water resources.

30. Considerable importance was also attached to assistance in development planning and public administration. The Department was actively contributing to improving the methods and mechanisms indispensable for analysing economic and social evolution and for making sound decisions and establishing better negotiating positions with external partners. It was also establishing linkages between short-term programmes and long-term development objectives. In public administration emphasis had been placed on training and personnel management, institution building and the strengthening of financial management systems. The report of the expert group convened in October to review the United Nations programme in public administration and finance would be made available to the Economic and Social Council.

31. The Department was implementing many projects in and had fielded a number of missions relating to development planning. It had organized three interregional workshops on the subject and had contributed actively to several round-table meetings financed by UNDP.

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(Mr. Bi Jilong)

32. Greater efforts were being made to assist in implementing the World Population Plan of Action. Many of the recommendations adopted at the recent International Conference on Population had a bearing on the technical co-operation activities of the United Nations system in general and of the Department in particular.

33. The Department executed over one third of its field programme in the least developed countries and focused on the provisions of the Substantial New Programme of Action that dealt with development planning and administration, population and statistics and natural resources.

34. Institution building and the development of economic and social infrastructures required consistent action and should not be jeopardized by unexpected changes necessitated insufficient funds. Many developing countries could not afford disruptions in their infrastructure development efforts. The recent world economic recession had not only reduced the flow of capital to developing countries but had also necessitated a number of economy measures within the Department. That streamlining process must be complemented by other measures that were largely outside the authority of the Department.

35. He expressed concern at the fact that the consolidation of technical co-operation activities within the Department, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197, had not been completed. As a result some duplication of efforts existed. He also drew attention to the need for the funding agencies to make greater use of the Department's expertise to ensure that the capabilities existing within the United Nations system were more efficiently utilized. At the same time some agencies had been undertaking activities that fell largely within the responsibility of the Department thereby encouraging a piecemeal approach and hampering efforts to make optimum use of available resources. Greater co-ordination between the executing and technical agencies and the funding organizations was therefore needed. Finally, he reported that efforts to explore alternative sources of funding had met with some success and that funds had been obtained from the Inter-American Development Bank and the African Development Bank.

36. Mr. ALBORNOZ (Ecuador) welcomed the collaboration between the United Nations system and multilateral development banks on technical co-operation activities referred to in the annual report of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation (A/39/417, annex).

37. Noting that preparations would soon begin for the fourth programming cycle and speaking on behalf of the Latin American group, he reaffirmed the bases of the 1970 Consensus. The Latin American countries wished to preserve the principle of UNDP's universality and would oppose any attempt to introduce a cut-off point after which a country would no longer be eligible for grant assistance from UNDP. To do so would be tantamount to penalizing a country for its development efforts or would appear to indicate that the countries with more technology and finance were willing only to assist in the transfer of technology up to a point. Secondly, they considered that the principle of voluntariness was fundamental to UNDP, in other words, States should decide whether they desired UNDP assistance and whether - and

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(Mr. Albornoz, Ecuador)

how much - they wished to contribute to its resources. Any departure from that principle would be unacceptable. They had supported the recommendation that States should raise their contributions by 14 per cent annually. As had been demonstrated at the latest Pledging Conference, many States had increased their pledges by at least that amount or more. Ecuador had been among them and, in addition, it had pledged some \$240,000 - 8 per cent of its IPF - towards the operating costs of specific projects. That additional contribution should also be included in the accounts. There were a number of paradoxes in the accounting practices which needed to be corrected. For example, countries which became net contributors were granted services amounting to only 55 per cent of their IPF.

38. Exchange rate fluctuations had the effect of reducing the value of the original pledge by countries. In other words, if a country delayed in disbursing its contribution, UNDP received considerably less than the amount pledged. That financial erosion was accompanied by an erosion of political will in those countries which were capable of providing larger amounts of assistance.

39. A number of countries had already, or were about to, become net contributors thus ceasing to be a burden on UNDP. Cost-sharing arrangements, trust funds and voluntary contributions to project operating costs and to the expenses of local UNDP offices were also significant voluntary contributions.

40. The Latin American countries were in favour of retaining the "floor" principle for the fourth cycle; to eliminate it would be to sign away the best chance of multiplying the real value, in terms of services, of each dollar UNDP spent, because in some parts of the world one dollar was worth eight dollars in terms of the national contribution to training or research activities. In that connection he drew attention to the sharp drop in the percentage of resources allocated to Latin American and Caribbean country programmes - 9.3 per cent in the third cycle - compared with 20 per cent in the first and second cycles.

41. The Latin American countries upheld the right of each country to establish its own development priorities and the authority of the Governing Council to approve the programmes formulated by countries. There should be no change in the amount of 80 per cent for country IPFs that was allocated to the least developed countries, but the middle-income countries could not agree to having their own share fall below 20 per cent. They were in favour of raising the percentage of resources allocated to regional or global projects provided that that did not further affect the country IPFs which were already low.

42. The United Nations Fund for Population Activities had proved very successful in Latin America and had done so without conflicting with national legislations. The experience in Latin America showed that the population problem could be solved to a large extent simply by improving housing, food, education and levels of living.

43. Finally, he commended UNICEF on its activities for mothers and children.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.