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PROVISIONAL VERBATIM RECORD OF THE THIRTY-EIGHTH MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Tuesday, 24 October 1989, at 3 p.m.

President:

Mr. LOHIA
(Vice-President)

(Papua New Guinea)

later:

Mr. GARBA

(Nigeria)

- Development and international economic co-operation [82]
- (f) Environment: report of the Secretary-General
- Tentative programme of work

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In the absence of the President, Mr. Iohia (Papua New Guinea), Vice-President,
took the Chair.

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

AGENDA ITEM 82 (continued)

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

- (f) ENVIRONMENT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/44/256 and Corr.1 and Add.1 and 2)

The PRESIDENT: This afternoon the Assembly will continue the discussion on the proposed United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992.

Mr. HASMY (Malaysia): The Group of 77, on whose behalf I am speaking, welcomes this opportunity to deliberate on environment, an extremely important and complex issue pivotal to the immediate and long-term interests and well-being of all countries. It is a global issue requiring global action on the basis of shared responsibilities. Without any doubt environment will become the all-important test of genuine interdependence between and among all countries committed to a common future.

In recognition of the importance of this issue, the Special Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77, held in Caracas in June this year, categorically stated that the members of the Group would continue to make every possible effort to prevent the deterioration of the environment. At that meeting the Ministers reaffirmed the Group's commitment to the strengthening of international co-operation for the protection of the environment, which requires a global multilateral effort to address the problems in all its aspects.

Further, the Ministers clearly defined the concept of sustainable development as necessarily including the meeting of the basic needs of people of the developing

(Mr. Hasmy, Malaysia)

countries, the maintenance of adequate levels of growth for the attainment of their social and economic objectives, and the improvement of the quality of life in a healthy, safe and clean environment.

The Ministers also stated the following:

First, the concept of sustainable development should not be used as a pretext for additional conditionality in the policies of multilateral development and financial institutions.

Secondly, poverty and environmental degradation are closely interrelated and environment protection must therefore be viewed as an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it. Excessive pressure on natural resources on account of poverty and a rising population have given rise to problems such as land degradation, deforestation and desertification, which need to be addressed with a sense of urgency along with global environment problems. In this context the Group of 77 emphasized the importance of supportive measures favouring the developing countries in any arrangement for concerted multilateral co-operation for the protection of the environment.

Thirdly, there is an urgent need for the international community to set aside not additional financial resources, which should, inter alia, be used to enable access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies. Alternative technologies should be made available to the developing countries on concessional terms.

Fourthly, since developed countries account for the bulk of the production and consumption of environmentally damaging substances, they should bear the main responsibility in the search for long-term remedies for global environment protection and should make the major contribution to international efforts to reduce consumption of such substances.

(Mr. Hasmy, Malaysia)

The Group also reiterated that measures taken at the international level should take full account of the existing asymmetry and global production and consumption pattern and should consciously seek to redress this problem.

Similar views were expressed during the ninth summit conference of the non-aligned countries at Belgrade last September.

At the Commonwealth summit conference currently being held in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, the subject of the environment has figured prominently, resulting in the release of a declaration entitled the "Langkawi Declaration on Environment". The Declaration reflects, as I stated earlier in the Second Committee, a happy convergence of views of some developed and developing countries in constructively addressing the various issues as well as in making specific recommendations for finding solutions. That augurs well and could contribute positively to mutually beneficial co-operation on a global basis on this all-important subject.

It is important to recall that there have been other positive statements on the environment by leaders of regional groups as well.

We believe these views expressed at the summit meeting of the non-aligned countries, the Kuala Lumpur Commonwealth summit meeting and the Group of 77 constitute important inputs for the proposed United Nations conference on environment and development. That conference, tentatively scheduled for 1992, will provide an important opportunity to address environmental and developmental issues in an integrated manner. The conference should not be allowed to turn out to be a mere technical or academic meeting. It should serve as a forum to discuss and devise comprehensive approaches that would tackle the mutually reinforcing problems of environment and development. At the very outset I wish to state categorically

(Mr. Hasmy, Malaysia)

that it would be fallacious to assume that developing countries would make unrealistic demands on the proposed conference in regard to development issues and thus change its nature.

We believe all countries realize that environment and development is not a North-South issue. However, there is concern among developing countries that when we broach the proposed 1992 conference on environment and development the developed countries will inordinately pursue environmental issues without equally addressing, and committing themselves to finding solutions to, the problems and shortcomings of development that directly impinge on environment.

(Mr. Hasmy, Malaysia)

Development and environment considerations are not mutually exclusive; one need not take place at the expense of the other. Additionally, developed countries should not hastily resort to discriminatory policies and administrative practices against developing countries ostensibly on the basis of environmental considerations.

I wish to stress that developed countries account for the bulk of the production and consumption of environmentally damaging substances. They, therefore, should bear the main responsibility in the search for long-term remedies for the purpose of global environmental protection and should make the major contributions to international efforts to reduce consumption of such substances. It is necessary to restate this fact to prevent any misinterpretation of the objectives and desires regarding the outcome of the 1992 conference, and so that there should be no back-peddalling with regard to responsibility for environmental degradation.

With regard to the organizational aspects of the proposed conference, I wish to refer to my statement at the summer session of the Economic and Social Council during the discussion on 13 July 1989 on the convening of the United Nations conference on environment and development. I stated that the preparatory process should include the establishment of a preparatory committee with universal participation and a secretariat. This preparatory committee, which should be a committee of the whole, has to be established by the General Assembly.

Admittedly, there appear to be some differences over how to bring all the parties concerned under the one umbrella of the United Nations. The Group of 77 wishes to emphasize that if there were disagreement regarding the preparatory process we should be making a bad start that would affect the outcome of the conference, with far-reaching consequences for all of us. Given the importance of both the substantive and the organizational aspects of the conference, the Group

(Mr. Hasmy, Malaysia)

intends to hold further discussions with all parties in search of a consensus. The issue of the conference is too important to suffer from division.

Consultations are now in process which point to a framework that will reflect universal participation and allow for inputs from all sectors and organizations in the preparatory process. The venue for the preparatory committee is also under consultation, with sound cases being made for its being held in one or more than one venue.

All the aspects that I have referred to must be the subject of common agreement at an early date. At the same time, I must emphasize categorically that the Group of 77 is fully aware and deeply conscious of the significance of the proposed conference and would not rush to take hasty decisions. On the venue of the proposed conference, the Group of 77 supports acceptance of Brazil's offer to host the conference.

Before concluding, I wish to reiterate that we are in the midst of consultation and will be better placed to discuss the various aspects at the appropriate time during the course of this session of the General Assembly.

Mr. KRYZHANOVSKY (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): From this rostrum during the general debate, which ended recently, Heads of State or Government, ministers, well-known statesmen and virtually all States Members of the United Nations drew the attention of the world community to existing problems providing a rather colourful mosaic of life today on our planet. An analysis of the general debate shows that ecology was stated by virtually all delegations to be, if not the major priority, on a par in its significance and seriousness with such problems as those of disarmament and the settlement of regional conflicts and crisis situations. Further, evidence of this is the fact that we are now discussing this here in the plenary meeting, and a great deal of

(Mr. Kryzhanovsky, Ukrainian SSR)

attention is usually paid to what happens in the plenary meetings of the General Assembly.

In the year that has passed since the adoption of resolution 43/196, one of whose sponsors was the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic, there has been a wide exchange of views on basic work and organizational matters pertaining to the holding of the conference in 1992. I would mention in particular the intensive discussions at the fifteenth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the summer session of the Economic and Social Council.

One of the results of the discussions of which we have taken note is recognition of the existence of a direct proportionate link between the expansion of international co-operation in connection with ecology and the possibility of more effective and rapid solutions to ecological problems nationally, since pollution of the environment knows no national boundaries, ecological barriers or obstacles. As we see it, there is also a mutual understanding to the effect that we must collectively set the existing international machinery in motion and perhaps think about the establishment of new international ecological bodies.

There is a focus for our joint efforts, and that is the holding within the United Nations of the 1992 conference on environment and development. The significance and productiveness of the conference will depend to a great extent on the level of representation. Bearing in mind the seriousness and importance of today's ecological problem, and the significance of the work which awaits the conference, we support the view that it should be held at the highest possible political level.

There is already some experience of holding ecological conferences at a high level. We are thinking here of the European Conference in 1979, which resulted in the signing of a Convention on long-range transboundary air pollution, an

(Mr. Kryzhanovsky, Ukrainian SSR)

instrument which it is no exaggeration to say determined the health of the environment in Europe. Today the scope of the 1979 Convention has been expanded by new protocols. The 1992 conference, which will have high-level representation, could result in the adoption of a legal instrument imposing specific commitments on Governments with regard to various aspects of activities to solve basic ecological problems.

At its fifteenth session the UNEP Governing Council devoted a great deal of attention to defining priorities and activities. Many views were expressed regarding priorities for the ecological problems on which the 1992 conference is to focus its attention. A reasonable compromise on the selection of priorities that truly reflects their global significance must be reached. In this connection we agree with the listing in paragraph 4 of the annex to UNEP Governing Council resolution 15/3, which has been drawn up taking into account the latest achievements in science and technology and the views of the majority of States in the various regions and at differing levels of development.

The United Nations system has accumulated a great deal of experience in determining joint programmes of action on the consequences of existing ecological problems. Examples in recent times include the intensification of the fight against the depletion of the ozone layer and action to protect wildlife.

Doctors have always said that it is easier to prevent an illness than to cure it. Therefore, the conference should direct special attention to the adoption of preventive measures with regard to major causes of the deterioration of the ecological situation. In this connection, we believe that it is very important for the conference to consider the possibility of the United Nations system being used

(Mr. Kryzhanovsky, Ukrainian SSR)

to monitor ecological emergencies, take action when emergency situations arise and work out ways of correcting their consequences. To ensure the successful completion of such tasks we could, without waiting for 1992, establish a United Nations centre for emergency ecological assistance.

(Mr. Kryzhanovsky, Ukrainian SSR)

We trust that the establishment of such a centre will make an important contribution towards achieving the practical benefits of international co-operation - something still lacking in the international organs of the United Nations system.

The conference could also promote a free and rapid exchange of information on scientific policy on the environment, on the ecological situation and on accidents. Here, we see the role of existing international organizations - first and foremost, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) - being strengthened. It would therefore be a good idea for the conference, in one way or another, to highlight the obligations of bodies, organizations and programmes in the United Nations system in carrying out their final recommendations.

At the same time there must be a collective evaluation of requirements, financial resources and possible sources of finance if decisions that have been adopted are to be complied with successfully. We have mentioned repeatedly the possible establishment of a special international ecological trust fund, the finance for which would be obtained by voluntary contributions from States, organizations and individuals, as well as by way of a reduction of military expenditure through genuine disarmament measures.

The recommendations of the conference concerning the conversion of a part of military productive capacity to environmental-protection measures could, within a short time, have an effect on the ecology of the world.

Let us now say a few words about the preparations for the conference. We agree with the view - expressed in decision 15/3 of UNEP's Governing Council - that the Council could act as an intergovernmental committee. UNEP was established as a result of the 1972 Conference, and it is quite proper that two decades later its deliberative bodies should prepare for the next world-wide forum.

(Mr. Kryzhanovsky, Ukrainian SSR)

There are two points of view as to the activities of the preparatory committee. One is that it should be given more freedom to define its own agenda. The second is that the scope of its activities should be defined clearly and that it should be given relevant instructions, at an international, intergovernmental level.

We do not underestimate the possibilities of the future committee, but we must point out that it is only three years until the beginning of the conference and that a great deal has yet to be done. We must try to free the preparatory committee from routine and give it leeway for truly creative activity. We should also try to ensure that the entire preparatory process, as well as the conference itself, involves the minimum financial expenditure.

As regards the title of the conference, we have already received at least 10 valid suggestions. We would draw attention to the fact that its proposed mandate is basically in keeping with the goals and tasks of international ecological security, one of the initiators of which, in the United Nations, was the Ukrainian SSR.

We hope that, with joint efforts, we will be successful in preparing a representative forum - something that is expected by the world community. The decisions of the forum must become the basis of a programme for improving the environment on Earth.

The PRESIDENT: The role and contribution of women in the field of environment and development is very important. It is with that in mind that I invite the representative of New Zealand, Dame Ann Hercus, to address the Assembly.

Dame Ann HERCUS (New Zealand): New Zealand's Prime Minister, Mr. Geoffrey Palmer, spoke to this forum three weeks ago. He spoke of global ecological interdependence and of the pivotal role of the United Nations in ensuring international co-operation to protect this planet. He also stressed the

(Dame Ann Hercus, New Zealand)

nexus between environment and development. I therefore welcome this opportunity to reiterate New Zealand's strong support for a United Nations conference in 1992 whose purpose is to come up with legal, political and institutional solutions to the world's pressing environmental problems.

I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to the declaration - known as the Langkawi Declaration - issued on 21 October, just a few days ago, by the Heads of Government of 49 States members of the Commonwealth. In this important commitment to co-operative action to protect and conserve the world's environment, Heads of Government pledged their full support for the convening of the United Nations conference in 1992.

We see it as imperative that this session of the General Assembly set in motion preparations for the conference on environment and development by producing a clear, coherent and effective strategy. New Zealand is therefore committed to working constructively at this session to complete the groundwork for a successful conference. We intend to participate fully in the preparatory process and in the conference itself.

Last year, New Zealand was pleased to be a sponsor of resolution 43/196. The adoption of that resolution by consensus was a demonstration of the concern felt by all delegations at the threats to our environment, as well as of their awareness of the imperative of sustainable development as the central theme of international economic activity.

We have participated actively in subsequent debate on the objectives of the proposed conference and how these might be achieved. We acknowledge the major contribution the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), under the leadership of Mr. Mostafa Tolba, has already made, and must continue to make, in respect of global environmental issues within the United Nations system, and this conference in particular. We are very conscious of the co-ordinating role of UNEP on

(Dame Ann Hercus, New Zealand)

environmental matters and of the constructive way in which it has interacted with the many other United Nations bodies closely involved in environmental matters.

In May this year the fifteenth session of UNEP's Governing Council, held in Nairobi, dedicated itself to the task given to it by resolution 43/196. By its decision 15/3 and the attached annex, the Council provided a wealth of guidance for evaluation at this session. It is worth recalling that the Council was invited to give particular attention to the objectives, content and scope of the conference. In this regard, the elements contained in the annex to decision 15/3 are particularly helpful.

Little more than six weeks later, during the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council, United Nations Members had a further opportunity to express their views on the conference. It was clear that there is a diversity of views on many aspects of the conference. On that occasion I had the honour of outlining my country's general views on the aims and structure of the conference and on the preparations for it. I was careful not to close off options. Rather, I indicated New Zealand's wish for a conference in which all would be able to participate, one that would show the way forward, and, most important, one that would produce results. We are very conscious of the need for flexibility and goodwill on the part of all members.

By the time this Assembly adopts a resolution convening a conference on environment and development, barely 30 months will be available for preparation. The issues this conference will address are both numerous and complex. Our hope is that at this session we will agree on a clear path of action, which, in turn, will prevent wasteful delay during the preparatory process. With barely 30 months to go until June 1992, we cannot delay major decisions until the first meeting of the preparatory committee. We therefore believe that the General Assembly must ensure

(Dame Ann Hercus, New Zealand)

that key decisions are made at this session. Equally, we must ensure that the organs of the United Nations system understand from the outset what we expect of them.

(Dame Ann Hercus, New Zealand)

To contribute to the process ahead of us this session, I wish to outline the view of New Zealand on key aspects of the Conference and the process for its preparation.

We welcome the generous offer of the Government of Brazil to host the conference. We appreciate that this offer will represent a major commitment of resources and effort by Brazil, and see this as a further demonstration of its commitment to the preservation and enhancement of the global environment within the principle of sustainable development.

Resolution 43/196 requires that the Assembly at this session look at the scope and objectives of the conference. The work contained in UNEP decision 15/3 on priority themes and the definition of objectives contained in the preambular sections of resolution 43/196 are, as I have already said, helpful. We must all acknowledge that States Member may have different perspectives on the global environment. For this conference to be meaningful, it must acknowledge that diversity of approach.

At the same time, priorities must be set if the conference is to achieve results. New Zealand believes that high priority must be accorded to the serious environmental problems such as climate change, ozone depletion, desertification and drought, conservation and protection of endangered species. Particular priority should be given to the need for compatibility between developmental and environmental concerns.

The Conference will need to consider institutional mechanisms for ensuring international co-operation to halt environmental degradation. When New Zealand's Prime Minister addressed this session he spoke of the need for the establishment of a new organ in the United Nations system, perhaps to be called the Environmental Protection Council. He did not envisage that such an organization would replace

(Dame Ann Hercus, New Zealand)

existing bodies such as UNEP. It would be empowered to co-ordinate decisions on environmental protection; and it would be empowered to take binding decisions. New Zealand believes it will be important to discuss this issue at the conference, within the context of a consideration of constitutional mechanisms. In the same context, it will also be important to evaluate the performance of the United Nations existing institutions in dealing with environment and development issues.

Environmental issues to be covered at the conference all have a global as well as a national and regional perspective. It is essential that consideration of such concerns be on the basis of the widest possible participation. The preparatory committee must be open to all Members of the United Nations. It follows, therefore, that meetings should be held at a venue ensuring maximum participation. Only one such location exists: United Nations Headquarters. We are aware, of course, of the strong preference of some for other venues, including Geneva and possibly Nairobi. To accommodate such concerns, we would be prepared to see the preparatory committee hold its sessions in more than one location.

The four sessions of the preparatory committee being proposed will not be able to cover all aspects of the preparatory process; nor should we expect them to. The United Nations system must be fully engaged in this process as well. We welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to take personal oversight of the work of the task force of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC). Equally important will be the participation of members in the deliberations undertaken by specialized agencies and other organs of the United Nations system. A particular effort must be made to enable developing-country participation, especially where such countries are not normally able to be represented. My delegation is particularly conscious that many of the small island-States in the South Pacific stand to be very seriously affected by climate change. Their voice deserves to be heard.

(Dame Ann Hercus, New Zealand)

It is not my intention to take this opportunity to debate the range of other questions concerning the nature and operation of the preparatory process. These are best left to the informal negotiation process upon which consensus can be built. I do wish, however, to join others in this debate who have emphasized the importance of establishing at this session the real costs of convening and preparing for this conference. We must approach this major commitment in full knowledge of the costs of our actions and with a willingness, if necessary, to accept the reordering of other activities to meet our new priorities.

Finally, throughout this debate, and alongside the diverse and at times divergent views expressed by other speakers, there has been a common thread, one which demonstrates the determination of Members to make this major endeavour a success. As we all start along the road to June 1992, I am pleased to commit my country to what the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development so aptly called "our common future".

Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia): The representative of Malaysia presented general views of the Group of 77 on the United Nations conference on environment and development, which we share and support. Since the environment is a global problem, affecting all countries, and is becoming one of the priority areas of international co-operation, my delegation would like to contribute to joint reflections on the character of the conference and on the nature of its preparation.

Environmental problems that confront us today are hardly new, but only recently have we begun to comprehend their complexity. Our main concern in the past was, if I may say so, directed at how to accelerate development without sufficient consideration of how it would affect the environment. Today we are no less concerned how to continue development and protect the environment, otherwise, environmental degradation may dampen or reverse economic development.

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

Awareness of the environment has been with us for many years. As early as 1969, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations, the late U Thant, pointed to this problem, saying:

"For the first time in the history of humanity a crisis of worldwide scope has come into existence concerning the relations of man to his environment."

Twenty years later, this crisis is assuming worrisome proportions and appears in various forms: the depletion of the ozone layer, the greenhouse effect, desertification, abject poverty and underdevelopment.

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

In spite of great efforts at national and international levels and the results achieved since the Stockholm Conference, the degradation of the environment is continuing at a rapid pace and assuming staggering proportions. In this too, like everywhere else, there exists a clear relationship between causes and effects. So far we have dealt mainly with effects. From now on, however, we must deal with the causes in order to prevent further degradation without affecting development. That would have to be a main objective of the conference.

As the biggest polluters of the environment the developed countries must naturally bear the largest share of responsibility for the re-establishment of the disrupted balance of nature. For developing countries growth and development remain the main levers of the preservation and protection of the environment, since poverty reduces the capacity of the people to use natural resources in a sustainable manner.

The difficult economic situation in developing countries and the acuteness of the economic and social problems are a primary concern of those countries and negatively affect their ability to manage their environment. External debt, net outflow of resources and obsolete technology compound the imbalances, as developing nations are generally influenced by - but unable to influence - international economic relations.

The conference on environment and development therefore provides an opportunity to view the numerous problems facing all countries in the light of economic and ecological interrelationship and mutual interests. We must rid ourselves of certain past illusions. Attempts to preserve social and ecological stability through old approaches to development and to environmental protection will in fact increase instability.

New environmentally sound technologies must be diffused more rapidly to all countries. National and international norms that regulate the transfer of

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

technology must be changed. The regulation and practice established a century ago have to be replaced by a new régime. Developing countries must have access to these technologies on concessional terms. Financial assistance to and support for developing countries that will enable them to protect the environment without compromising their development objectives and priorities are of paramount importance.

The growing concern over the effects of environmental degradation on present and future generations was fully reflected in the deliberations of the Ninth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Countries in Belgrade, where the protection of the environment was accorded high priority.

That summit conference expressed the readiness of all non-aligned countries to strengthen and promote international co-operation in the field of the environment. It welcomed the convening of the United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992 as an important opportunity to address environmental and development issues in an integrated manner and supported Brazil's offer to host the conference.

I should like to emphasize that such an important conference should be extremely well prepared and environment and development should be accorded equal attention. In addition, the problem of additional financial resources must not be disregarded in these preparations. The proposal of Mr. Rajiv Gandhi, the Prime Minister of India, presented in Belgrade, to establish a planet protection fund under the aegis of the United Nations, is reflected in the separate document on environment of the non-aligned summit conference. We support the proposal. It deserves to be carefully considered in the preparatory process for the conference and at the conference itself.

As to the mechanism for the preparation of the conference, my delegation is in favour of an intergovernmental preparatory committee, open to equal participation

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

by all countries, both Member and non-member States of the United Nations. Expert assistance to the committee should be provided by both the Secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Secretariat of the United Nations.

All relevant international organs and organizations of the United Nations system as well as some relevant non-governmental organizations would have to be involved in and make their contribution to the preparation of the conference.

We hope that in the negotiations at this session of the General Assembly other pertinent issues will be resolved.

In conclusion, let me note my delegation's conviction that the spirit of co-operation and full respect for the interests of all countries must prevail both in the preparatory process for the conference and at the conference itself. Only on that basis can we expect successful results and their implementation.

Mr. WILENSKI (Australia): Over two years ago the World Commission on the Environment and Development showed clearly that the major changes caused by human numbers and activities are threatening the security, well-being and very survival of life on this planet. The Commission called for international action and co-operation to achieve a major reorientation of many policies and institutional arrangements at national and international levels to facilitate action.

Like so many others, Australia has welcomed the Commission's report. The underlying concept of sustainable development, the analysis of the causes and effects of the environmental threats facing the world, and the action recommended to address these threats are common elements in both the Commission's recommended global action plan and Australia's own national approach to global environmental problems.

The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development - or the Brundtland report - irrespective of its obvious merits, will be worthless unless we

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

find ways to convert it and other such reports into practical, meaningful programmes and, with sufficient resources, set about the task of protecting and promoting our planet's environment. We expect the 1992 conference, to which we give our strong support, to play the key role in this conversion process. It is also a critical test for the United Nations system. The environment has emerged as the major new problem which can be solved only by international co-operation. Will the United Nations system rise to this challenge with co-operative action, or will the impetus to action be submerged, as our critics contend, in a torrent of words and resolutions while practical measures are devised elsewhere? The responsibility lies heavily on us here in the General Assembly to ensure that the Organization meets the test and rises to the challenge.

For the 1992 conference to be successful, we shall need at this stage to find answers to two basic questions: first, what should be the objectives of the conference and, secondly, in the light of those objectives how can we best prepare for a successful conference outcome?

A good sign-post to assist with the first questions, that of objectives, is contained in the recent decision of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on the 1992 conference. Central to that decision were the calls for the conference to do the following: review the state of the environment; identify strategies on a national, regional and global basis; define guidelines to protect the environment through preventative action at the sources, with action to be taken within a particular time-frame; plan for better information flow on environmentally sound technologies and environmental management; promote institutional capacities to address environmental matters in the context of economic and social development processes; and quantify the costs of conference decisions and recommendations.

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

That is a good, practical agenda. At the same time, in setting conference objectives we must allow for the fact that not all national and regional agendas are alike. We need to be sensitive to differences in perspective. In industrialized countries, discussion about the desirability of environmentally sound and sustained development tends to emphasize the need for sustainability, whereas, by contrast, the emphasis in poorer countries tends to be on the need for development.

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

Both developing and developed countries have legitimate concerns which should be heard; the constructive co-operation of both is necessary. Therefore, without losing sight of its basic environmental focus, the conference must take into account the complex interrelationships between environment and development in a balanced way, and should not shy away from discussion, for example, of the need to promote a more supportive international economy.

The second question concerns conference preparations. This is not just a matter of getting the bureaucratic accoutrements right; it is above all an essential conditioning process, and is closely related to conference objectives.

An important principle is that there should be the greatest and most equitable involvement by all countries in conference preparations. We believe that this would be facilitated by the preparatory committee being an open-ended United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Governing Council; but we are ready to consider other proposals as long as they are effective. Also, it would be fitting for the conference to be held in a developing country - and I wish today to announce our support for Brazil's generous offer to be the host.

We must also ensure that the conference receives proper substantive inputs. The UNEP/World Meteorological Organization (WMO) Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), in which Australia is playing an active part, is working well and is on track to provide much needed scientific assessments and proposals on response strategies. Local and regional perspectives will also be important inputs, and regional conferences are being organized with 1992 in mind. In the Asian and Pacific region next year, for example, there will be a ministerial-level conference on the environment. As a further prelude to the 1992 conference, Australia will host an international conference on the environment of the Asian and southern hemisphere regions in 1990-91.

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

As well as Governments, the Brundtland report urges that citizens, non-governmental organizations and industry should become involved environmentally, and this is an issue that has not yet been fully addressed in our preparations.

The need for participation by industry and the private sector generally is clear. New environmental standards and practices which may be recommended by the 1992 conference are likely to have major flow-ons for industries globally, for example, with the introduction of new tax structures, new product codes and pollution charges and other disincentives. As the Brundtland report reminds us on this point:

"Industry is on the leading edge of the interface between people and the environment. It is perhaps the main instrument of change that affects the environmental resource bases of development, both positively and negatively. Both industry and government, therefore, stand to benefit from working together more closely." (A/42/427, p. 321, para. 75)

Last month, in Canberra, on a different issue - chemical weapons - some 400 representatives of 65 countries and the world's chemical industry successfully gathered to reinforce and give fresh momentum to the negotiation of a chemical-weapons convention. The need to involve industry on environmental matters was highlighted by Prime Minister Hawke when, in opening the conference, he reminded delegates that:

"There is a growing feeling that industries must be held accountable for the effects of their operations, especially in regard to the environment."

Similarly, we must actively engage individual citizens and community groups and the non-governmental organization community in dialogue on the environment in order to promote community awareness and also to assist the policy formulation process by taking into account the views of those most directly affected. On many

(Mr. Wilenski, Australia)

issues it is the non-governmental organizations which have alerted Governments to the impending environmental dangers.

In preparing for the 1992 conference we need to involve all these important players outside the government sector. By doing so - though the process is complex - we will get better policies with better prospects for successful implementation.

In closing, I would stress that the 1992 conference is not an end in itself - it is part of a process ending in action.

Much of course remains to be done for the successful staging of the 1992 conference as the first act of a much larger production on environment in the 1990s and beyond. We have an outline of a script, but it needs greater clarity. We need to involve more players and to flesh out their roles. But above all we need to ensure that this part of the production fits with later acts and that, at the end of the entire performance, an audience - humankind in an environmentally secure world - remains.

Mr. NIKULIN (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) (interpretation from Russian): Issues pertaining to the preservation of the environment no doubt take pride of place not only in the United Nations. Their solution will determine the stable and ecologically secure development of the world, as they are part of the struggle for the survival of mankind. The depletion of the ozone layer, acid rain, pollution of water resources and the lack of clean drinking-water, desertification and deforestation, toxic waste, and so forth - all have become real threats to human life.

The consequences of unwarranted economic and other types of human activity have, so to speak, made their contributions to the above-mentioned list. Nor can we omit the harmful consequences of the arms race and military conflicts on the environment. In addition, there are industrial accidents. For us in Byelorussia,

(Mr. Nikulin, Byelorussian SSR)

this is not simply an abstraction - there is Chernobyl and the consequences of the accident at the nuclear power-station. The Republic is drafting a comprehensive programme for the years 1990-1995 to eliminate the consequences of the accident and to ensure safe life for the population, which will require more than 16 billion roubles. We can only carry out this programme through joint efforts, and we welcome the activities of some organizations that have lent assistance to the Byelorussian SSR in helping to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl disaster.

By and large, ecological problems are by their very nature trans-boundary problems. No one country alone can deal with them. We need international co-operation in order to preserve nature. The possibilities of overcoming negative phenomena are rightly connected with disarmament and the ensuing release of material and intellectual resources. The ecological situation in the world also requires new ecological thinking. It is precisely this concern for a safe environment for mankind that dictated the Soviet proposal to establish, within the United Nations, a centre for emergency ecological assistance - a view we fully share and support. Overcoming the global threat to the environment and ensuring universal ecological security through the speediest possible and most effective means is an urgent requirement of our times. The 1992 international conference on environment and development under the aegis of the United Nations will be an important step in that direction.

(Mr. Nikulin, Byelorussian SSR)

The Byelorussian SSR, in its response pursuant to General Assembly resolution 43/196, expressed support for the convening of a high-level conference. We trust that that conference will define a strategy for ecological development and will become a very important event in environmental protection activities at the international level. In our reply we set forth our opinion of what should be done by the United Nations, its bodies and the international community in the near future in order to preserve the environment.

We would now simply like to emphasize that our strategy in the field of environmental protection should be realistic, and it can be so only if it is based on all the aspects of the problem - ecological, political, social, scientific and technological, and legal; if it takes into account the concrete conditions and possibilities of different countries and groups of countries; if it contains economic and legal guarantees, to be observed by all States, for ecologically clean development in the world; and, of course, if it takes into account the scope and seriousness of global ecological problems today.

We note with satisfaction Brazil's offer to serve as host for the 1992 conference. In our view, we should use the time remaining constructively and undertake practical preparation for the conference. In order to achieve positive results, we believe it important that all the forthcoming international ecological meetings and relevant activities in the sphere of environmental protection be directed towards preparation for the 1992 conference and contribute to it.

We should emphasize the importance of the efforts of other international organizations, groups of countries, and individual States at the expert, national, regional and interregional levels, efforts undertaken with a view to considering and adopting concrete action to preserve the environment. It is extremely

(Mr. Nikulin, Byelorussian SSR)

important to us that there are European meetings taking place, in particular the conference in Sofia as part of the pan-European process, and the high-level conference in Bergen.

Without any doubt, we need to enhance the roles of the United Nations and its Security Council; the International Court of Justice; other relevant United Nations structures; all the organizations and bodies within the United Nations system - first and foremost the United Nations Environment Programme, the World Health Organization, the World Meteorological Organization and the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator; regional economic commissions of the United Nations; the United Nations Development Programme, the World Bank, and other development bodies in the sphere of preserving the environment. The Economic and Social Council has been called upon to play the leading role in this connection.

We need to put to good use everything achieved by the international community in developing co-operation in ecology. We therefore support the initiative of Czechoslovakia and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic on the environment.

Issues pertaining to the preservation of the environment should not be made the subject of ideological dispute. They require in-depth analysis, well-pondered, concrete, speedy and joint action in order to achieve positive results. Measures on the national level alone to preserve the environment are insufficient: we need joint international efforts. Preservation of the environment is becoming increasingly a political problem, the subject of international relations. The States of the Warsaw Treaty, in their well-known document entitled "The Consequences of the Arms Race for the Environment and Other Aspects of Ecological Security", have called upon the world community to set basic directions for international co-operation in the field of ecology.

We hope that at this session the Assembly will provide consensus recommendations for preserving the environment and for preparing for the 1992 conference.

Mr. ALVAREZ (Philippines): It is very gratifying to note that the question of the environment is now receiving unprecedented political attention world-wide. The international community has indeed come a long way in according that issue its rightful place in the deliberations of individual Governments and the United Nations itself.

Eighteen years ago, at the United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the international community first recognized the global character of environmental protection. Consequently, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was established. Subsequently, in the early 1980s, UNEP embarked on a project resulting in the report "Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond". At about the same time, work was in progress at the Commission on Environment and Development under the skilful guidance of the then Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland.

On 27 April 1987 the Commission released its report, "Our Common Future", which challenges Governments to pursue that development which considers environmental protection as an inseparable component of economic growth. It also challenges the relevant United Nations agencies to reorient their policies and programmes in accordance with that new development philosophy. Like the Commission's report, UNEP's "Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond" concluded that the solutions to serious environmental problems, whether global, regional, or national, depend to a very large extent on the full integration of environmental considerations in the development process.

(Mr. Alvarez, Philippines)

The response of the Philippine Government was focused on a new understanding of the consideration of the environment and development. In 1986 we reorganized our Department of Natural Resources and named it the Department of Natural Resources and Environment. One of the principal bureaus of that reorganized department is the Environmental Management Bureau, with which all other agencies and instrumentalities of the Government work in close co-ordination to ensure that environmental considerations are given critical importance in the activities of the Government.

The decision of the Philippine Government to merge the concerns for natural resources and for environment under one Department ensures the consideration of environmental protection in its proper perspective. In forest utilization, for instance, massive deforestation and denudation caused havoc on our lands, and that brought about new policies that seek to protect the environment.

It is well accepted that pollution has no territorial, much less political, boundaries and unless the international community deepens its consciousness and thinks in terms of the common purpose to protect the Earth, surely and inexorably it will soon be inhospitable for human habitation.

My delegation and my Government are aware of the continuing efforts undertaken by the various agencies of the United Nations. We commend them and shall continue to support those undertakings. We have also followed such international efforts as the preparation of a set of goals and principles of environmental assessment, the Protocol to the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the guidelines on the exchange of information on chemicals in international trade, and the relevant activities supporting the 1977 Nairobi Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

(Mr. Alvarez, Philippines)

The Philippines participated in the preparation of the Protocol on Chlorofluorocarbons to the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, and subsequently the Philippine Senate ratified that Protocol.

All that is not enough. The international community urgently requires an agenda of concerted efforts by all Governments. Only then can we address our common concern of environmental protection adequately within the overriding concern of promoting sustained growth and development in the developing countries. The agenda should seek the balance between our common needs in the international community and the compelling objective of development in individual developing countries.

We cannot fail to take note of the fact that the developed countries throughout the years have been the principal contributors to the degradation of our global environment.

(Mr. Alvarez, Philippines)

It is in this perspective that the Philippine Government fully endorses the convening of an international conference in 1992 to discuss both environment and development. At that time it is hoped that our continuing inquiries will have further clarified the global agenda to address the degradation of the Earth.

The conference should provide a fresh assessment of the link between environment and development and how it can be properly addressed in international relations. Several insights could be brought to bear on this relationship. Critical among them is the perception that poverty, in environmental terms, is both exacerbated by and contributes to environmental degradation. In this regard my delegation believes that the fundamental environmental challenge is how to protect and safeguard our environment without inhibiting economic growth, especially in the developing world. This can be achieved if supportive measures are implemented by the international community through various multilateral co-operation schemes in favour of the developing countries. That could involve, among others, the setting aside of net additional financial resources for environmental co-operation which could be used to enable access to and transfer of environmentally safe technology. Equally important is the perception that one reason for the generally limited response of developing countries to policy reforms is the continuing unfavourable international economic climate. The external debt problem remains insurmountable; there is a resurgence of protectionist measures against the products exported by the developing countries; and the constriction of private and official capital flows shows no sign of abating.

In order to ensure the successful convening of this international conference on environment and development, it is important that adequate technical preparation be undertaken. The General Assembly should establish an intergovernmental preparatory committee participation in which will be open to all States Members of the United Nations. The preparatory committee should immediately start its work

(Mr. Alvarez, Philippines)

and all pertinent agencies, organs and bodies of the United Nations system should be enjoined to assist in the work of that intergovernmental preparatory committee. The forty-fifth session of the General Assembly should review the status of the preparations undertaken by that committee together with the heightened efforts of all nations in the world in addressing the awesome problem of environmental pollution and degradation.

Finally, my delegation supports the proposal that this international conference on environment and development be held in a developing country, if only to dramatize the direct link between environment and development. I am also pleased to announce that my Government supports Brazil as the venue for the conference in 1992.

Mr. MOORE (United States of America): The United States views the 1992 conference on environment and development as a prodigious challenge for the United Nations system's treatment of global environmental issues. Coming 20 years after the meeting in Stockholm, which first engaged the United Nations in a major way on environmental concerns, it presents an opportunity to review progress since 1972 and to plan constructive action for the years ahead. In the view of the United States, the purpose of the 1992 conference should be to examine environmental issues in a broad scope, with careful attention given to sustainable development in an environmental context.

The United Nations and its specialized agencies are now heavily engaged in specific activities on the environment. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is probably the single most important offspring of the Stockholm Conference. UNEP serves as the focus for environmental efforts and the centre of environmental co-ordination in the United Nations system and should be strengthened in this role. The work of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) in the atmospheric sciences is laying the empirical and analytic foundation for the

(Mr. Moore, United States)

consideration of practical measures to deal with the threat of climate change. The United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) will also shortly consider a more formalized environmental programme focusing on facilitating the transfer of technologies for producing and using substitutes for ozone-depleting chemicals, setting up an inspection system for hazardous waste-dumping sites, and the environmental rehabilitation of the tannery and cement industries. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is currently supporting about 400 projects world wide, costing about \$300 million, which address specific environmental problems, and manages another \$100 million worth of projects financed by other funds for environmental purposes.

We believe that the 1992 conference should be a landmark in international thinking and planning for the environment. It should thoroughly inventory and fully evaluate the range of programmes and activities now under way or planned; identify the areas where further efforts are needed and recommend new or additional measures to fill these gaps; and improve organizational structures and their co-ordination.

The joint UNEP/WMO Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is well along in assessing the current state of the scientific evidence for climate change, considering the likely social, economic, and other impacts of such change, and evaluating possible ways to respond. The IPCC's work is expected to lead to negotiations on a framework convention on global warming with perhaps some agreement achieved by 1992. This process will also form a basis for each of us to consider how to orient and focus the work of the 1992 conference.

The challenge of the task before us becomes apparent when we realize that we have only two short years before the conference begins. A proper preparatory process, relying closely on UNEP, is necessary for a successful conference. With solid substantive and procedural preparation the 1992 conference should be able to

(Mr. Moore, United States)

produce concrete, viable and hopeful recommendations. The United States believes strongly that the 1992 conference should address development questions in an environmental context, rather than address environmental issues as merely one of the many factors in the development process. We support consensus decision 15/3 of the UNEP Governing Council as providing a balanced approach towards this question.

We place particular importance on the major environmental issues enumerated in the annex to decision 15/3, including protection of the atmosphere, the ocean, soil and fresh-water resources; the conservation of biological diversity; and the environmentally sound handling of toxic chemicals and hazardous waste.

Conference preparations should review environmental efforts undertaken nationally and internationally since 1972 and identify or outline feasible strategies for ongoing and future action. It will be necessary to monitor work in progress on various formal agreements; to consider how to meld environmental impact assessments into development planning; to improve information flow on technologies while respecting intellectual property rights; to improve environmental education and exchange of information on environmental policies; and to formulate recommendations strengthening institutions and clarifying responsibilities, especially within the United Nations system.

Also among the Conference's efforts will be the examination of environmentally sound technologies and their availability to developing countries. The United States recognizes that the developing countries are faced with special and urgent problems in this respect and need help in dealing with them.

Viable, carefully thought-out guidelines for a preparatory committee's deliberations are also contained in the annex to decision 15/3. The United States favours a well-focused set of task-oriented meetings. Its members should come from the techno-scientific and policy-making sectors of both developed and developing

(Mr. Moore, United States)

countries and from the United Nations system. We believe this preparatory committee would function best if - along with the conference secretariat - it were to be located in Geneva.

(Mr. Moore, United States)

Managing and directing the secretariat, which undergirds and oversees the preparatory process, will be a demanding job. The person in charge should be a distinguished public servant with strong credentials in environmental affairs and the ability to forge the consensus needed to engage discussions and develop recommendations. The director must have the confidence of Governments and the United Nations.

Regarding the venue of the conference, the United States is pleased to join the emerging consensus on Brazil as the host for this major meeting on the environment. Holding the conference in Brazil, a country with an extraordinarily rich ecological patrimony, should help to boost the world's consciousness of the importance of the environment. Moreover, Brazil's status as a major developing country with a strong industrial sector and abundant natural resources makes it representative of the effort to strike the right balance between environmental preservation and development priorities. We welcome the Non-Aligned Movement's decision to endorse Brazil, as expressed recently by its Co-ordination Bureau in Harare.

We believe that the expenses of the preparatory process should fall within the overall budget level now set for 1990 through 1991. This will be a reachable goal if the size of the preparatory committee and the number of its meetings are within reasonable limits. The annex to the UNEP resolution provides helpful suggestions in this regard. As to the conference itself, its funding should be provided, in our view, at the expense of lesser-priority activities.

The 1992 conference and the preparations for it demand the most serious attention. Faced and threatened by the deterioration of the environment all around us, the conference presents a crucial opportunity to counter global self-destruction. It constitutes a unique obligation to mobilize the ongoing

(Mr. Moore, United States)

global actions dealing with the environment. It will challenge us to understand the interrelated risks to our single biosphere and to map out a coherent, co-ordinated campaign to deal with them. Let us wisely summon and vigorously employ our knowledge, creativity and commitment to this task.

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan): At its forty-third session, last year, the General Assembly, in its resolution 43/196 of 20 December 1988, decided to consider at its current session the question of the convening of a United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992. The resolution also mandated the forty-fourth session to take appropriate decisions in regard to the exact scope, title, venue, date and financial implications of such a conference. I should like to take this opportunity to present the views of my delegation on these aspects of the proposed conference.

Pakistan shares the international concern over the progressive degradation of the environment. The greenhouse effect, the depletion of the ozone layer, climatic change, the growing intensity of toxic gases in the atmosphere, rapid deforestation and desertification and the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes pose a multiplicity of threats to the human race. It is imperative for the international community to engage in an in-depth dialogue on the nature and consequences of these threats with a view to formulating concrete measures for arresting environmental decay and preventing its proliferation in order to safeguard future generations against its deleterious consequences. My delegation therefore fully endorses the proposal for holding an international conference on the subject in the first half of 1992.

Environment is closely linked to development. Environmental issues cannot be addressed or treated in isolation. Environment is not a restricted, technical issue. It has far-reaching implications on the developmental dimension. In this

(Mr. Kamal, Pakistan)

context the proposed title "conference on environment and development" would appear to be quite appropriate.

The scope and objectives of the conference should not be difficult to define. The foremost objective should be the creation of a healthy, clean and safe environment through the enforcement of equitable principles that will not only prevent further degradation but also improve the quality of the environment in which we live today. That would require a clear perception of the causes of environmental degradation and the enunciation of internationally agreed measures for its arrest and reversal. In this context it needs to be understood that those who have been instrumental in producing the current state of the environment should also be prepared to shoulder their due responsibility in remedying the situation. The developing world, large parts of which have yet to reach even the preliminary stage of industrialization, should not be penalized in our search for common solutions to this problem. Decay of the environment in the third world is largely attributable to poverty and the absence of environmentally sound technologies. The countries in the third world have still to reach the level of industrialization or consumerism that could be considered to have contributed tangibly to the global environmental degradation. This fact would have to constitute the linchpin of the deliberations and conclusions of the proposed conference.

It ought to be realized that an attempt to freeze the level of industrialization in the developing countries would be not only inequitable but counterproductive. It would undermine the very objective of halting and preventing the degradation of the environment. Such an approach would engender unemployment and a further decline in living standards, which in turn would accelerate the processes of environmental degradation - namely, deforestation, desertification, potable water storage and proliferation of slums and disease. A more enlightened

(Mr. Kazal, Pakistan)

and purposeful approach would be to facilitate and accelerate third-world industrialization and overall economic development by transferring environmentally sound technologies and creating a supportive international economic environment in the areas of financial flows, market access and terms of trade. We believe that one of the important components of the proposed conference should be the determination of ways and means for strengthening international economic co-operation for advancing growth and development in the developing countries. The realization of that objective would by itself substantially eliminate the cause of environmental degradation in the developing world.

The conference would have to address the question of availability of additional and substantial resources for implementation of its decisions, in particular in respect of those aspects relating to the transfer of environmentally sound technologies to the developing countries.

Now a few words on the preparatory process. The universal dimension of the problem of the environment would appear to mandate universal participation in the preparatory process for the conference. In this regard the most suitable modality would be to set up a committee of the whole of the General Assembly to prepare for the conference. Non-governmental organizations should contribute to the process through submission of reports to the committee. The role of the United Nations system in preparing for the conference would be equally important. Inter-agency co-ordination should be streamlined and strengthened. The creation of a ~~new~~ separate structure for servicing the preparatory process would not appear to be necessary. We believe that sufficient resources and expertise exist within the system to contribute effectively to the preparatory process. We support the proposal for assigning the responsibility for the organization and substantial

(Mr. Kamal, Pakistan)

servicing of the conference to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, in collaboration with the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme. Additional temporary posts may be created, but only if absolutely indispensable. The existing machinery should be utilized to the optimum in the preparation and organization of the conference.

Last but not least, the conference would have to assure effective follow-up of its decisions through periodic monitoring of their implementation. This task would be assigned to the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. The creation of a separate intergovernmental structure for this purpose would appear to be unnecessary.

(Mr. Kamal, Pakistan)

Pakistan looks forward to this important conference and will participate actively in its preparation. I should also like to assure the Assembly of our full co-operation in making the conference a complete success.

Mr. EMENYI (Nigeria): The views and observations of the Government of the Federal Republic of Nigeria have been set out in addendum 1 to the report of the Secretary-General (A/44/256 and Corr.1), prepared in response to resolution 43/196, on the proposed United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992. Specifically, my Government has outlined its position on such issues as the objectives, content and title of the conference and appropriate ways of preparing for the conference.

The important place given to environmental issues on the international agenda is one of the most significant and hopeful signs of this fading decade. It is significant because until recently those issues were relegated to the background in international discussions, the impact of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment notwithstanding. It is hopeful because signs abound everywhere that environment has become an issue to which all nations rally enthusiastically. Thus, the 1992 conference will be an important occasion for international stock-taking on environment since the Stockholm Conference, but also to give effect to some of the emerging and promising trends on the issue.

An important encouraging trend is the recognition that a vast number of environmental problems are amenable only to collective international action. This awareness has been made more acute by scientific evidence pointing to increased climate change, global warming and depletion of the ozone layer, but also by the alarming rate of drought, desertification, deforestation, deterioration of bio-diversity, transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, and pollution of air, seas, rivers and bodies of underground water.

(Mr. Emenyi, Nigeria)

Another encouraging trend is the growing acceptance of the notion of environmentally sound and sustainable development. Equally important is the explicit recognition that sound environmental policies thrive best - indeed, can only be implemented - in the context of growth and development. But herein lies the challenge. As the report "Our Common Future" makes clear,

"It is ... futile to attempt to deal with environmental problems without a broader perspective that encompasses the factors underlying world poverty and international inequality." (A/42/427, p. 19)

"Two conditions must be satisfied before international economic exchanges can become beneficial for all involved. The sustainability of ecosystems on which the global economy depends must be guaranteed. And the economic partners must be satisfied that the basis of exchange is equitable; ... For many developing countries, neither condition is met." (ibid., p. 76)

"Growth in many developing countries is being stifled by depressed commodity prices, protectionism, intolerable debt burdens and declining flows of development finance." (ibid., p. 33)

The report from which I have just quoted, prepared under the chairmanship of Mrs. Brundtland, former Prime Minister of Norway, made a reasoned case for support for the developing countries in the interrelated areas of trade, commodities, money and finance, but also for wide-ranging reforms in the structures and policies of the key international financial institutions. I call attention to this fact because the escalating competition in proposals for new institutions to deal with environmental issues is matched only by conspicuous silence on the question of how to give effect to the recommendations on promoting growth and development in the developing countries.

(Mr. Emenyi, Nigeria)

Commitment by the developed countries to the protection of the environment should be accompanied by an equally important commitment to transfer adequate resources and environmentally sound technologies.

Still, another encouraging sign is that virtually all nations now endorse the proposition that the environmental dimension has to be incorporated into economic decision-making and planning.

Alongside these promising signs there are also disturbing trends. A major source of concern is that environmental considerations would appear to have become a new conditionality in lending and in granting assistance to developing countries by bilateral agencies and multilateral institutions. Such a tendency not only detracts from the wide and growing emphasis that most environmental problems - being global in character - require global solutions, but could lead to unravelling efforts to reinforce the international consensus on the environment question.

A related concern is that developing countries, which have been least responsible - and I want to underline "least" - for industrial sources of environmental degradation should not be burdened with an excess baggage of policy prescriptions for environmental restoration. The current asymmetries in international economic relationships are detrimental enough to the developing nations; it would be an unbearable burden if those patterns were extended to environmental issues.

There will be ample opportunity, both during the preparatory meetings for the 1992 conference and at the conference itself, to examine in detail proposals for addressing some of the issues to which I have referred. None the less, Nigeria wishes to put forward proposals on protecting the environment from desertification, as well as on pollution of air, seas, rivers and bodies of underground water.

(Mr. Emenyi, Nigeria)

Nigeria takes the view that the combating of desertification should include a mix of appropriate measures and policy instruments, including intensive afforestation programmes and debt-for-nature swaps to increase the level of resources committed to afforestation. At the same time, concessionary loans from developed creditor nations should be extended to developing countries to buttress their policies and programmes of reforestation.

The adverse effects on human health of pollution of the air, as well as of seas, rivers and bodies of underground water are too well known to require any explanation. Yet developing countries have the capacity neither to monitor and assess the damage arising therefrom nor to deal vigorously with the consequences, effluents and emissions from industrial plants. The transfer of environmentally sound technologies from the developed to the developing countries is essential if the capacity of developing nations to cope with these problems is to be enhanced.

There is wide recognition that poverty is a great degrader of the environment. Given that the number of persons living in absolute poverty is projected to rise above 1 billion in the developing countries by 1990, it is essential that bold measures be adopted to tackle the problem of poverty. Aiding the poor must be perceived no longer as an act of charity but as a matter of enlightened self-interest and the collective good of mankind.

(Mr. Emenyi, Nigeria)

The intricate relationship between promotion of growth, alleviation of poverty and protection of the environment is the best argument for striving to integrate the poor in the rural and urban areas of the developing countries into the formal economy so that they may be able to make a significant contribution to the development of their countries. In this respect, policies and programmes aimed at the development of human resources assume special importance. Aiding the poor should be seen as a long-term investment in human development. Support for the poor should have as its goal the development of their skills, to prepare them not only for the job market but also for self-employment. Human-resource development should be given appropriate focus, commitment and support in the United Nations system, in the context of the international development strategy for the next decade.

For a majority of developing countries, erosion is a major environmental, as well as economic, concern. By depleting soil fertility and diminishing crop lands, it reduces the supply of food and deprives the farming population of their means of livelihood. Seeking effective solutions to these problems would require national measures but also strong international support of a variety of types - a key type being assistance for soil renewal, and technology for the erection of erosion barriers.

The adoption of the Basle Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes is an important milestone in international efforts to attack traffic in those substances. Nigeria hopes that when the convention enters into force it will reduce the incidence of illegal traffic in hazardous wastes. Still, it will be necessary to establish an effective monitoring mechanism within the United Nations, possibly under the aegis of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to monitor illegal traffic in wastes. In effect, a global "Dumpwatch" should be instituted for this purpose.

(Mr. Emenyi, Nigeria)

I indicated at the beginning that these proposals were only an illustration of the range of policies and options needed to cope with certain environmental problems. The preparatory process leading to the conference, and the conference itself, present the opportunity to develop policies, programmes and action plans to cope with the environmental challenges of our time.

I assure this Assembly that Nigeria will participate actively and constructively in these meetings.

Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia) (interpretation from French): It is an honour and a great pleasure for me to make this statement on behalf of the delegations of Mauritania and Tunisia. I should like, first, to say how pleased we are that the General Assembly has decided at this session to give such priority to the question of the conference on environment and development - to be held in Brazil in 1992, thanks to the generous invitation extended by the Government of that friendly country.

Mauritania is a Saharan African country bordering the Atlantic Ocean, and it is on the list of the least developed countries. Tunisia is also an African land and a developing country located where the western and eastern basins of the Mediterranean - that semi-enclosed sea, cradle of great civilizations - join. It is not too far removed from the economic centres of the European continent, but at the same time it is a Saharan country which, like its sister Mauritania, is always threatened by drought and desertification. For Mauritania and Tunisia, therefore, it was essential that the 1992 conference have the theme set by the General Assembly in resolution 43/196 and retained by the Economic and Social Council in its decision 1989/87 - namely, environment and development.

Protection of the environment requires that effective measures be taken urgently to reduce and eliminate emissions caused by products and substances that are harmful to the environment, as well as practices that result from poverty and

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

the lack of development on one hand and from overdevelopment or profit motives on the other hand. As is stressed in the Brundtland report, such an approach would not be sufficient to guarantee lasting protection of the integrity of the Earth and of the spaces around it.

There are two parameters that need to be identified with the utmost clarity. First, there must be scientific diagnosis of the different phenomena that cause environmental deterioration but are not yet well understood. I refer, for example, to climate changes, global warming and depletion of the ozone layer. This diagnosis should then be related to the very causes of these phenomena. Once this is done, it will be possible to determine the degree of blame attaching to various States, regions and sectors of economic activity, as well as the less tangible contribution made by rural emigration, unemployment, poverty, lack of development and education, or policies of structural adjustment. This could be done as an objective exercise.

Secondly, the transformation of economic and social behaviour, together with changes in models of production and consumption by means of a universal pledge of solidarity for viable and lasting global development, would guarantee balanced survival and maintenance of the integrity of the Earth. Hence the high hopes of Mauritania and Tunisia for the 1992 conference as a major enterprise.

As developing countries which, like most others, still confront the hardships of a serious economic and development crisis, Mauritania and Tunisia continue, through great sacrifices, to apply environment-protection policies and programmes, particularly in industry and in the struggle against desertification. Through this approach, extremely costly pollution-control measures have been applied to activities that are regarded as causes of pollution. This has been done in an economic context characterized by substantial losses of agricultural revenue, caused especially by several consecutive years of drought.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

The burden of debt, which causes a massive negative transfer of financial resources, and the consequent contraction of investment, together with the very costly maintenance of our capacity to pay our international debts, underscore the enormous economic and social sacrifices that have been made in order that we may take at least some action to reduce the threat to the environment.

For these reasons, and because the state of the environment is a matter of constant concern to our countries - as can be seen from our commitment over the decades, together with that of other States, to safeguard the Mediterranean, from the struggle against desertification, and, in a more global context, our adherence to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and our recent accession to the Montreal Protocol on the Protection of the Ozone Layer, as well as Tunisia's participation, in the person of its Prime Minister, in the Hague summit - our delegations were among those to sponsor the draft resolution that later became General Assembly resolution 43/196.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

In fact, we believe that a decisive, urgent and global programme of action is necessary today in order to tackle the already considerable but ever-increasing dangers to the survival of our planet, to the chances of future generations, our children, for a healthy and prosperous life.

The phenomena that characterize the rapid deterioration of the ecology of our world may be global or more limited. The resulting responsibilities may be shared or individual. But those factors do not suffice as a working basis that Member States can use to identify the most effective ways and means of dealing with this serious - indeed urgent - situation.

The decision to convene such a conference - unprecedented in terms of its scope and sphere of action - comes, it is true, 20 years after the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, but it reflects the highest degree of awareness, of commitment and of participation by all States, as well as the support of the entire international community.

That is why it is essential that this session of the General Assembly clearly define, at the very outset, the mandate and terms of reference of the conference, as well as its objectives and the nature and status of the conclusions that will be reached, in the context of the General Assembly's rules of procedure and on the possible basis of a "gentlemen's agreement", following the example of the Caracas Conference on the Law of the Sea.

We are faced with such serious questions as climatic changes; global warming; the deterioration of the ozone layer; air pollution - especially transborder; pollution of the oceans, including semi-enclosed seas; drought and desertification. Therefore, the legal and political framework in which those issues will be dealt with must be as precise and relevant as possible, and in particular it must provide for equal participation by all States, regardless of their respective impact on the environment.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

The relevance of the analyses and effectiveness of the measures that the conference is to adopt will depend to a large extent on the way it deals with issues pertaining to progress, expansion of the world economy, and especially economic growth and socio-economic development in the developing countries, as well as the means for integrating them into the world economic system.

Models for development, production and consumption which have enabled the developed countries with a market or centralized economy to attain prosperity, well-being and progress have become very harmful to the integrity and viability of our planet.

Similarly, the lack of development, even underdevelopment, and the exacerbation of poverty and squalor have also proved to be incompatible with the ecological requirements of our planet Earth.

Hence, as we see it, the conference will have to identify the collective model for growth and global development of the future. Obviously, this will have to be a model shared and agreed upon by all, based on equity, balance and collective solidarity, allowing all nations to meet the legitimate requirements of their development and taking into account their capabilities and respective responsibilities, with a view to enabling all to contribute fully to safeguarding the planet, as well as to its sustained and ecologically harmonious development.

Indeed, it remains clear to us that the implementation of such a collective model for growth and development should be - as was stated yesterday by Mr. Brice Lalonde, on behalf of the 12 members of the European Community - in keeping with a timetable that will provide for stages in the achievement of objectives as well as time frames for implementation in accordance with States' various levels of development.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

Thus, we shall have to set up effective and viable machinery that will enable developing countries to contribute fully to the world effort to protect the environment. That machinery should provide the additional financial resources those countries need to ensure that their efforts can continue and also - and this is a major condition - to have free access on preferential and non-commercial bases to technology, including new technology that is reputed to be "clean" and scientific research. The environment could not be protected without that. The research and development capacities of such technologies, the dissemination of information, the transfer of scientific data, and the training of staff in the developing countries could be provided for through multilateral machinery agreed upon and established by the conference.

For those reasons the delegations of Mauritania and Tunisia believe that the conference should lead to a genuine global programme-agreement on international co-operation for the environment and development, binding on all participating Member States and providing for a system of control and multilateral co-ordination administered by the United Nations and combining the contributions of the system as a whole, including multilateral financial institutions and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Hence, the preparation of the 1992 conference should be conceived of as a common endeavour, involving all aspects of the environment and development.

As regards the environment aspect, we hail the work done by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) at its fifteenth session, and more particularly the suggestions in the annex to its decision 15/3. On that basis especially, it is now for the General Assembly to establish the preparatory structures for the conference by providing for systematic use of the capacities of the United Nations system in the two interrelated sectors: environment and development.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

In the view of our delegations, the Governing Council of UNEP in Nairobi - the African headquarters of the Organization - which has the benefit of the expertise and commitment of Mr. Mostafa Tolba, whose authority and wisdom need not be stressed, should play a central role in the preparation of the document concerning the environmental aspect. In that respect the Governing Council and the Environment Programme - more than any other bodies - have the competence, the mandates and the necessary ways and means.

As for the development aspect, the Organization's capabilities should be brought to bear, with the full co-operation of the entire United Nations system, especially the World Bank, to the effective and complete availability of expertise, studies, analyses and the necessary research, especially a study of the interactions between the various issues and, finally, between environment and development.*

* The President took the Chair.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

It is of course the responsibility of the Secretary-General to identify and propose someone to oversee this matter.

We believe that the UNEP Governing Council's proposal to enlarge its membership to encompass all Member States is appropriate. This would enable that body to carry out successfully the mandate that might be entrusted to it on the environment issue. It would be desirable, however, to ensure that sessions of the enlarged Council continue to be held at its headquarters, that is, in Nairobi, thereby guaranteeing acknowledgement of the full participation of Africa.

For purposes of co-ordination and decision-making a preparatory committee of the whole of the General Assembly should be set up, to which the UNEP Council would report through the Economic and Social Council. In our view the Economic and Social Council, a Charter organ and the central co-ordination body of the United Nations system, the revitalization of which is one of the priority objectives of Member States in the economic and social sectors, would be the appropriate intergovernmental focal point for the development aspects of the preparatory work. The Council could, in this context, be assisted by the Director-General for Development and International Co-operation, the Assistant Secretary-General in charge of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and its new secretarial structure, which should be established very quickly.

The secretary-general of the conference elected by the General Assembly would ensure co-ordination of contributions by the United Nations system and by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) as part of the support to be given to the work of the preparatory committee. It will be necessary, in view of the scope of the task, that the person chosen be supported by an appropriate secretariat, at a high level and with the greatest competence in the relevant areas, and that its composition take fully into account the principle of equitable geographical distribution.

(Mr. Ghezal, Tunisia)

The responsibilities of the present session of the General Assembly are considerable. We are convinced that our Organization, moved by the collective political will and fully aware of the scope and nature of what is involved, will take up the challenge, as has been shown by its performance in settling regional conflicts and maintaining international peace and security.

What better proof of confidence in the Organization and in multilateralism could States give than by ensuring the success of the United Nations conference on environment and development? What better message of hope would they give their peoples and generations to come than the collective effort to rehabilitate and strengthen the viability of our planet for the well-being, prosperity and economic and social progress of all?

Mauritania and Tunisia would like to assure the Assembly of their determination to co-operate fully in the attainment of that objective.

Mr. PEÑALOSA (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): The general debate at this session of the General Assembly confirmed that the major international problems have become global and pointed out the major challenges that we have to meet. In this context, the consumption and production of and traffic in narcotic drugs, the environment and development are issues of the utmost priority and involve the entire international community.

It is evident that the problem of the environment is essentially political, multilateral and global. This forum, the most important and representative in the world, is the right place to secure the greatest involvement in the effort to achieve a balanced environment and at the same time guarantee the development of the developing countries and of all mankind.

Without ecological balance - in other words, without a place to live - there can be no development; but, in turn, without development there can be no

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

environment. The problem therefore is global and must be considered in the broadest way, in the overall context of development, an area in which we all have responsibilities and commitments to shoulder.

The two major challenges in the forefront of global concern for the decade of the 1990s are reduction of poverty and protection of the environment.

The President of Colombia, in his address before this Assembly three years ago said:

"Extreme poverty cannot be accepted as the inevitable consequence of natural differences between men, nor can it be accepted as a characteristic of still-backward societies beset by want. I am convinced that, for those who will in the future have the responsibility of governing, the major challenge will be to overcome the barrier poverty has set up before us." (A/41/PV.18, p. 13-15)

For the majority of the developing countries the decade of the 1980s has been one of regression. Debt servicing, deterioration of the terms of trade, structural adjustments, and the reduction of international development assistance have placed too great a burden on the poorest developing country. All this has increased world-wide interest in the reduction of poverty as a universal priority.

Furthermore, threats to the global environment, such as changes in climate caused by an increase in carbon-dioxide emissions and the growing acceptance of the consequences of the destruction of natural resources, especially in tropical countries, have placed the protection of the environment among the primary objectives of development policy.

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

At their summit meeting last July the Seven agreed to redouble efforts to help the developing world to preserve its resources and to avoid the deterioration of its ecological systems.

The subjects of poverty and environmental deterioration are interrelated and are even further complicated by the rapid population growth in the developing world. Widespread poverty and the destruction of the environment threaten to impede the social and economic progress of many developing countries in the decades to come. The global challenge for our planet in the near future is to find ways of helping the developing world reduce poverty and at the same time preserve the environment. When we speak of the poor, we are speaking not only of the poor of today but also of the poor of the future.

As the President of the World Bank has quite rightly said:

"The undeniable fact of the 1980s is that growth has been insufficient, poverty continues to increase and the environment is inadequately protected. If we do not change these realities we shall be denying our children a peaceful and decent world in which it is possible for people to live."

In this forum the primary responsibility of the developed countries for the deterioration of the environment has already been recognized, in resolution 43/196. The industrialized countries have an ecological debt to mankind. It is a debt to future generations in all countries, who will have to live with the consequences of the irrational way in which the developed world has managed its natural resources and of the models of industrialization followed by those countries.

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

The deterioration of the environment that we are witnessing today contradicts the argument that economic growth in the developed countries necessarily leads to benefits in the developing countries. A revision of industrialization processes and of patterns of production and consumption should lead to sustainable development in those countries for the benefit of all mankind.

The development of environmentally safe technologies is critical. There can be no doubt that the future development of technology should lead to relations in which our countries benefit from an effective transfer of technology within a just and favourable international economic climate.

The current international political and economic situation is a source of great concern. As things now stand, the economic viability of our countries is in question. It is urgent, vital and a matter of priority for our efforts to be backed by a favourable economic environment. The way in which the industrialized world can pay its ecological debt is by helping to suggest alternatives that preserve the environment and at the same time ensure the development of our countries in a climate of understanding, equity and justice between all nations.

With the commitment and the political resolve of the entire international community, we must build a consensus regarding the challenge of the environment and development. This consensus must lead to fair and equitable negotiations that ensure harmony, peace and the development of present and future generations. Our delegation has been contributing to this process ever since it began. That is why we co-sponsored resolution 43/196. Both at the Sixth Ministerial Conference on the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean and in the Declaration of Amazonia adopted in Manaus, Brazil, on 6 May 1989 by the Heads of State parties to the Treaty on Amazonic Co-operation, we established the principles that inspire our position. At the last session of the Economic and Social Council, in Geneva, our delegation reaffirmed these principles, which are clearly stated in the unanimous

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

position of the Group of 77. The Declaration made by the Heads of State of the non-aligned countries last month in Belgrade also reflects the importance and the constructive position of the developing world. The Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in its decision 15/3 raises elements which, when fleshed out, will contribute to the consensus.

The United Nations conference on environment and development, planned for 1992, offers an excellent opportunity for finding, in a common effort and through clear commitments, a solution to the problems that jeopardize the very survival of our Earth and the political, economic and social stability of all countries.

With a view to achieving these international commitments, the decisions that will be taken at this session of the General Assembly will lay the foundations for the entire preparatory process of the conference and will therefore be decisive to the success that we all hope the conference will enjoy.

In conclusion, we would refer to the organizational aspects of the conference. We believe that for the preparatory work to be successful the Assembly should establish a committee of the whole as the highest authority, with permanent headquarters in the Organization. That would ensure the highest level of participation and representativity and would also reflect the political and universal nature of the challenge confronting us.

At the same time, the secretariat that will be established should be headed at the highest political level by the Secretary-General of the conference. That will ensure the necessary support for the preparatory committee and its officers. It would act as a central co-ordinating point for efforts and contributions from the entire United Nations system. Within this structure, the United Nations Environment Programme should play a major role, as well as the Department of International Economic and Social Affairs of the United Nations.

(Mr. Peñalosa, Colombia)

Last but not least, we welcome the consensus which has been emerging on accepting the generous offer of the Brazilian Government to be the host of this important event.

The conference on environment and development must be a success. The human beings of the present and of the future demand it.

Mr. URIARTE (Chile) (interpretation from Spanish): As we approach the last decade of this century, the preservation of our environment has acquired very special relevance. In recent years the international community has become aware that it is essential to give that subject priority attention.

This global forum could not dissociate itself from that concern. The General Assembly in recent years has adopted various resolutions responding to initiatives aimed at confronting specific situations of special concern and interest. The adoption of two important resolutions in 1987, which take an environmental approach up to the year 2000 and beyond - the approach taken in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development - marked the beginning of a new awareness of the global nature of the environment.

The adoption last year of resolution 43/196 was a very special moment. It revealed the high priority that Governments attach to the environment. The convening of the United Nations conference on environment and development, at the latest in 1992 - to which that resolution refers - is undoubtedly an important milestone.

My country shares the existing concerns about the environment. The political Constitution of the Republic of Chile, in its article 19 (8), enshrines the right of all persons to live in an environment free of pollution, and establishes that it is the duty of the State to see to it that that right is not diminished in any way. The State must also ensure the preservation of nature. The Constitution

(Mr. Uriarte, Chile)

further provides that the law may establish specific restrictions on the exercise of certain rights and freedoms in order to protect the environment.

In accordance with this constitutional mandate, our National Commission on the Ecology was established as a co-ordinating body for State action on environmental protection. It is composed of all the entities that have responsibilities in this field and is presided over by the Minister of the Interior. It has a technical and administrative secretariat and advisory groups composed of technical experts. It works in conjunction with non-governmental organizations and gives priority to informing the public and raising the general level of environmental awareness in order to create a sphere of action that is as broad as possible. A draft law on the environment is being prepared in that Commission. The law will contain basic principles and guidelines for the preservation of nature, the protection of the environment from pollution and the protection of our country's renewable resources.

(Mr. Uriarte, Chile)

Owing to the various problems deriving from our geographical configuration, there is a national awareness of ecological protection in my country. We are familiar with problems involving ocean and air pollution, erosion and desertification. Our national wealth is threatened, and that is why there is growing activity in that respect by the State and by individuals.

This has prompted Chile to participate actively in the competent international forums. We are a member of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme. We have signed important international treaties and more recent treaties are now in the process of ratification. Regionally, Chile is participating actively in the work of the Permanent Commission of the South Pacific, which is doing important work to preserve and protect the marine environment. Our country has also taken many initiatives bilaterally, inter alia, in establishing together with the Argentine Republic, a sub-committee on the environment in the framework of the bi-national commission that already exists between the two countries. We have also co-operated with the Government of Ecuador in programmes to increase the population of vicuña.

A list of different initiatives on environmental issues that our country has taken in the international sphere would be very long indeed. Our views on various areas of concern have already been stated in the competent forums.

My country attaches special importance to the convening of a conference on environment and development in 1992. In this connection, we appreciate and support the very kind offer of the Government of Brazil to host that event. We believe that a preparatory committee of the whole must be established, open to participation by all Member States and coming under the General Assembly. My country promises to participate actively in its work.

(Mr. Uriarte, Chile)

We believe that the preparations for the conference must be carried in keeping with the fundamental principle that protection of the environment is an integral part of the process of development and must not be considered separately. The conference must deal with both problems - the environment and development.

Environmental problems are global in nature. The ecological deterioration of our planet is a real, concrete fact that brooks no discussion. There are even some areas in which the damage is irreversible. Furthermore, increasing technological progress has brought with it a number of environmental imbalances that in some cases are changing the living conditions of our world's population. By way of example, it is essential to recall the progressive deterioration of the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect, both sources of profound concern.

Environmental problems affect developed and developing countries alike. It is indispensable that we seek solutions that will preserve an environment conducive to the survival of the human race, in the most extreme case, or simply that will maintain the quality of life that our present civilization has achieved for at least some of its population, although other broad sectors live in distressing conditions.

International co-operation should come out of the conference further strengthened. Concern over the environment and compliance with relevant norms should not be incompatible with the process of harmonious and vigorous development. The two concepts should complement one another.

We cannot discuss environmental issues without taking into account the urgent need for economic and social development, especially for the developing countries. That is why we welcome the initiative concerning the conference, which should unite the two aspects. The international situation could not be more conducive to this. New concepts and ideas are prevailing on the international scene, as the General

(Mr. Uriarte, Chile)

Assembly has seen. The United Nations has played an important role, and a climate of peace and understanding seems to be spreading to the most distant parts of our world.

The beginning of the next decade offers an important opportunity for the United Nations to play a major role in promoting international co-operation and development. Next year a new international strategy for development is to be adopted, and there will also be a special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation, in particular to the revitalization of the economic growth and development of the developing countries. These events, together with the conference on environment and development, will put the international community to the test, because they will determine whether we are capable of addressing those important challenges in a pragmatic way.

The question is whether the international community, and especially the developed countries, will be capable of establishing a true system of co-operation that takes into account the present critical situation of the developing world.

Genuine international co-operation is the only pragmatic means of overcoming the problems of environment. But that co-operation must not be confused with the application of undue pressure by some States that do not respect the sovereign right of other States to manage their natural resources and carry out their development plans in accordance with their own national needs. Nor should it be used as a pretext to attach conditions to the essential support of financial institutions.

It is therefore essential that developing countries have access to up-to-date technology and scientific information without adverse effects on the environment. Furthermore, it is important that wherever possible developing countries incorporate the environmental variable in their national plans and projects. My country is aware of the situation and will endeavour to achieve this.

(Mr. Uriarte, Chile)

On the basis of the legal equality of States and the principle of international co-operation, a balance must be found between the sovereign right of the State to manage its natural resources and the legitimate concern of the international community to guarantee the quality of the environment on a global scale.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to support the statement made in this forum by the Chairman of the Group of 77, because it completely reflects the position stated at the ministerial level in the Caracas Declaration of June of this year on this important subject.

Mr. POERWANTO (Indonesia): The Indonesian delegation warmly welcomes the decision to devote this plenary meeting to preparations for convening the conference on environment and development in 1992. This reflects the great importance the international community attaches to the search for appropriate solutions to the problems of the global environment as related to development. In this context, my delegation supports the views expressed by the representative of Malaysia in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of 77.

(Mr. Poerwanto, Indonesia)

As we are all aware, in recent years environmental degradation has captured the headlines of the world and the public consciousness of mankind. The Indonesian delegation concurs with the view that the threat of irreversible environmental destruction, through escalating pollution and hazardous waste proliferation, depletion of the ozone layer and climatic change, desertification, deforestation and other causes, has now become a major global preoccupation. As a result it has been firmly anchored on the international agenda, and has become a central concern of the international community. Scenarios of impending environmental catastrophe have been advanced and the very survival of mankind has been called into question.

As we approach the twentieth anniversary of the Stockholm United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, this failure to redress spreading environmental damage is disappointing. It has been a period, as rightly put by the Executive-Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in which environmental problems outweighed solutions. At best the international community has succeeded only in decelerating environmental damage since the first environment Conference in 1972. It is therefore our collective challenge to halt and reverse this slide and to set the path for environmentally sound growth and sustainable development as we enter the 1990s and go beyond into the twenty-first century. Nevertheless by the end of the 1980s we can say that the political will to protect our planet has finally begun to emerge. It is therefore imperative that the international community should not fail to seize this unique opportunity to harness the current momentum through the convening of the United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992.

I should like to comment on the scope and diversity of environmental problems. While such problems are global in scope, there is a clear dichotomy

(Mr. Poerwanto, Indonesia)

between many of them that are associated with the developed countries and are a consequence of affluence and those of the developing countries that mainly stem from poverty and underdevelopment. Furthermore, we believe that the resolution of these respective spheres of human environment also takes distinctive courses. On the one hand, the industrialized countries have their own catalogues of environmental damage which represent the lion's share of world environmental problems. We therefore trust that the developed countries will assume their proportional share in international co-operation for environmental protection in this respect. On the other hand, since the major environmental problems of the developing countries are associated with poverty and underdevelopment, their resolution cannot be achieved in isolation from the eradication of poverty through growth and development. As clearly stated in the Caracas Declaration of the Special Ministerial Meeting of the Group of 77, the concept of sustainable development must necessarily include meeting the basic needs of the peoples of the developing countries. It is also vital that the environmental issue be addressed on the basis of equitably shared responsibility among all nations and that it does not become a new bone of contention between the North and the South. Neither should environmental issues be used as an added conditionality in the context of development assistance.

From our perspective, the major objective of the conference should therefore be within the concept of environmentally sound growth and sustainable development. While we recognize that there are various definitions of this concept, we also believe that such development should meet our present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. In this context it is imperative that the conference should promote international co-operation to redress

(Mr. Poerwanto, Indonesia)

the degradation of the environment as an integral part of economic growth and development and to contribute to a better understanding of the relationship between the targets of growth and development as well as the necessity of protecting and enhancing the environment.

In conclusion, the Indonesian delegation believes that the conference should strongly reflect the interdependence of development issues and environmental concerns, which indeed are mutually reinforcing. We also hope that the forthcoming conference will truly embody and foster broad-based and balanced co-operation between the developed and developing countries.

Mr. GBEHO (Ghana): A few days ago, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs of Ghana, Dr. Obed Asamoah, speaking in the general debate of the current session of the General Assembly, affirmed Ghana's support for the proposed conference on the environment, to be held in 1992. I wish, from the outset to reaffirm that support because the danger posed to the environment is global and requires international co-operation to save our planet.

Our support for the conference is a clear manifestation of our belief in the urgent need for the preservation of the environment. It is indeed this concern that made it necessary for my Government, not too long ago, to direct that no development project should be undertaken in Ghana without first considering its environmental implications. To ensure the effective implementation of this directive and with a view to forestalling the establishment of projects that are likely to be detrimental to the environment, the Government has appointed a representative of the Ghana National Environmental Council to serve on the Board of Directors of the Ghana Investments Centre, which is empowered to promote and approve all investment projects in the country. Indeed, as I speak today, the

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

Ghana Government is hosting a four-day subregional international Conference on the Environment attended by the Gambia, Nigeria, Liberia, Sierra Leone and, of course, ourselves.

The danger of environmental degradation to our countries, both developed and developing, is indeed enormous and one would be naive to assume that it is only a problem for the developed countries or to contend that because they are largely the source of environmental degradation and pollutants of the atmosphere, developed countries alone should bear responsibility for the environmental clean-up and preservation. Environmental degradation is a threat to mankind on the same scale as nuclear and chemical weapons and the acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (AIDS) pandemic. The effects of global warming, ozone depletion, deforestation, desertification, ocean and fresh-water pollution and industrial pollution, to mention just a few, are not limited to any one country, group of countries or region. They are universal. We all, therefore, have a shared responsibility to fight the degradation of the environment. The Group of 77, to which Ghana belongs, has demonstrated its maturity by recognizing the global nature of the environmental issue and has accepted that environmental protection is a shared responsibility of both developed and developing countries.

It is, however, disturbing that while no country doubts the fact that environmental degradation is a threat to the world's ecosystems and food production and therefore poses a serious threat to the very survival of mankind, some transnational corporations, covertly supported by their home Governments, are relocating environmentally dangerous operations, as well as dumping toxic wastes, in developing countries without providing the adequate safety measures that are required of them by their home countries and without due consideration for the fact that these countries lack the means, financial and technological, to cope with the hazards that these operations and wastes entail.

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

Indeed, there are also some developed countries which are deliberately causing environmental degradation in parts of developing countries through the testing of nuclear devices. The activities of these countries and transnational corporations belie their professed belief in the preservation of the environment for our common good.

We believe that the adoption of an international convention, ratified by all countries, with appropriate penalties for the dumping of toxic wastes and testing of nuclear weapons, as well as for failure to provide adequate safety measures for nuclear and other environmentally dangerous operations, is the only way in which all countries can demonstrate their genuine concern for the protection of the environment not only in their own countries but in all parts of the world.

I am persuaded, as indeed most people are, that the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, of 22 March 1989, will meet the concerns of all if it is amended to provide for stopping waste traffic and relocation of environmentally dangerous operations from industrialized countries to developing countries desperate for hard currency, and for adequate safety measures to guard against accidental nuclear explosions such as the one that occurred in Chernobyl.

That there is a close relationship between poverty and environmental degradation can no longer be denied. Several speakers at the commemoration a few days ago of World Food Day emphasized this relationship and stressed the need for developed countries to help developing countries to overcome their economic problems so as to put an end to the degradation of the environment. The Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations could not have better echoed the Group of 77's sentiments when he stated that

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

"In order to protect tomorrow's world and guarantee access to wholesome food and water and clear air for all, the rich should share with the poor and stop making immediate profit their primary value."

In developing countries deforestation leading to accelerated erosion of the soil and destruction of wild flora and fauna is probably the major means through which the environment is degraded. This is done not for any fanciful reason but in order that their inhabitants may live. Indeed, the situation in many developing countries is such that they cannot help massive deforestation. For several of these countries timber is either the largest or second largest foreign exchange earner, and with the constant deterioration in the already low prices of timber on the world market, coupled with the large-scale under-invoicing of timber exports by the foreign companies which dominate the timber industry, increasing the volume of timber exports is the only way these countries can earn any appreciable foreign exchange for development. Aside from deforestation for export purposes, developing countries are compelled to engage in deforestation in order to obtain firewood and charcoal for cooking and, more important, to acquire new lands for farming for food - a process of shifting cultivation necessitated by a lack of fertilizers to replace lost nutrients.

The call to end shifting cultivation and commercial logging in forest areas, both of which result in massive destruction of the forest, can be effective only if developing countries can have access to an inexpensive alternative form of energy and either receive better remuneration for timber products or be compensated to the full amount of what they would have earned from their timber exports. It would seem that the time is about to come when the European Community must take a critical look at the STABEX Fund facility granted to African, Caribbean and Pacific countries. Should the Fund continue to be used to stabilize countries' earnings

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

from commodities whose production degrades the environment? Instead of encouraging developing countries to increase production of the same primary commodities for which demand and prices are constantly falling, would it not be a better idea for those funds to be increased and used in sectors where remunerations are higher and which pose less danger to the environment?

It would seem to me that what developing countries need most in order to help preserve our common heritage, the environment, is alleviation of their huge external debt and substantial financial flows without conditionality; access to markets of developed countries; better terms of trade; and access to intellectual property rights and appropriate technology.

Is it not, indeed, morally wrong to continue to ask developing countries to preserve their rain forests for the sake of all when all commodity arrangements are collapsing owing to the uncompromising attitude of consumer developed countries, resulting in a sharp fall in prices of cocoa, coffee, natural rubber and tropical timber, which are the largest foreign exchange earners for developing countries, and when developed countries deny those countries access to their markets?

In affirming the importance of environmental questions on the international agenda, I must add that Ghana is opposed to the issue of environment being an additional condition of assistance to developing countries. We would also find it difficult to support environmental policies the effect of which would be to halt the industrialization of developing countries. It is a fact that the resources required to acquire or develop new technologies that would render industries environmentally safe are not yet available to most developing countries. Rather than halt the progress in industrialization of such developing countries, developed countries may wish seriously to consider assisting developing countries to afford the change. I am aware that this would impose an additional burden on developed

(Mr. Gbeho, Ghana)

countries, but we should be realistic enough to admit that the preservation of our environment will tax our resources and, under present conditions, can be paid for only by those having the necessary means. Therefore, to wish to pass on the cost to developing countries would not only be unfair but also fault the implementation of plans to preserve our common heritage.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that environmental issues are indeed important and should be of great concern to all. Indeed, they deserve an international conference, and my delegation supports such a conference. However, let me say from the perspective of a developing country that the environment is neither the only important nor the most important issue that confronts us today. Thus, while we must by all means accord the environment priority on our agenda, we should not be so overwhelmed by it as to lose sight of other equally important issues that are of vital interest, in particular to developing countries.

Mr. GUTIERREZ (Costa Rica) (interpretation from Spanish): On behalf of the Central American countries - El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua and Costa Rica - I have the honour to speak on the present item. As we have done on other items in which we have a common interest, we Central Americans want to speak on this subject in unison. This of course will shorten the debate and also make our words more meaningful.

The international community has expressed its profound concern over the deterioration of the environment and the dangers that our Earth will face in the future if short-, medium- and long-term measures are not adopted to promote ecological preservation and strengthen international co-operation. Nations from the richest to the neediest share the conviction that the environmental problems must be dealt with.

Central America is pleased to note that in the past five years there has been intensified international action, under the auspices of the United Nations, to promote a better understanding of this problem. We note with interest the increase in the number of international agreements adopted and the number of congresses, conferences and seminars held for the purpose of increasing the awareness of the dangers of climate change and its probable environmental and economic effects, as well as its impact on development efforts. We agree with the following statement by the Secretary-General in his report on the work of the Organization:

"Now, with the possibilities of disastrous change in climate no longer dismissible, daily signs of an ailing and exhausted Earth are evoking universal concern." (A/44/1, p. 21)

This universal awareness of the problems of nature is reflected in many initiatives that set forth our moral obligation to give future generations a sound environment. In this respect we must emphasize the Brundtland report, "Our common

(Mr. Gutierrez, Costa Rica)

future". The analysis it contains and its sense of reality demand immediate responses from the community of nations, in particular as regards the strengthening of international co-operation.

Another initiative of global scope, which we believe will have positive results, is the convening in 1992 of a United Nations conference on environment and development. Our countries support this initiative and welcome the offer made by the Republic of Brazil to serve as host for this very important event. The conference would provide a unique opportunity for a dialogue about the sustainable management of our ecological resources that could forge a consensus between the rich and the poor nations on the resources of the Earth and the quality of our environment, in particular the indissoluble link between the environment and development.

We cannot forget that the unprecedented destruction of biological resources constitutes a new threat to all nations. It is the result of the adoption of harmful patterns of exploitation and inappropriate development models, of waste and opulence in the North and a struggle for survival in the South. The convening of this conference will be a major opportunity to formulate policies to reverse these negative trends and design a style of development compatible with the preservation of life in all its forms.

We should encourage a broad definition of sustainable development that would enable us to carry out dynamic processes ensuring, among other things, the well-being of the human race, the management of natural resources, the application of various scientific and technological approaches to development and the preparation of appropriate legal and administrative plans. This new style of development must provide the third world with options for meeting the basic needs

(Mr. Gutierrez, Costa Rica)

of present and future generations, while preserving the ecological base and the quality of the environment. We must redirect development strategies towards sustainable development for all nations.

The efforts the developing countries are making to alleviate their environmental problems would have more concrete, lasting and long-term results if there were favourable economic conditions. Unfortunately, however, these countries must tackle, simultaneously, a whole set of even more urgent national problems: malnutrition, hunger, a lack of proper housing, illiteracy. In other words, they must first eradicate poverty and underdevelopment.

The protection of the environment is a responsibility shared by all countries. None the less, the industrialized nations, which directly and indirectly have caused a large part of the ecological destruction, have an obligation to help the developing world implement sustainable-development policies; those are the nations with the necessary resources.

Additional financing is required, on favourable terms and without conditionality, to ensure reforestation, development, and the rational use of our forests, soil and water. The industrialized nations should create a fund for environmental rehabilitation and development. Such a fund would enable us to address these problems in a mutually respectful and constructive way.

The developing countries need policies that provide the incentives for a large increase in the Earth's biomass. They also need assistance to augment the technological and scientific capacity to protect the environment and tackle the crucial problems of the overwhelming majorities in those countries: poverty, hunger, malnutrition, illiteracy and despair. To that end, effective action must be taken to create new opportunities for development.

(Mr. Gutierrez, Costa Rica)

As regards the process for the preparation of the international conference on environment and development, our Governments believe that a preparatory committee should be established at United Nations Headquarters in New York. All members of the Organization should be allowed to participate in the committee, which should be in charge of the preparation for this important event.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, our Governments have expressed growing concern over the degradation of our global ecology. In March this year a meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Ministers of the Environment was held in Brazil. That meeting adopted the Brasilia Declaration, containing a Latin American policy for the preservation and protection of the environment, and an appeal for the promotion and strengthening of international co-operation and for additional resources to deal with the problem. In its resolution 15/17 the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme requests the Executive Director to initiate, in consultation with the Governments of the region, the formulation of an action plan for the environment in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In Central America, tropical forests have disappeared and we have done damage to our soil and our water basins and their potential for supplying potable water. With respect to these serious problems, our Presidents - in the context of the comprehensive principles for solving the Central American crisis - created the Central American Commission for the Environment and Development. Because the countries of our area are deeply interdependent, we regard regional co-operation as an essential tool for solving ecological problems. We are seeking rational management of our natural resources, pollution control, and the restoration of the area's ecological balance.

(Mr. Gutierrez, Costa Rica)

The establishment of this Commission was inspired by our conviction that if Central Americans are to have a better quality of life it is necessary to promote respect for the environment. This must be achieved within the framework of a model of sustainable development in order to avoid the destructive effects of earlier models on the natural resources of the region. Regional order in the use of resources is essential if lasting peace is to be achieved.

We want to protect and preserve the natural heritage of the region, which is rich in ecosystems. We want to establish co-operation between Central American countries in the search for and adoption of appropriate types of sustainable development. We want governmental and non-governmental organizations to be involved. We want to promote compatibility in national policy and legislation incorporating environmental concepts into national development planning. We want to determine areas for priority action - such as education and environmental training, the development of shared ecosystems and hydrobasins, the management of tropical forests, the control of pollution in urban centres, appropriate management of toxic and hazardous substances and residues, and other aspects of environmental degradation that affect the health and living conditions of our peoples. Lastly, we want to promote among the countries of the region a participatory, democratic and decentralized system of environmental management. For this purpose, international understanding, co-operation and support are required if the activities of the Commission are to be effective.

Other important initiatives are being taken in the regions - for example, the conversion of foreign debt to achieve ecological balance. Almost 5 per cent of Costa Rica's foreign debt has been converted to finance reforestation projects and the management of protected areas. Furthermore, the establishment of the "Maya

(Mr. Gutierrez, Costa Rica)

route" is intended to protect the tropical forests and their flora and fauna. The aim of this project is to promote environmentally sound tourism and create that kind of development which is not destructive and which generates employment and sufficient resources for their preservation.

We wish to preserve the environment, and we have the will to do so, but first we need to deal with the problems that afflict us: the overwhelming burden of servicing foreign debt; net transfers of our resources to the developed countries; the decrease in official development assistance; the low prices for our exported goods; and an international climate that is unfavourable to us, which is certainly the major obstacle to our meeting environmental problems adequately.

If the economic pressure is reduced, if there is appropriate incentive, we the developing countries will be able to commit ourselves to the cause of sustained development without imposing an undue burden on the poorest sectors of our populations.

In conclusion, we in Central America are convinced of the urgent need for co-ordinated international co-operation in adopting a global policy in keeping with the seriousness of the world environment situation, and avoiding unilateral action that could lead to inappropriate use of the additional resources that are required for this undertaking or to further deterioration in the living conditions on Earth. We hope that the international conference on environment and development will produce global agreements on measures to be taken immediately in the field of financial and scientific and technical co-operation between all nations. Given the willingness of all, it will be possible to take firm political action to achieve our sole objective - the ability to bequeath to future generations a just world, one that is environmentally sound and at peace.

Mr. OKEYO (Kenya): It is a pleasure for me to participate in this debate on the important issue of the environment, which is at the top of the agenda of items for urgent consideration and action by the international community. My delegation and I are confident that, under your guidance, Mr. President, we shall make the progress expected of us, and we assure you of our full co-operation and support.

As we approach the end of the 1980s, the environment on which we all - rich and poor - depend presents one of the most serious problems confronting the international community. There is international agreement that degradation of the environment - perhaps it should be put the other way round: environmental protection, conservation and improvement - must be dealt with urgently and effectively. In view of the mounting global concern - expressed publicly - about the continuing deterioration of the state of the environment, as well as the increasing amount of documentary evidence provided by scientists and experts, it is imperative that Governments take action.

Yet, as the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) pointed out in his introductory statement concerning the agenda item before us, the torrent of words is not being translated into deeds. There is no evidence of a slackening-off in the destruction of tropical forests, a slowing-down in the march of deserts, or a diminution in greenhouse-gas emissions. There is therefore an urgent need for Governments to heed the Executive Director's call:

"In the next decade crucial actions towards environmental protection and repair must be taken, and at a much faster pace. The alternative delay could well mean that pollution, degradation and destruction will combine in a global environmental emergency beyond our experience."

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

This session of the General Assembly provides Governments with immense opportunities to agree on concrete measures and actions to spearhead the movement towards a clean and safe environment. Among the issues in the area of the environment upon which the General Assembly must take action at this session is the proposed convening of a United Nations conference on environment and development not later than 1992. This is a matter on which I wish to comment and to express the views of my delegation.

In resolution 43/196, the General Assembly set out the scope and general objectives of the substantive agenda of the proposed conference, which we support. In the same resolution the General Assembly assigned specific tasks to the Governing Council of UNEP, which is the appropriate United Nations body. The Council was invited to submit, through the Economic and Social Council, its views on the objectives, content and scope of the conference, and to comment on the date, venue, title and financial implications. Following thorough preparations at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, in which all United Nations organs and bodies that are concerned were involved, and after intensive negotiations at the fifteenth session of the Governing Council in May this year, the Council adopted decision 15/3, which is before the Assembly as document A/44/25.

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

It is important to emphasize that the fifteenth session of the Council was attended by the unprecedented number of 103 Governments, with 44 of them represented at ministerial level. Virtually all United Nations organs, bodies and agencies were also represented. Numerous experts from non-governmental organizations, scientists and academicians attended that meeting. Decision 15/3 and the report of the Council provide a rich basis for the General Assembly's consideration of the issue and the possibility of reaching a consensus.

Among the issues that the Governing Council of UNEP considered intensively were the substantive topics that the conference should deal with and the pre-conference organization and preparations.

Kenya, being a member of the Group of 77 and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, associates itself with the position of both, as contained, respectively, in the Caracas and Belgrade Declarations, which endorsed the suggestion that Brazil should be the venue of the conference. The opportunity of deliberating in a developing country on environment and development will undoubtedly provide additional experience and practical evidence of the realities of the difficult choices that must be made in view of the interdependence of environmental and developmental problems in the 1990s, in contrast to those of 20 years ago at the Conference held in the affluent surroundings of Stockholm in the 1970s.

Kenya, which was among the first sponsors of the resolution on the conference, supports the proposal that its title should be "United Nations Conference on Environment and Development". As our Head of State President Daniel arap Moi pointed out during his address at the opening of the fifteenth session of the Governing Council of UNEP, when he was also honoured with a Global 500 Award for his contribution to the cause of the environment,

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

"Environmental problems are human in origin and global in nature; their solution would therefore require both human intervention and global action and co-operation."

We believe that any meaningful efforts to solve environmental problems must recognize the basic factors at the root of the interdependence of the environment and human economic and social factors, such as the struggle for food, clean water, energy and improved living conditions in developing countries as opposed to the ceaseless pursuit of affluence in the developed, industrialized countries.

We fully support the proposal that the conference should be for a duration of two weeks, ending on 5 June 1992 to coincide with World Environment Day.

We support the proposal that participation should be at the highest level of representation. In this connection, we emphasize the importance of ensuring the effective participation of developing countries during the preparatory stage and in the conference itself. Developing countries need all possible support to strengthen their ability to establish the necessary broad-based national preparatory machinery. National non-governmental organizations, in particular women's organizations, should be fully involved. The organs, organizations and programmes of the United Nations system should contribute to and participate fully in the preparations.

Kenya attaches great importance to strengthening involvement at the regional level and ensuring that the results of such involvement are widely disseminated with the reports constituting the contribution of the regional economic commissions. In this connection, the results of the First African Regional Conference on Environment and Sustainable Development, held in Kampala, Uganda,

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

12 to 16 June 1989, at the ministerial level of participation and jointly organized by UNEP and the Economic Commission for Africa, constitute an important contribution.

On the subject of the topics for the conference, my delegation believes that the elements recommended by the Governing Council of UNEP provide an excellent basis for the General Assembly's consideration of this crucial matter in order to arrive at a consensus. Negotiations on topics for the conference will have to be based on the clear recognition that meaningful solutions to environmental problems can be reached only through the co-operation and commitment of all countries and an understanding of the constraints that developing countries face as regards their financial and technological ability to deal with environmental problems while under pressure to deal with the problems of poverty.

In this connection, the positive position of the Group of 77, as set out in the Caracas Programme of Action, in which the developing countries reaffirm their commitment to the strengthening of international co-operation for the protection of the environment, will be an important contribution to progress in this direction.

The concerns of the members of the Group of 77 on matters such as sustainable development, conditionalities, responsibilities, poverty, the struggle for food, water and energy and their impact on the environment cannot just be dismissed or reduced to a matter of lack of attention to the management and planning of national resources. Their concerns derive from real experience of the interdependence of environment and development. Therefore the root causes of environmental degradation must be identified and targeted for specific action without diverting the conference from its concentration on environment. The views expressed by the non-aligned countries in the recent Belgrade Declaration should also contribute to progress in the negotiations.

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

One of the important topics for consideration and inclusion in the agenda of the conference is the urgent need to strengthen the role and effectiveness of the United Nations Environment Programme. The Governing Council of UNEP has for a long time repeatedly emphasized the need to strengthen its role as the co-ordinating body for action on environment throughout the whole United Nations system, as well as the effectiveness of its mandate to serve as a catalyst for initiatives at the international, regional and national levels. In its recent decision 15/1, adopted at its fifteenth session, the Council emphasized once more the urgent need for action to strengthen its role in view of mounting environmental concern and the need for closer international co-operation. We support the strengthening of the role and mandate of UNEP and emphasize the need for urgent action, without necessarily delaying until 1992.

The Kenya delegation, however, deplores so-called institutional reforms that would cause international organs to proliferate and complicate the role of the United Nations in the field of environment, seriously reducing its ability and effectiveness.

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

Some of the views expressed at the last Governing Council that "there might be two environmental bodies within the United Nations system, each with its own mandate" and that "the body envisaged by the Declaration of the Hague could be an environmental authority or council comparable in political influence and prestige to the Security Council" would, if implemented, be detrimental to the ability of the United Nations to deal effectively with environmental problems and also prejudice the sovereign rights and development interests of developing countries.

Environmental problems are, foremost, the consequences of poverty in developing countries and the excesses of affluence in the developed industrialized countries and should remain in the appropriate organs of the United Nations. Selfish attempts to plunge them into the trenches of power politics should be resisted. The preparatory session and the 1992 conference should therefore devote their limited time and resources in considering, and taking action on, the strengthening of the effectiveness and mandate of UNEP in the United Nations and at the operational levels rather than indulging in so-called reform proposals that would certainly turn the forum into a political arena.

A number of other important issues are to be decided at this session, especially on the preparatory intergovernmental machinery and the secretariat, on both of which I shall now present Kenya's views. In its decision 15/3 the Governing Council of UNEP recommended, in paragraph 6 of the annex, that the preparatory committee

"should be the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, open on a basis of equality to all States Members of the United Nations or members of a specialized agency or the International Atomic Energy Agency".

(A/44/25, p. 118)

This recommendation is based on established practice and should be accepted by the General Assembly. Last year the General Assembly requested the Governing

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

Council of UNEP to address this issue. No other governing body was addressed so directly as UNEP, which within the United Nations is the organ with the expertise on environmental questions and in the environment field. The recommendation is consistent with the way in which we have handled such matters. For instance, when the matter of the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy came up, the Assembly entrusted the United Nations Committee on Natural Resources - which was open to other Member States - with the preparatory process. Clearly, it should not be different when it comes to the case of UNEP.

A related question is: where should the preparatory committee meet? First and foremost, it should meet at the seat of UNEP, Nairobi. But there should be more than one or two more meetings, and these could be held in other United Nations headquarters - New York and Geneva - and, if a further meeting is required it should again be held at the seat of UNEP, in Nairobi. It is our considered view that the preparatory process should benefit immensely from the experience and expertise of UNEP; it would then be assured of the closest consultations for the preparation of the conference.

This brings me to another very important matter, namely, the secretariat to prepare for the conference and its location. Ideally, the secretariat should have been that of UNEP. But we know it is traditional that a secretary-general to head such a process be named by the United Nations Secretary-General. Considering that the conference needs to be extremely well prepared, that time is running out and that such a secretariat should closely consult with UNEP, its ideal location should be Nairobi. Over the last 16 years UNEP has efficiently co-ordinated environmental activities from Nairobi, and inter-secretariat meetings have alternated between Nairobi and Europe to facilitate such co-ordination. The preparatory secretariat for the conference could no doubt do likewise. We note, however, that the Governing Council recommended that such a secretariat be set up in Geneva.

(Mr. Okeyo, Kenya)

As the Executive Director of UNEP, Mr. Mostafa Tolba, stated, environmental momentum has been towering high in the skies. Much is expected in this field. The foremost United Nations forum on the environment is UNEP, and as the Assembly decides on the important matters before it this fact should not be bypassed at any cost.

The 1992 conference, which this session is to finalize, should set the stage for environmental action for decades to come and contribute significantly to the achievements made since the Stockholm Conference in 1972. The Stockholm process was supplemented by a number of reviews, among them a session of a special character in 1982, 10 years after Stockholm. More recently, the report "Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond" and the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development were submitted to the General Assembly when it adopted resolutions 42/186 and 42/187, respectively. The net result should be a strengthened environmental movement and as many global instruments as are possible between now and 1992. That movement would be spearheaded by a strengthened UNEP in the United Nations, with the active participation of the rest of its system.

The United Nations created environmental machinery nearly 20 years ago. All subsequent reviews have called for its strengthening. The next steps cannot and should not misconstrue this clear message. My delegation will take an active part in the negotiations on the above and other related topics concerning the forthcoming conference. But we submit that everything possible should be done to support UNEP in efforts to organize this conference.

TENTATIVE PROGRAMME OF WORK

The PRESIDENT: We have heard the last speaker for this afternoon in the debate on the proposed 1992 United Nations conference on environment and development. The debate on this aspect of sub-item (f) of agenda item 82 will be

(The President)

concluded tomorrow morning as the first item, to be followed by consideration of agenda item 14, "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency".

Before I adjourn the meeting, I should like to inform the Assembly that consideration of agenda item 32, "The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security", which was originally scheduled for Wednesday morning, 25 October, is being postponed to allow the review by the Fifth Committee of the programme budget implications of draft resolution A/44/L.17. Pending confirmation, however, we may be able to take up this item tomorrow afternoon. I suggest that representatives consult the scheduled meetings in tomorrow's Journal.

The meeting rose at 6:40 p.m.