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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.25 p.m.

GENERAL DEBATE (continued)

1. Mr. AYALLA LASSO (Ecuador) said that in an increasingly interdependent world, the serious economic and social problems that remained unresolved constituted the greatest threats to international peace and security. A world in which such a gulf existed between rich and poor could not be called a world of freedom and democracy. The work of the Committee at its forty-fourth session should help strengthen the foundations for more realistic and objective co-ordination and co-operation which would go far beyond the United Nations's role of providing information and analyses and would enable the Organization to engage in a genuine process of political management. There were examples of co-ordination and co-operation in small forums, such as the European Economic Community or the Nordic group. However, that practice should become more widespread, since the economic, trade, financial and monetary decisions of the developed countries had global repercussions. Decisions of that nature should not be made exclusively by, and in the interests of, those countries. Such situations should be borne in mind during the preparation of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade.
2. The analysis of each region's specific situation and of the economic mechanisms should be carried out with flexibility. A follow-up system providing for periodic evaluations of the successes and errors of the strategy would help avoid the distortions of the Third United Nations Development Decade. To term the 1980s a decade lost to development was to tell only part of the story. If the possibility of growth had disappeared for the debtor countries for at least another 10 years, and if the current economic indicators corresponded to those of the 1970s, those countries would enter the twenty-first century with a 30-year economic lag.
3. The current economic crisis had global consequences, and it was in the interests of the entire international community to overcome it. The current trends in international trade made it difficult for the developing countries to gain direct access to industrialized markets on an equitable basis. For more than 20 years, the developing countries had been advised to diversify their production and exports, and they were making serious efforts to do so. However, it was also necessary for the industrialized markets to suspend their systems of internal subsidies for the same or similar products, lift tariff barriers, discontinue protectionist measures and put an end to the direct or indirect sanctions by which they penalized the developing countries economically.
4. The world economic order could not continue to be based solely on a Great Power's trade deficit, the capital surpluses of other Powers, the constant fluctuations in bank interest rates, the millions of tons of foodstuffs stored in industrial silos or the enormous profits of transnational corporations. The United Nations should take the leading role in redefining the purposes of growth and development, bearing in mind that the human being was the beginning and end of those processes and should not be made ancillary to economic and financial

(Mr. Ayalla Lasso, Ecuador)

considerations. In the view of his delegation, the holding of a special session of the General Assembly on the reactivation of economic growth, particularly that of the developing countries, would provide a good opportunity to redefine the terms of co-operation and co-ordination between the United Nations and all its agencies, as well as Member States which could and should help overcome mistrust, fear and egoism with a view to fostering sustained economic growth.

5. The United Nations should promote better and more coherent international political and economic co-ordination which would ensure greater economic stability and which would reflect the real circumstances in which thousands of human beings lived. Many of the reports and documents, especially those prepared by financial institutions, emphasized the percentile values of economic growth, of trade and the achievements of certain economic reforms but did not mention that such statistics did not reflect the growth of absolute poverty which, according to an estimate made by the Asian Development Bank, included 500 million people in Asia and a similar number in Latin America and the Caribbean and in Africa. While thousands of millions of people in the developing world felt the effects of absolute poverty, the economy of the developed nations continued to expand. While more than 350 million tons of foodstuffs continued to be stored in the affluent countries, 280,000 people died each week from malnutrition and hunger, and the assistance offered to famine-stricken countries did not exceed 10 million tons annually.

6. The problem of debt had been a recurring theme during the general debate, and the United Nations could play a unique role in that area. It was abnormal and dangerous that the developing world had become a net exporter of capital and that it was financing the growth and accumulation of capital in the developed world. It was abnormal and dangerous that every Ecuadorian child was born with a debt of more than \$1,000, while that was the amount each citizen of a large developed country spent annually on gambling. Everyone recognized the real and potential impact of the problem of debt and no one denied any longer its political nature. However, the courage and generosity needed to adopt adequate measures to resolve it were still lacking.

7. The United Nations should give special attention to co-operation with Governments in human resources training programmes, and should endeavour to ensure the transfer of science and technology to developing countries, an undertaking which required broad international co-operation based on the concept of solidarity.

8. Finally, Ecuador attached great importance to the protection of the environment and considered that it was essential to link the problems of the environment and development. Concern for environmental protection must take account of development needs and the sovereign right of countries to make use of their own natural resources in a responsible and adequate manner.

9. Dame Ann HERCUS (New Zealand) said that, although New Zealand had been classified as a developed country, it had experienced many of the basic economic pressures facing developing countries. New Zealand had been making efforts to get the fundamentals of a sound economy in place and, after five years, New Zealanders were beginning to see the benefits of rigorous structural adjustment, which

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(Dame Ann Hercus, New Zealand)

included increased productivity in key sectors, a drop in the average annual rate of inflation and a decrease in the official overseas debt. Those were positive indications of the improving health of the New Zealand economy. Such results had not been achieved without significant cost for many New Zealanders and, since New Zealand was a nation which traded primarily in agricultural products, it remained closely linked with the world economy.

10. At both the national and the international level, effective economic and social activity was crippled or seriously threatened if sound economic support did not exist. No developed or developing country could seriously confront current economic and social issues if it lacked the required economic health. All countries were part of the global economy, and the alleviation of extreme chronic poverty in many regions and countries depended on coherent international solutions. Environmentally responsible development programmes required extra financial resources.

11. The reality of the current international economic situation could be seen in many of the statements made during the general debate which linked the problems of external debt with the state of international trade practices. For New Zealand, as for many members of the Committee, the current Uruguay Round of multilateral trade negotiations represented a vital opportunity to improve international trade practices, and it was essential that the outcome of the Round should include a substantial liberalization of international trade in agricultural products, for the benefit not just of New Zealand but also of many developing countries confronted with unacceptable protectionist barriers to agricultural trade.

12. Inseparable from the economic development issues before the Committee at its forty-fourth session was the large and diverse range of environmental issues. The United Nations system must play a central and decisive role in deliberations on the interrelated issues of environment and development. Since the future of the planet was at stake, the outcome of such deliberations must be positive. An example of the urgency of that issue and the imperative of sustainable development was the information that as much as half of the ozone layer over Antarctica had disappeared. Leading scientists speculated that the hole in the ozone layer might become bigger than ever as a result of the 10 per cent increase in chlorine in the atmosphere since 1987. While the international community was already in agreement about the need to halt ozone depletion, action was now urgently needed to strengthen the Montreal Protocol, and all countries should ratify it. There were many other environmental problems to which solutions must be found, and a week ago the Prime Minister of New Zealand had proposed, in his address to the General Assembly, that consideration should be given to the best possible co-ordinating mechanisms within the United Nations system to halt and regulate environmental degradation.

13. In its deliberations, the Committee would also be considering climate change and international progress, an issue to which New Zealand attached high priority. Another environmental concern of high concern to New Zealand was the ecologically destructive practice of drift-net fishing. Drift-net fishing involved the use of

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(Dame Ann Hercus, New Zealand)

large quantities of huge nets, each up to 50 kilometres in length, which drifted on the ocean each night. That fishing practice had disastrous effects on the marine environment and was capable of wiping out the target fish species and of severely depleting other marine living resources, such as birds, whales, dolphins, seals and turtles. In the Tarawa Declaration, the South Pacific Heads of Government had already expressed their abhorrence of that fishing method which, by destroying fisheries resources, could destroy their economic livelihood. Countries of the northern Pacific were also concerned at the potentially disastrous effect of drift-net fishing on their marine resources. New Zealand was working together with the United States on the draft of a resolution on the subject of drift-net fishing and its environmental significance, which they would submit to the Committee.

14. Miss BAIN (The Bahamas) said that many of her delegation's views had been expressed in the statement made by the representative of Malaysia on behalf of the Group of 77. She then drew attention to the importance of interdependence for international economic relations and the development process and recalled the complex developments and revolutionary transformations which had marked the international economy during the 1980s. The developing countries had found it difficult during that period to overcome problems caused by stagnant economies, insufficient financial flows, protectionism, declining commodity prices and foreign debt. While the short-sighted view was that those countries were caught in a web of their own making, the international community had come to appreciate the true complexity of the situation.

15. In their statements to the Committee, the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and the Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs had offered a discouraging prognosis for many developing countries. One major obstacle to a resumption of growth in those countries was the persistent debt crisis, which exacted a high social and economic toll of debtor countries and threatened the foundations of their fragile political institutions. Yet the 1990s still offered hope, provided that a dialogue was maintained and an integrated approach to problems adopted that would allow the developing countries to move from adjustment to genuine development.

16. Improved relations between the two super-Powers and the abatement of many regional conflicts had allowed the international community to turn its attention to the many economic challenges facing the 1990s. The special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation and the preparation of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade would provide an invaluable framework within which to begin a political dialogue on economic and social problems. Agreement must be reached on the principles governing co-operation in the years to come, and multilateral activities must be harmonized with agreed objectives and priorities.

17. As early as 16 years before, when the Bahamas had attained independence, the country's Prime Minister had stressed the need to promote interdependence. The fact that co-operation was still necessary in the contemporary world was evident

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(Miss Bain, The Bahamas)

from the fact that exporters in the North relied on the South for markets; unless the latter achieved economic growth, they could not be able to purchase goods and services from the North.

18. A major challenge to be faced in the 1990s was the development of human resources, a key factor in the development process. Human resources development must be targeted towards the creative potential of every man and woman and the development of self-reliance. Skills must be acquired so that people could manage industries which utilized the new and improved technologies so crucial to development. In that connection, the recent adoption by the Economic and Social Council of resolution 1989/120, on the development of human resources, reaffirmed the international community's belief in the importance and relevance of that aspect of the development process, one which must also be addressed in the forthcoming international development strategy.

19. Her delegation was concerned at the continuing degradation of the environment, which, if left unchecked, would threaten man's very survival. Environmental issues underscored the complexity of global interdependence. The international community must seek ways and means of achieving sustainable development that would protect the environment for future generations. At the same time, the legitimate aspirations of the peoples of developing countries must not be unduly penalized. A balance could be achieved if both developed and developing countries pursued a constructive dialogue. In that connection, the Bahamas supported the convening of the United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992 and welcomed the recent adoption of Economic and Social Council resolution 1989/101, which drew attention to the need for additional resources for the environmental programmes and projects of developing countries.

20. The Bahamas condemned the dumping of toxic and hazardous wastes in developing countries. Developed countries must adopt strong administrative and legislative measures to prohibit the export of such wastes. She welcomed General Assembly resolution 43/212 and supported the call of the Movement of Non-Aligned States for the establishment of national monitoring units which would exchange information about companies and ships that engaged in illegal dumping of toxic wastes.

21. Her delegation was particularly concerned at the continued pollution of the marine environment, with its consequent impact on marine life. The islands of the Bahamas were surrounded by some of the cleanest and clearest waters in the world, and tourism was the engine of the country's economic growth; fishing was also rapidly becoming a major industry. Her delegation would therefore support any multilateral efforts aimed at protecting the marine environment.

22. Mr. BORCH (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) welcomed the recent reduction of international tension and confrontation as well as the increased confidence, the initiation of a political dialogue and the intensification of contacts between States. The socialist countries' proposal for a comprehensive approach to strengthening international peace and security had met with growing support. Those countries believed that halting the arms race and proceeding with

(Mr. Borch)

disarmament were the most important tasks currently facing the international community. In addition, military expenditures must be cut to release funds for social and economic development.

23. The countries members of CMEA supported the efforts being made, with the active involvement of the United Nations, to solve the many economic problems facing the world. Discriminatory restrictions which thwarted the development of commercial, economic, scientific and technological ties and access to modern technology must be eliminated. No political or other considerations should stand in the way of economic relations.

24. Current global economic trends indicated that the world economy was becoming a single entity outside which no State, regardless of its level of economic development, could develop normally. Bearing that in mind, the socialist countries had elaborated the concept of international economic security, by which they meant the establishment of conditions that would allow all States to participate in international economic life while ensuring that national interests were protected against destructive external forces. That process could be promoted by the development of indicators which would enable the international community to tackle emerging problems promptly and facilitate the co-ordination of economic policies. The countries members of CMEA were well aware of the role that the United Nations could play in macro-economic co-ordination at the global level. The concept of international economic security should take into account the principles of such instruments as the Charter of the United Nations, the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and the Final Act of the seventh session of UNCTAD. The Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States was a particularly important policy document for the restructuring of international economic relations.

25. Recent positive trends in approaches to international economic problems would be enhanced by the formulation of the international development strategy for the 1990s. The strategy must provide for collective approaches to global economic problems and promote world economic development on the basis of genuinely interdependent national interests. The special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic development would also play an important role in that regard.

26. Particular attention must be paid to assistance to the least developed countries, most of which were African States. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 43/186, the CMEA member countries were actively participating in the organization of the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries and hoped that firm measures would be taken to prevent the economic situation of those countries from deteriorating further.

27. The views of CMEA with regard to the restructuring of the international monetary and financial system remain unchanged from those expressed at the forty-third session of the General Assembly. CMEA continued to attach particular importance to broad economic co-operation with developing countries on the basis of mutual benefit, full equality and stability.

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28. CMEA appreciated the work done by the United Nations and its specialized agencies and supported the growing role played by the Organization in solving urgent global problems. The Council was prepared to expand and improve its co-operation with the United Nations system in all areas relating to its terms of reference. It attached particular importance to co-operation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and welcomed the results of the fifteenth session of the UNEP Governing Council, during which important consensus agreements had been reached on issues such as the organization of the United Nations conference on environment and development.

29. Global control over international co-operation in the field of the environment was essential, and the socialist countries were interested in developing the concept of international ecological security as a contribution to the development of all States in a conflict-free world.

30. Given the great demand for international scientific and technological co-operation at the global level, the countries members of CMEA were prepared to help in the elaboration and implementation of a unified global programme in that field. The CMEA Comprehensive Programme for Scientific and Technological Progress, adopted in 1986, sought to foster the development of international economic, scientific and technological ties and eliminate any artificial barriers to their development.

31. Noting that CMEA had marked its fortieth anniversary in 1989, he briefly reviewed the Council's achievements during that period. As the 1980s drew to a close, however, the Council had entered a difficult period: despite past successes, the current economic situation called for an improved mechanism for economic co-operation among its member States.

32. The countries of CMEA viewed themselves as an integral part of the world economic system, and sought to make their economies more open to the West and to become more actively involved in the world economy and the international division of labour. The Council welcomed the efforts by UNCTAD to identify further steps for the development of trade between countries having different social and economic systems. The establishment in 1988 of close ties between CMEA and the European Economic Community was another welcome development. Bilateral relations between individual EEC and CMEA countries were dependent on the integration achieved in the two organizations; areas in which organizational co-operation could be most effective included standardization, environmental protection, science and technology, transport, statistics and long-term economic forecasting.

33. Given the primordial importance of the economic and social progress of peoples, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance was endeavouring to enhance the international prestige of the United Nations and strengthen its role in the development of international co-operation.

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34. Mr. BEN MOUSSA (Morocco) said that his delegation fully endorsed the remarks made by the representative of Malaysia on the behalf of the Group of 77.

35. He wished to reiterate how important the general debate in the Second Committee was: the right to debate was a sovereign right of States which reflected the essential function of the United Nations. While the shortening of the general debate in recent years had been attributed to the financial crisis, which in turn was largely the result of a failure of one Member State to pay its assessed contribution, the developing countries' right of expression could not be limited if the debate was to be balanced.

36. Recalling the remarks made at the 3rd meeting by the representative of France on behalf of the States members of the European Community, he pointed out that the developing world was simply too big to be reflected in technocratic studies based on a few quantitative indicators of growth. Despite high economic performance in certain parts of the developing world, roughly one fifth of the world's population still lived in shanty towns or hovels on a minimal daily income. The quantitative doubling of resources held little meaning under those circumstances. Moreover, life in such settings was characterized by deprivation, unsanitary living conditions and a lack of basic services. The people living in such circumstances could not be dismissed as being marginal, since they accounted for more than half the population of all metropolitan areas in the South. The use of quantitative indicators meant nothing if qualitative indicators were not taken into account as well. Despite positive trends, then, the North prospered while the South languished in a state of economic inertia and social injustice.

37. Given that international life was no longer dominated by the cold war, the international community could now focus its attention on issues pertaining to development. The time had come to acknowledge man as the focal point of development, and to concentrate on human resources development: no better investment could be made than one that involved the promotion of human dignity. All States should vigorously reaffirm the pre-eminence and indivisibility of such human rights as the right to development and the right to self-determination as well as all other fundamental economic and social rights, including the right to a favourable environment for development.

38. The far-reaching process of restructuring under way in the modern world was having a severe input on the poorer countries, particularly in such sectors as education, health, transport and other social services. As prices and the cost of amenities rose and subsidies were cut, an increasing burden was placed on the poor in those countries whose lives depended on the cost of basic commodities. There were also severe impacts in terms of rising unemployment and homelessness. Structural adjustment programmes could have positive effects in the developing countries, but only if they went hand in hand with a liberalization of the economic policies of developed countries: in most of their present manifestations, they were injurious to the fight against poverty.

39. In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General had noted that a new world strategy was required to tackle major social problems, which were gaining new, international dimensions. One of the most alarming scourges of the

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modern world was drug abuse and the illegal traffic in narcotics. In some developing countries trade in narcotics had attained monumental proportions, outstripping that in oil and even armaments.

40. A further challenge to mankind was the problem of population growth, which had attained exponential proportions. The United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development concentrated on the issue of financial assistance, but unfortunately ignored the development of human resources. Consequently, its chances of success in Africa were very poor. The question of development of human resources was one of immense importance and should be given priority, as on it depended all other aspects of development.

41. The question of the environment also posed a vast problem for the modern world. The degradation of natural resources had reached such a peak that it threatened to turn the earth into a vast cemetery. Furthermore, misuse of the environment was increasing the risk of natural disasters. Drawing the Committee's attention to the proliferation of nuclear power stations in the world, he expressed support for OAU resolution CM/Res.1153 of May 1988 on the dumping of nuclear and industrial wastes in Africa, which condemned the complicity of transnational corporations in perpetrating a crime against the African peoples. In view of the magnitude of the problem, there was an urgent need to implement all the relevant international agreements and conventions. In addition, the UNESCO Vancouver Declaration of September 1989 should be given official distribution and the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction should be proclaimed and its plan of action implemented. In order to maintain the delicate balance between resources and population a new development strategy had to be adopted and an end had to be put to all irresponsible economic and development policies.

42. The modern world was characterized by the growing interdependence of nations in the context of an increasingly unstable world economy. It was essential for the developing countries to preserve their cultural specificity. A new model for development was needed, which would give priority to regional integration, so as to help contain the trend of international cultural hegemonism. The Maghreb Union hoped to set an example of such organization to the world, by encouraging the free circulation of manpower, goods and capital through their countries.

43. There was an urgent need for markets to be liberalized, for without such a step there could be no development in many parts of the world. Although a process of liberalization was under way, international markets were still characterized by grave inequality. It was important to remember that economic development was not an exact science, and that development strategies had to be designed from a position of economic pluralism.

44. Civilization could not survive uncontrolled consumption, and a halt had to be called to the adoption of high technology to maintain the lifestyle of rich countries. The destruction of the world's natural resources to provide luxury goods for a few countries was inexcusable, and instead attention should urgently be given to the solution to global problems such as natural resource depletion,

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population growth and environmental destruction. It was with such problems in mind that a conference was to be held in Morocco later in the current year to consider methodologies in economics and relevant current research.

45. Given the escalation of such problems throughout the world, it was unfair to expect the developing world to accept total responsibility for its present plight. They were, however, prepared to accept their share of that responsibility in return for a more just international economic order and the ability to participate in decision-making processes. It was important to set up a system to monitor the proper co-ordination of the economic systems of developed countries, and to ensure their compatibility with the objectives of development. It was to be hoped that forthcoming multilateral measures, such as preparation of the new international development strategy, the special session in 1990, the development of the Uruguay Round negotiations, the new special plan of action for least developed countries, would demonstrate the willingness on the part of participating countries to engage in constructive dialogue, and would herald a new international social contract. In order for the developing world to be represented in such measures as a full partner, a truly multilateral context was required. It was, therefore, necessary to strengthen the role of the United Nations and its system in order that it would provide a proper forum for the reconciliation of divergent interests in the international community.

46. The CHAIRMAN said that the general debate was closed.

AGENDA ITEM 82: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (A/44/3, A/44/84, A/44/139, A/44/187, A/44/188, A/44/235, A/44/254, A/44/260, A/44/409 and Corr.1, A/44/499)

(c) CHARTER OF ECONOMIC RIGHTS AND DUTIES OF STATES (A/44/266 and Add.1-2, A/44/379)

(d) EFFECTIVE MOBILIZATION AND INTEGRATION OF WOMEN IN DEVELOPMENT (A/44/290, ST/CSDHA/6)

(h) HUMAN SETTLEMENTS (A/44/8 and Add.1, A/44/534)

47. Mrs. SELLAMI-MESLEM (Director, Advancement of Women Branch of the Centre for Social Development and Humanitarian Affairs), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the effective mobilization and integration of women in development (A/44/290), said that there was a real commitment to promote women's participation, evinced both at intergovernmental level and at the level of general co-ordination in the system. The report also contained a number of recommendations called for by Economic and Social Council decision 1987/182 on the means to improve co-ordination between Governments and institutions.

48. Drawing attention to the report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC), on the application of the system-wide medium-term plan for

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(Mrs. Sellami-Meslem)

women and development, she said that ACC had deemed the plan to be well-suited to the requirements of its members' work programmes in the field of women and development.

49. Turning to the World Survey on the Role of Women in Development (ST/CSDHA/6), she noted the Economic and Social Council resolutions 1986/64 and 1988/21, recommending that the updated version of the World Survey should emphasize those factors which had caused the status of women in the developing countries to deteriorate.

50. The introduction to the Survey underlined the conclusions of the 10 other chapters, which analysed the situation of women and the problems encountered by them in different economic development sectors. The last paragraphs set out recommendations concerning the preparation of the next update of the Survey. The comments of the Second Committee would be highly appreciated.

51. The World Survey took into account mainly the economic difficulties of developing countries, their consequences and their effects on women. The original Survey had revealed the important role women played in development. The central theme of the first update could be called the influence of development itself and of its slowing on the situation of a recognized economic agent, women.

52. The report did not aim at proposing an alternative or simplistic analysis of current economic and social difficulties. Rather, it sought to provide an extra dimension at the time of the major debates on the preparation of the next international development strategy and the examination of economic adjustment, and it formed part of overall research on the basic causes of the current difficulties in the international economic system.

53. Economic adjustments and in particular stabilization policies, when too strictly pursued in a number of developing countries, had aggravated the already unacceptable situation prevailing there. The struggle to improve the social situation, levels of living, and welfare of people must not be relaxed. Social variables could not be temporarily neglected as unimportant "variables of adjustment". Rather, the economic difficulties should be seen as signs of the long ignored underlying social difficulties which had been masked by the gains in growth and production. There was a need to go beyond the short- and medium-term approach and to work on the elaboration of long-term actions in which social objectives would be included from the outset.

54. Thus, the sole advantage of the crisis - and it was indeed a crisis for most countries - was that it forced new thinking about the meaning of development. If development implied growth, it also implied improvement in the well-being of all individuals without exception. At a time when the gap between North and South was growing, that reality must be understood and considered in all its dimensions, so that the consequences of the decisions taken by the international community could be carefully evaluated. Developing and industrialized countries, though facing a similar economic environment, were affected differently because their economic

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structure, their type of participation in international trade, their needs and their investment resources were different. The same was true of individuals: a similar economic situation affected certain groups - the poor - more strongly than others. Similarly, certain groups of women had been affected by the economic environment more heavily than men. Chapter II of the World Survey, entitled "Women, debt and adjustment", was a first step towards giving adjustment a "human face", an objective which would mean abandoning the fiction of an asexual "homo economicus". Each of the chapters identified areas where a greater or lesser degree of progress had been achieved in the advancement of women, as well as specific actions that could be taken.

55. Other recommendations in the World Survey were designed to supplement general economic and social recommendations made in other parts of the United Nations system. All of the recommendations concerned specifically with women - for example, those concerning women's participation mentioned in the introductory chapter, also the kinds of action in the area of education and training described in the chapter on debt, and the actions seeking to create equal employment opportunities for men and women analysed in chapter 7 - could be integrated easily into certain adjustment programmes.

56. In conclusion, she wished to stress the new approach which the second version of the World Survey sought to provide. At a time when consideration was being given to ways in which the point of no return reached by many developing countries would be passed, the choice of the means and methods of growth could not be made in an abstract context without evaluating their effects on all levels of society. That evaluation was one of the goals of the World Survey, which approached the task with more statistical rigour than its predecessor. The conclusions would serve to pinpoint needs better, so that the design of development was improved for the benefit of all without distinction of sex.

57. Mr. RAMACHANDRAN (Executive Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)), introducing agenda item 86 (h), said that at its twelfth session, the Commission on Human Settlements had devoted considerable attention to the implementation of the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, focusing on the establishment of modalities for monitoring that implementation, especially at the national level. On the basis of a general review of the progress made so far by Governments, the Centre and other bodies concerned, the Commission had produced its first progress report to the General Assembly on the implementation of the Strategy (A/44/8/Add.1).

58. The Commission had engaged in an in-depth consideration of two substantive topics: the role, responsibilities and capabilities of governmental and non governmental sectors in the field of human settlements; and the maintenance of buildings and infrastructure and its financing and cost recovery. With regard to the first topic, the Commission had concluded that successful implementation of the Global Shelter Strategy required the active collaboration of government at both the national and local levels, the private sector, formal and informal, non-governmental organizations and community-based groups, with emphasis on the

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devolution of powers (and revenues) from the Centre to the metropolitan and lower levels. As to the second theme, the maintenance of buildings and infrastructure was seen as being complementary to new capital investment in public works, and as even more critical in times of financial stringency. However, systematic maintenance programmes were often hampered in developing countries by lack of technical expertise, appropriate equipment and management capacities, and developed countries were therefore urged to support such programmes.

59. Other significant tasks accomplished by the Commission included the review and approval of the work programme of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) for the 1990-1991 biennium, the budget of the Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation for the same biennium, and the outline of the medium-term plan for the Human Settlements Programme for the period 1992-1997.

60. The Commission had adopted three important resolutions: resolution 12/7, entitled "Preparations for an international development strategy for the fourth United Nations Development Decade", drew attention to the priority attention human settlements development deserved within the new development strategy, as a means of revitalizing the economies of developing countries; resolution 12/17 on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction enjoined full participation by the Centre in the activities of the Decade by, inter alia, providing relevant information and innovative technologies to developing countries; and resolution 12/18 on human settlements in relation to sustainable development and preparations for a United Nations conference on environment and development recommended to the General Assembly that the proposed conference should consider the contribution of human settlements and urbanization to environmentally sound and sustainable development, and their impact on the environment.

61. With regard to the subject of resolution 12/18, a turning point had been reached in the formulation and implementation of socio-economic development strategies. Whereas in the past the priority concerns had been to maximize economic growth and human welfare, those goals now had to be reconciled with those of environmental sustainability and protection of the natural environment. The challenge which the new trade-offs and new variables in the development debate posed for Governments and policy-makers could hardly be overstated, particularly in view of the enormous pressures which Governments of developing countries were under from their people to achieve quick and tangible results.

62. Given the leading role of the United Nations in promoting the social and economic development of the developing countries, an urgent need had thus arisen to find the correct balance between developmental imperatives, on the one hand, and conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment, on the other. The result was the concept of "sustainable development", which required that development should be pursued within the constraints of the earth's resource base and the carrying capacity of the biosphere, while also acknowledging the need to accelerate development, if only because many of the threats to the environment sprang from poverty, and stipulating that a healthy living environment was an essential prerequisite for sustainable development.

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63. It was increasingly being realized that neglect of those issues would imperil the health, welfare and eventual survival of the entire human race. The deplorable living conditions of the 1 billion people who lacked the basic necessity of decent shelter, with attendant amenities such as clean water and proper sanitation facilities, therefore required urgent attention. A major aspect of the problem was the rapid urbanization currently taking place in the developing countries, which would continue well into the next century, concentrating the majority of the population of those countries in urban centres.

64. The home living environment of the urban poor in developing countries was highly unhealthy, defined by polluted water, uncollected wastes, poor or non-existent sanitation facilities and immediate proximity to toxic-waste producing industries and uncontrolled dumpsites, and offering little protection against the elements or against disease-bearing vermin. Diseases flourished, usually aided by the peoples' low resistance as a result of malnutrition and under-nourishment.

65. At the city level, rapid growth in industrial production had nearly always taken place in the absence of effective planning, management and regulatory systems. The resulting chaotic and haphazard development of housing, commercial and industrial sites, accompanied by land speculation, had produced a pattern and density of development not easily amenable to the cost-effective provision of roads, water, waste-disposal and social services. It was usually the poor urban majority who suffered most, since the only accommodation they could afford was typically in such areas.

66. Cities were the engine propelling economic development, already accounting for 60 per cent or more of the gross national product of developing countries. To the extent that, with their productivity undercut by the environmental degradation resulting from rapid urbanization, they were unable to perform that function effectively, the prospects for development were hampered, and without development there could be no talk of sustainable development. The ultimate guarantee of such development for most developing countries lay in their human resources. Yet it was precisely on those resources that unhealthy living conditions had their most damaging effect. One of the priority areas of a strategy for sustainable development must therefore be mitigating the environmental problems caused by rapid urban growth in the developing countries. That called, *inter alia*, for a sustainable urban development strategy in which priority was given to improving the living conditions of people in human settlements.

67. Many of the environmental problems associated with development in developing countries could be addressed through innovative human settlements policies, for which the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000 provided the requisite framework. Its primary goal was the improvement of the shelter conditions of the poor in both urban and rural settlements in the developing countries through the institution of better urban management techniques, which, combined with infrastructural development, improved operations and maintenance, and greater enforcement capacity, would eventually lead to healthier human settlements and, therefore, to more sustainable development. Moreover, if successfully implemented

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over the next decade, the Global Strategy should do much to reduce the symptoms of poverty and enhance social stability, both fundamental goals of sustainable development.

68. Many of the policy measures required to redress the deterioration of the physical and living environment in human settlements were in fact also required to ensure the future economic growth and productivity of those settlements. There was a direct connection between the enhancement of the environment and the acceleration of productivity and of growth, the very linkage that lay at the heart of sustainable development. The path to such development was therefore closely parallel to the path of human settlements development. The answer to the frequent question whether the international community's preoccupation with the environment would tend to deflect attention from human settlements development was thus in his view in the negative: concern for environmental issues was greatly to be encouraged so long as the international community kept in mind the legitimate beneficiaries of that concern, namely people, all of whom were to be found in human settlements.

69. Mr. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka) said that shelter was a basic human need and, therefore, a basic human right. All human activities were centred around the home, which therefore assumed a central position in relation to national development in any country. That fundamental truth was the guiding principle underlying the new concept of housing as conceived by the President of Sri Lanka and being implemented in two new housing programmes which had become the most ambitious and successful programmes ever launched in that country.

70. That pioneering effort had assumed international dimensions when the President of Sri Lanka had proposed in the General Assembly in 1982 that 1987 should be declared International Year of Shelter for the Homeless in order to create greater awareness in the international community of the urgency of the problem, which affected nearly one quarter of the human race. The Year had drawn to a successful conclusion with the majority of Member States responding to the call. Its success had been followed by the endorsement by the General Assembly at its forty-third session of a Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, whose main objective was to provide shelter for all by that year, making it one of the most ambitious programmes sponsored by the United Nations.

71. The effective mobilization and integration of women in development was another subject which had received increasing attention in recent times. Men and women should have equal rights and opportunities so that they could develop their personalities and work together as equal partners in development. His country's experience in that regard was an encouraging one. Through concerted socio-economic changes brought about since the early 1930s, including universal suffrage, free education from kindergarten to university, the incorporation of safeguards against sexual discrimination in the Constitution, the establishment of a separate Ministry for Women's Affairs, and the formulation of a national strategy for the development of women embodying the contents of the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies, women had been brought to the forefront of socio-economic life and were being

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increasingly integrated in the mainstream of national development. The literacy rate among women had risen to well over 80 per cent, which was one of the highest in Asia and enabled them to gain professional and technical skills in various fields. They successfully competed with men for entrepreneurial and managerial jobs at every level of the development process in the country and had begun to assume increasing responsibilities in that process. Doors had been opened to them in every sector of the economy, including such male-dominated preserves as the administrative service, the judiciary and the armed forces.

72. The urgency and importance of integrating women in the main stream of development had also resulted in regional action. In that connection, Sri Lanka had, with other members of the South Asian Association for Regional Co-operation, agreed on the need for the integration of women in development and included that subject in the Association's programme of action.

73. His delegation noted with appreciation the initiatives taken so far by the Commission on the Status of Women and other related United Nations agencies in working towards the integration of women in development processes, and wishes to extend its fullest co-operation to their activities in the future.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.