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**GENERAL
ASSEMBLY**

TWENTY-SIXTH SESSION

Official Records



**THIRD COMMITTEE, 1888th
MEETING**

Tuesday, 30 November 1971,
at 3.25 p.m.

NEW YORK

Chairman: Mrs. Helvi SIPILÄ (Finland).

In the absence of the Chairman, Mr. Mahmassani (Lebanon), Vice-Chairman, took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 59

Assistance in cases of natural disaster: report of the Secretary-General (continued)* (A/8403, chap. XIX; A/8436, E/4994, A/C.3/L.1897, A/C.3/L.1899)

CONSIDERATION OF DRAFT RESOLUTION

1. The CHAIRMAN said that Cyprus and Japan had been omitted from the list of sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897. He also announced that the following countries had become sponsors of the draft resolution: Denmark, Finland, Jamaica, Liberia, Malaysia, Mali, Morocco, the Netherlands, Nicaragua, Nigeria, the Philippines, Sierra Leone, Swaziland and Uruguay.

2. Mr. HILL (Consultant to the Secretary-General) said that the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (E/4994) had been prepared in response to a series of decisions, beginning with General Assembly resolution 2435 (XXIII). In 1970, shortly after the cataclysmic earthquakes in Peru, the Economic and Social Council had considered an interim report by the Secretary-General¹ on the implementation of that resolution and had adopted resolution 1546 (XLIX) adding points to be covered by the Secretary-General in his final report and endorsing his proposal that a focal point should be established in the United Nations Secretariat from which to initiate action and promote more effective co-ordination by the agencies in the United Nations system. That focal point had duly been established in the Office for Inter-Agency Affairs and its role so far had been that of a clearing-house for information and ensuring concerted action from the outset of disasters.

3. The General Assembly had returned to the question in November 1970, shortly after the cyclone disaster in East Pakistan, and in its resolution 2717 (XXV) had expressed the view that international efforts at times of great catastrophes did not measure up to the technical capacity and resources of modern society or satisfy the conscience of the world, and the conviction that the United Nations should assume a much greater role in helping to prevent and mitigate the effects of such catastrophes. Under resolution 2435 (XXIII) the Secretary-General had been requested merely to report on the implementation of the General Assembly decisions and to make certain studies, but

resolution 2717 (XXV) had asked him to submit conclusions and specific recommendations on the most important aspects of the whole problem. That he had tried to do in the comprehensive report before the Committee.

4. In carrying out its task, the Secretariat had held extensive consultations with Governments and the organizations of the United Nations system and with the International Red Cross and many other leading voluntary agencies. The League of Red Cross Societies, whose Secretary-General was attending the current debate, had provided a senior expert to work with the Secretariat on aspects of special concern to it. The Secretariat had also had the benefit of the views contained in memoranda submitted to the Council at its fifty-first session by the Governments of the United Kingdom and Turkey.² It thus had a clearer view of the major problems besetting disaster-prone countries and facing Governments and voluntary organizations anxious to help, in particular the delay in obtaining precise information on needs and priorities and on action being taken or planned by others. There had been broad agreement on the international action required at different phases and on different aspects of the problem. It had become apparent at an early stage that a condition for the expansion and better co-ordination of international action was the building up of small but suitable machinery within the United Nations. A key recommendation in the Secretary-General's report concerned the establishment of a permanent United Nations office for disaster assistance.

5. The Secretary-General's report (E/4994) first considered what could be done to ensure the further application of science and technology to the prevention, control and prediction of natural disasters and to improve early warning systems; it emphasized the vital role of pre-disaster planning and preparedness in disaster-prone as well as donor countries, with special reference to the role of UNDP resident representatives; it discussed questions relating to stockpiling, training and arrangements for relief units and logistic assistance from abroad. New ground had been broken in 1970 when a Swedish technical unit made available to the United Nations in response to General Assembly resolution 2435 (XXIII) had done valuable service in Peru. The report set forth some of the lessons learnt from that experience. It also included a study on the legal status of disaster relief units made available through the United Nations (*ibid.*, annex III), as requested in General Assembly resolutions 2435 (XXIII) and 2717 (XXV).

6. With regard to action when a disaster struck, discussed in chapter III of the report, the United Nations organs and agencies in a position to give immediate help at the emergency stage—especially UNICEF and WHO—should

* Resumed from the 1827th meeting.

¹ Documents E/4853 and Corr.1 and Add.1.

² Documents E/L.1404 and E/L.1425.

move as rapidly as their resources and Constitutions permitted. The new United Nations office for disaster assistance could help to co-ordinate and stimulate action by the United Nations system, endeavour to obtain and transmit to Governments and organizations concerned the best and earliest information on relief needs, approach potential donor Governments and organizations on the assistance they might provide, facilitate transport and other arrangements for channelling relief and thus supplement and support, without duplicating or attempting to replace, bilateral aid. Such action would be appropriate in the case of major disasters of a sudden and unpredictable nature, such as volcano eruptions, floods, typhoons and tidal waves, but would not be called into play for local disasters or for long-range or slow-developing disasters such as drought.

7. Chapter IV of the report dealt with rehabilitation and reconstruction and stressed the encouraging developments in the attitudes and policies of UNDP and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the expansion of long-range assistance through UNICEF and the World Food Programme.

8. In connexion with the organizational arrangements within the United Nations, the Secretary-General recommended as a minimum an office under a high-ranking official with three professional assistants and provision for the use of experienced people in the field as necessary. The report of the Secretary-General on the revised estimates resulting from decisions of the Economic and Social Council at its fiftieth and fifty-first sessions³ contained proposals for implementation in progressive stages during 1972 and 1973; the administrative and financial implications of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 were set forth in document A/C.3/L.1899.

9. The Secretary-General's recommendations, which were summarized in chapter VII of the report, were designed to draw the fullest benefit from the resources available in the United Nations system and the practices of co-operation built up within the decentralized system. That was the only principle on which the proposed new office could effectively carry out its tasks with the modest staff available. The Secretary-General had made it clear that international assistance could only supplement the efforts of the country itself through its Government or such organizations as its national Red Cross Society. He wished to ensure that the United Nations was not called upon to undertake more than it could do effectively. Although his mandate was limited to recommendations for action on natural disasters, many of his recommendations might prove helpful in other disaster situations.

10. General Assembly and Council decisions over the past three years in connexion with some of the worst natural disasters of the century had aroused tremendous public interest and support. In addition to the examples of supporting action by intergovernmental bodies given in the Secretary-General's report, he referred to action taken by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in Paris in September 1970,

the Board of Governors of the League of Red Cross Societies at Mexico City in October 1970, the International Telecommunication Union and the Advisory Committee on the Application of Science and Technology.

11. Such actions and countless others had been based on the assumption that the United Nations would play an enhanced role in assistance in cases of natural disaster. Many of them explicitly envisaged the establishment of a United Nations office for disaster assistance. It was unnecessary to stress how much depended on the decisions to be taken by the General Assembly, both for the victims of disaster and for those who were anxious to help.

12. Mr. KITTANI (Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs) recalled that, in October 1970, the Secretary-General had designated the Office of Inter-Agency Affairs as the focal point for the co-ordination of assistance in cases of natural disaster. Pending final action on the Secretary-General's report, the Secretariat was doing its best to act as a focal point and a clearing-house for information, to ensure that at the outset of a disaster the United Nations system would act in concert and not haphazardly. It provided a centre for learning, planning, acquiring and disseminating information and co-ordinating so that information could be put to the best use.

13. Mr. BAYULKEN (Turkey) said that, in spite of scientific and technological progress, it was still impossible to control natural disasters, even though some of them could be predicted. All that could be done at that stage was to develop better ways and means of helping mankind to alleviate the suffering and mitigate the damage caused by natural disasters. The important factors in providing assistance and relief in natural disasters were quality, quantity, efficiency, speed and, above all, co-ordination. The United Nations offered the best means of achieving such co-ordination. It was that belief which had led his delegation at the twenty-fifth session to co-sponsor the draft resolution which had been adopted unanimously as General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV).

14. The situation regarding co-ordination in the United Nations system prior to the adoption of that resolution had been ably described by the Secretary-General in his comprehensive report (E/4994). In his interim report,¹ the Secretary-General had pointed out that in the past century alone some 9 million people were believed to have died in floods, 900,000 in earthquakes and more than 600,000 in hurricanes, typhoons and cyclones. In 1966, 58 disasters had done \$2.4 million damage, mostly in the developing countries. The Secretary-General had concluded in his interim report that, although the primary interest of the United Nations system of organizations in the problem of natural disasters was humanitarian, the economic implications, particularly for developing countries, could not be disregarded.

15. In his comprehensive report, the Secretary-General had recalled that, although the international community's contributions to disaster-stricken countries had considerably increased in the past 10 years, there were three areas to which international action should be mainly directed: the intensive application of science and technology to the prediction, control and mitigation of natural disasters;

³ See *Official Records of the General Assembly, Twenty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 6B*, document A/C.5/1366 and Add.1 and 2.

pre-disaster planning and preparedness; and the central role of the United Nations in initiating action and more effective co-ordination.

16. The report clearly indicated the major problems faced by the international community in coping with recent disasters and referred to the undoubted need for a major strengthening of the arrangements within the United Nations system. In that connexion, he wished to express sincere appreciation to the Secretary-General and his staff for having prepared a valuable document, which reflected the universal awareness of the problems relating to natural disasters and the ways of dealing with them effectively in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV).

17. A great deal of progress had been made in implementing that resolution and he hoped that draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897, which he introduced on behalf of its sponsors, would pave the way to the realization of its objectives.

18. The tenth preambular paragraph of the draft resolution referred to assistance provided by UNDP to stricken countries "without prejudice to their individual country programmes" and there was a similar reference to the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development in the eleventh preambular paragraph. It was felt that, since such assistance had already been requested from UNDP and the International Bank in General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV), it would be sufficient to include such references in the preambular paragraphs; the sponsors believed that those two bodies would shortly decide on action.

19. Operative paragraph 1 of the draft resolution endorsed the appointment by the Secretary-General of a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, whose functions were set forth in the ensuing subparagraphs. The first essential function was to co-ordinate assistance provided through various channels before and during natural disasters. The second was to act as a clearing-house for information on all aspects of natural disasters. In the light of the Co-ordinator's responsibilities, it was recommended in operative paragraph 2 that his appointment should be at a level comparable to that of an Under-Secretary-General. Operative paragraph 3 endorsed the Secretary-General's proposals for the establishment of a permanent office in the United Nations Secretariat and operative paragraph 4 endorsed the idea of supplementing the staff by short-term secondments of personnel, in view of the limit on the number of permanent staff imposed by financial exigencies.

20. The sponsors of the draft resolution had not made any proposal for the location of the office in view of the divergence of opinion on the subject. Geneva was the seat of the League of Red Cross Societies and a number of organizations concerned with disaster assistance; and New York, as the site of United Nations Headquarters, would create a better public image and give a more tangible illustration of the involvement of the United Nations in that humanitarian problem. His own delegation preferred Geneva, on the understanding that a liaison office would be maintained at Headquarters in New York.

21. The purpose of operative paragraph 5 was to provide for the inevitable unforeseen factors that arose in imple-

menting proposals and for any necessary improvements in the light of experience.

22. Operative paragraph 7 recommended that the Co-ordinator should maintain continuous contact with members of the organizations of the United Nations system, which was essential for obtaining the advance information necessary for channelling efficient and co-ordinated assistance.

23. With regard to operative paragraph 8, it was essential to find a balance of responsibility between potential recipient Governments, potential donor Governments and the United Nations system. The responsibilities and functions of the Co-ordinator were covered in operative paragraph 1 and the responsibilities of Member States in operative paragraphs 8 and 9.

24. The subparagraphs of operative paragraphs 8 and 9 indicated certain essential measures to be taken by potential recipient Governments and potential donor Governments respectively, to make the assistance more effective.

25. The authorization in operative paragraph 10 merely renewed previous authorizations under General Assembly resolutions 2034 (XX), 2435 (XXIII) and 2608 (XXIV), the only difference being the increase of \$50,000 in the amount to be drawn. The amount of \$20,000 per country in the case of any one disaster might be only a symbolic figure, but implementation of the draft resolution would enable the United Nations to play a much more effective role through the additional arrangements proposed.

26. In operative paragraph 11, an appeal was made to the organizations of the United Nations system and all other organizations concerned to co-ordinate their activities with the United Nations and to co-operate with the Co-ordinator.

27. The sponsors of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 were confident that all Member States, organizations of the United Nations system and voluntary agencies would continue their praiseworthy efforts and work to achieve the necessary co-ordination.

28. Among the many important problems dealt with by the Committee, the current humanitarian item had aroused keen interest in the world, particularly in the light of the major disasters of the past two years. The importance attached to the subject and to the role of the United Nations was illustrated by a press report of 30 November 1971 which stated that one of the distressing aspects of any disaster was the slowness with which relief reached the survivors—not because of a lack of compassion or of aid, but because of a bottle-neck blocking the dispatch of supplies. The report also stated that natural disasters were too much for any developing country to cope with and that many voices had been urging the creation of a central agency to deal with natural disasters wherever they occurred. It suggested that the United Nations was the natural centre for such an operation and recalled that a proposal to that effect had been made to the United Nations several years ago but had never got off the ground. The United Nations would, of course, help with recovery in the disaster areas through such agencies as UNDP and UNESCO, but it

was in the field of immediate post-disaster relief that contingency plans should be ready for rapid implementation. It was suggested that such an agency should send experts to the affected areas to assess the extent of the damage and the amount of help needed and that nations should be asked to earmark special relief teams to be available in an emergency. The report also suggested the establishment of a network of relief depots around the world for stockpiling relief supplies. In conclusion, the report said that it was time for head and heart to co-operate in seeing that relief was more efficiently organized on a global basis and that the yearning to help was translated into terms immediately related to the stricken people's needs.

29. Mr. McCARTHY (United Kingdom) said that he wished to give some background information about draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 which non-members of the Economic and Social Council might find useful.

30. His delegation was very grateful for the work of the Secretariat, particularly that of Mr. Hill and Mr. Jensen, and for the careful compilation of the Secretary-General's comprehensive report (E/4994). That report, on which Economic and Social Council resolution 1612 (LI) was based, owed much to the Secretariat's investigations and thorough consultations with the League of Red Cross Societies, the specialized agencies and Governments. His own Government would like to express its special thanks for the account taken of its views. It agreed both with the analysis of the situation given and, in general, with the proposals made in the report. There were certain differences of emphasis between those proposals and the draft resolution, but broadly speaking the latter represented a consensus evolved between the Secretariat, the voluntary agencies and the delegations.

31. Whereas General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV), adopted at the twenty-fifth session, had been couched in general terms, draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 dealt with specific plans of action. In fact, an over-all plan of action was not possible, because disasters could vary so much in pattern, location and subsequent requirements. The sponsors whole-heartedly supported the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report that a Co-ordinator should weld together the activities of all concerned, rather than an official in the field who would do everything. The Co-ordinator's job, as they envisaged it, was to study all aspects of contingency planning and preparation, and, above all, to ascertain which Government, international or national agency or voluntary society could supply what help at short notice in an emergency. It would also be his duty to marshal all the information in what might be described as a myriad of pigeon-holes. When a disaster occurred, he would be in a position to go instantly to the right pigeon-hole. An inherent part of his functions would be to assist Governments with pre-disaster planning.

32. On the other hand, the sponsors endorsed the conclusion in the Secretary-General's report that rehabilitation after a disaster should not be the Co-ordinator's prime concern. While relief action could, to some extent, set a pattern for rehabilitation, some line had to be drawn between disaster relief and subsequent rehabilitation. The sponsors considered that rehabilitation as such should be

the concern of the specialized agencies rather than of a small co-ordinating unit. That was why operative paragraph 1 (h) of Economic and Social Council resolution 1612 (LI) had used the wording "phase out relief operations under his aegis as the stricken country moves into the stage of rehabilitation", although it also envisaged that the Co-ordinator would retain a continuing interest in the rehabilitation phase. In the opinion of the sponsors, that wording struck the right balance.

33. Whereas the Secretary-General had envisaged a small Co-ordinator's office within the present system and an existing official in the role of Co-ordinator, the draft resolution went further, because experience since the completion of the report suggested that more was required. The current tragedy on the Indian subcontinent had taught many lessons. Initially it had been handled on a part-time basis, but when the dimensions of the task had been realized it had become the full-time responsibility of an Assistant Secretary-General. The sponsors were therefore agreed that the Co-ordinator should be a distinct official within the United Nations system, particularly in the first phase of basic pre-disaster planning and exploration with Governments.

34. The question of status was also important since the Co-ordinator would be dealing with Governments and senior officials of the specialized agencies and voluntary agencies. While the quality and experience of the individual were important, it seemed essential, too, that he should be accorded a status which would enable him to conduct all the negotiations involved.

35. With regard to location, it would seem natural to have the Co-ordinator in New York, where the United Nations had its Headquarters and nearly all Members maintained permanent delegations. Furthermore, the Secretary-General and his senior officials, who were often very closely concerned with relief operations entailing political problems, could be readily consulted. None the less, in his delegation's view, there was an even stronger case for basing the Co-ordinator in Geneva. Most of the specialized agencies were based in that city or in Europe. The United Nations Office at Geneva handled the Organization's day-to-day work in the fields most relevant to disaster assistance. More governmental capitals were in relatively easy reach of Geneva than of New York. Moreover, the League of Red Cross Societies and the International Committee of the Red Cross were both based in Geneva, as was the International Council of Voluntary Agencies. The fact that very substantial assistance during disasters came from the American continent, particularly from the United States and Canada, did not weaken the case for choosing Geneva, since the Co-ordinator should be near not to the greatest volume of aid but to the majority of people likely to contribute aid and the majority of organizations concerned.

36. As his delegation had stated in the Economic and Social Council,⁴ if the Co-ordinator were based in Geneva, he would have to be represented in New York so that close contact was maintained with the Secretary-General; if he

⁴ See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Fifty-first Session, 1786th meeting.*

were based in New York, he would need staff in Geneva to deal with the various matters mentioned.

37. The financial implications (see A/C.3/L.1899) were based on an Economic and Social Council resolution which did not take account of all the factors involved and would have to be reviewed if the draft resolution was adopted. His delegation considered that it would be more economical in terms of staff if the Co-ordinator was based in Geneva, because most of the liaison and co-ordinating functions of his office would still have to be performed in Geneva even if he were based in New York.

38. There was two points which were not specifically dealt with in the draft resolution. The first was the establishment of regional stockpiles, the utility of which was debatable. On the whole, it was more important to have materials available, as one could never be sure that a regional stockpile would contain the right materials in the right place. The question of stockpiling was nevertheless open to further investigation. Secondly, the draft resolution did not provide for the establishment of emergency funds. That was because experience suggested that money was seldom the first consideration when a disaster struck; generally speaking, the most urgent problems were information, the assessment of implications, and the transportation of materials to the disaster area. The bigger the disaster, the greater the generosity of private individuals and Governments tended to be. But their generosity could be dulled if a fund was set up.

39. In conclusion, the sponsors were well aware that the machinery envisaged in the draft resolution might require some changes in the light of experience. That was why operative paragraph 5 requested the Secretary-General to report to the fifty-third session of the Economic and Social Council. The idea was that the Co-ordinator should have time to take stock of the problems confronting him. The important thing was to set up the machinery and to make the necessary improvements in the light of experience.

40. Miss PRODJOLALITO (Indonesia) said that her country's realization of the need for effective co-ordination of relief efforts had prompted her delegation to co-sponsor draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 which, it was confident, could provide an efficient institutional framework for such co-ordination. Her delegation particularly approved the provision that disaster assistance to stricken countries should not prejudice the amount of assistance they received from UNDP, United Nations sources in general, or the World Bank. In connexion with operative paragraph 11 of the draft resolution, it should be borne in mind that the International Civil Defence Organization could give substantial assistance to the Co-ordinator. It was an inter-governmental organization whose main purpose was to intensify and co-ordinate on a world-wide basis the methods and techniques for preventing and reducing the consequences of natural and industrial disasters. In 1970, the Executive Committee of the International Civil Defence Organization had adopted a national model plan for civil defence disaster operations, which could well serve as a model for individual States. It had also approved some arrangements for regional co-operation in cases of national disaster.

41. With regard to the location for the proposed Co-ordinator, her delegation preferred Geneva for financial reasons, and in view of the fact that most of the non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations concerned with disaster relief were based in Europe, if not in Geneva itself.

42. Miss LAPOINTE (Canada) said that her delegation was happy to be a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897, thus manifesting its support for the creation of the post of disaster relief co-ordinator. Her delegation would prefer the Co-ordinator's office to be in New York, where he could be in close personal contact with the bodies responsible for co-ordination and those concerned with assistance and the supply of services. With regard to the status of the Co-ordinator, her delegation would have preferred him to be appointed at the level of Assistant Secretary-General rather than Under-Secretary-General. However, after conducting consultations with a number of other delegations which preferred the latter category, her delegation had decided to accept the wording of operative paragraph 2. The adoption by the General Assembly of the resolution under consideration would represent an important step forward in the co-ordination of disaster relief assistance.

43. Mr. SAYAR (Iran) said that draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 met a deeply-felt need for co-ordination of assistance to countries stricken by natural disasters. The existing lack of such co-ordination often led to the duplication of efforts. The appointment of a Co-ordinator would facilitate the task of the international relief agencies, particularly the International Red Cross and the voluntary agencies.

44. The function outlined in operative paragraph 1 (f) of the draft resolution would form a very important part of the Co-ordinator's work and could help Governments to alleviate the effects of disasters. In the case of what might be called "lasting" disasters, for instance the long drought in Afghanistan, a thorough study of causes and an evaluation of needs, with technical assistance from UNDP and the specialized agencies, could prove extremely valuable. The Co-ordinator would be in the best position to provide a focal point for co-ordinating such assistance and storing the relevant data. He sincerely hoped that the draft resolution would be adopted by a large majority of votes.

45. Mr. ZAGORIN (United States of America) said that his delegation had little to add to the remarks of the representatives of Turkey and of the United Kingdom, but wished to thank the Secretariat for its valuable work. It was of paramount importance that the Committee should act promptly in response to the Secretary-General's call to strengthen the United Nations machinery for relief in disaster situations. He therefore hoped that the draft resolution would command unanimous support.

46. Mr. BABAA (Libyan Arab Republic) said that his country believed that the burden of natural disasters should be shared by the entire international community and had consequently contributed \$US1 million for relief in East Pakistan and \$US290,000 to assist Afghanistan. With regard to draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897, he had little to add to what previous speakers had said except to thank the Turkish delegation for its initiative. He hoped that the humanitarian draft resolution would be adopted by acclamation.

47. Mr. TARASOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that different parts of his country had frequently experienced seismic and climatic disturbances, and even the destruction of entire towns. The most recent example was the tragedy of Tashkent. Consequently, his delegation was well aware of the tragic consequences in economic terms of natural disasters and realized that they could be a tremendous setback, particularly in the developing countries. The USSR delegation was as concerned as any other to equip the United Nations to make a rapid and adequate response in emergency situations. In the Economic and Social Council, it had voted in favour of resolution 1612 (LI) in affirmation of its position of principle. While the spirit and basic ideas of draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 commanded his delegation's support, it was unable to agree with all the provisions. First, while it agreed that the man in charge of co-ordinating disaster relief had to be of very high calibre, it was not convinced that a special co-ordinator should be appointed at the level of Under-Secretary-General. It still believed that the task should be dealt with by the entire Secretariat, with the Secretary-General assuming leadership and initiating the necessary action to afford rapid assistance in cases of natural disaster, and co-ordinating Headquarters activities with those of the specialized agencies and voluntary agencies.

48. Moreover, as the Secretary-General had pointed out in paragraph 83 of his report (E/4994), the extensive network of bilateral consultations among the agencies concerned and with the Red Cross was supplemented on two levels: first, from the focal point at United Nations Headquarters and, secondly, by the review of interagency arrangements and problems on the part of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination and its Preparatory Committee. It should not be lost from sight, therefore, that such co-ordination did in fact exist, and would be enhanced by the focal point or central body already established in the Secretariat. Consequently, it was difficult to decide whether a new unit involving a small group of staff members would be able to replace the existing machinery. Indeed, it might lead to duplication of work and hinder the successful provision of relief in natural disasters. Again, paragraph 90 of the report in question had stated that the creation of a new high-level post had seemed unnecessary, since the Assistant Secretary-General for Inter-Agency Affairs was in a position to take on what was largely an extension of his existing responsibilities for co-ordination. Paragraph 91 had affirmed that a radical change in the basic pattern would involve some dispersion of authority with regard, for example, to inter-agency co-ordination. Such statements increased his doubts as to the necessity for a new post. While his delegation was in no sense opposed to a Co-ordinator providing international assistance when the need arose, it felt that the Secretary-General could be helped by one of his senior officials, at Under-Secretary-General or Assistant Secretary-General level, who had appropriate authority and competence. Natural disasters of such magnitude that they required international assistance did not occur very frequently and the establishment of a new permanent post, particularly at such a high level, appeared to represent a considerable additional burden on the strained finances of the Organization.

49. Operative paragraph 1 (b) of the draft resolution also called on the Co-ordinator to mobilize and direct relief

activities—matters which obviously fell within the competence of Member States. Furthermore, the provisions of operative paragraph 1 (h) required clarification, for he could not see how the Co-ordinator—a member of the Secretariat—could establish and improve stockpiles, presumably before a natural disaster took place.

50. Clearly, some preliminary planning was desirable, but it was not feasible, as provided for in operative paragraph 8 (a), to establish disaster contingency plans, which often involved military stockpiles and military assistance. Natural disasters often occurred where they were least expected and with little or no warning. Similarly, a country affected by a natural disaster would grant over-flight and landing rights, referred to in operative paragraph 8 (e), in respect of its own territory. However, the matter was much more difficult in relation to the territory of other States. No legislature could impose its will on another and it might be necessary to conclude international conventions. He had no serious objections to operative paragraph 9 (c), but he wondered whether it was possible to inform the Co-ordinator in advance of the facilities and services countries could provide immediately, for the supply of relief depended on many factors, such as the scale of the disaster and the availability of specialists. Lastly, it was plainly impossible to state categorically, as did operative paragraph 10, the exact sum the Secretary-General could draw on for emergency assistance. That matter should be considered by the Fifth Committee, which was responsible for the United Nations regular budget.

51. His delegation had no intention of submitting amendments to the draft resolution. On the other hand, if the sponsors did not wish to consider any changes, he would request separate votes on operative paragraphs 2, 3, 4 and 10.

52. Mr. BILLNER (Sweden) welcomed the broad agreement which seemed to be emerging with regard to the draft resolution. In the course of informal consultations, his delegation had stressed that the Disaster Relief Co-ordinator should be appointed at a level comparable to that of Under-Secretary-General, that he should have an adequate permanent office at his disposal and, finally, that the office should be located in Geneva. He was satisfied that those points would be solved satisfactorily.

53. Mr. ERMACORA (Austria), referring to the statement by the USSR representative, said that the underlying motive of the sponsors of the draft resolution was to ensure that, in cases of natural disaster, small States received co-ordinated assistance from the world community and did not depend solely on aid from the big Powers.

54. Mr. BAYULKEN (Turkey) expressed satisfaction at the support for the humanitarian draft resolution now before the Committee. However, he wished to dispel some doubts which had arisen.

55. The need for the establishment of the office of Disaster Relief Co-ordinator and the fact that the few staff members he would require could be sought from among existing Secretariat personnel were clearly shown in the comprehensive report by the Secretary-General (E/4994).

56. While it was true that the Secretary-General had expressed the hope that supervisory responsibility could be assured by an existing Under-Secretary-General, he had pointed out that it was not certain whether that would prove feasible. The Economic and Social Council, which was in some sense a more technical body than the General Assembly, had felt that a permanent and separate post should be established. Again, the word "mobilize" in operative paragraph 1 (b) reflected the wording employed in operative paragraph 5 of General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV), which had been adopted unanimously. Moreover, in operative paragraph 1 (b), the draft resolution stated that the Co-ordinator would mobilize relief activities only "in response to a request for disaster assistance from a stricken State". Establishment of the post of a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator would in no way affect the provision of any bilateral aid a State saw fit to grant to a country stricken by a natural disaster. The Co-ordinator would merely act as a focal point for relief activities. Furthermore, the information he would disseminate in accordance with operative paragraph 1 (h) would not be acquired forcibly. He would analyse the information made available to him through the usual channels and disseminate it at the request of the State which had suffered a natural disaster. As to operative paragraph 8 (e), potential recipient Governments were invited, not requested, to consider appropriate legislative measures to facilitate the receipt of aid, for it would be to their advantage to do so.

57. With regard to operative paragraph 10, the figure of \$20,000 as a normal ceiling for aid to a country in any one disaster was obviously a token amount. Far the greatest proportion of aid came from the international community at large. Moreover, the few staff members the Co-ordinator would need did not represent a significant burden for the United Nations and he hoped that everything would be done to adopt and implement the provisions of the draft resolution as soon as possible.

58. Mr. TARASOV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) thanked the representative of Turkey, who had dispelled some of the doubts of his own delegation. However, with regard to the organizational aspect, he was convinced that it was unnecessary to establish a post at the level of Under-Secretary-General and that the activities in question could be carried on without additional cost to the Organization.

59. Mr. DE LATAILLADE (France) said that, although natural disasters still plagued mankind, technical developments fortunately made it possible to bring more effective relief than had previously been the case. When the need arose, the display of international solidarity proved to be great and, in that connexion, his delegation wished to commend the International Red Cross on its tireless efforts. However, experience showed that goodwill was not enough and that effective relief depended above all on speed and proper co-ordination. It was essential to avoid chaos in providing information on the needs of the State concerned and in channelling and distributing aid.

60. For that reason, his delegation had sponsored General Assembly resolution 2717 (XXV), which had been designed to strengthen and co-ordinate the efforts of the United Nations and international agencies. His Government con-

sidered that, in view of its competence and its location in Geneva, the International Committee of the Red Cross could act as a centre for the co-ordination of emergency relief. On the other hand, that body was concerned with relief in cases of armed conflict and had hesitated to extend its activities to natural disasters, especially since the League of Red Cross Societies merely co-ordinated the relief activities of its members. Accordingly, his delegation had voted in favour of Economic and Social Council resolution 1612 (LI), on which the draft resolution before the Committee was based.

61. He wished to congratulate the sponsors on a text which was, in the main, satisfactory and should prove acceptable. The preamble rightly stressed the suffering caused by natural disasters and their serious economic and social consequences for all, especially the developing countries. The operative part clearly described the task of the Co-ordinator, whose role would be to disseminate information and to act in concert with the competent organizations and with the State concerned but solely, as stressed in operative paragraph 1 (b), "in response to a request for disaster assistance from a stricken State". In addition, he noted that establishment of the office would be covered by the regular budget of the United Nations. Emergency operational expenses would be drawn from the Working Capital Fund and not a special fund.

62. Nevertheless, his delegation had reservations regarding some matters and wished to submit amendments at a later stage. The role of the Co-ordinator was confined to the provision of relief, and development problems did not fall within his competence. The Secretary-General was called on to appoint a Disaster Relief Co-ordinator who, under the terms of operative paragraph 1 (i), would phase out relief operations as the stricken country moved into the stage of rehabilitation and reconstruction. At the same time, it might be inferred from the tenth preambular paragraph that the Co-ordinator could undertake co-ordination on a long-term basis, something which was contrary to the spirit of the text. He would therefore like the words "and development" in that paragraph to be deleted.

63. His delegation had pointed out in the Economic and Social Council at its fifty-first session that the duties of the Co-ordinator might well be carried out by an official of the rank of Assistant Secretary-General. Moreover, the Co-ordinator's office should be located in Geneva rather than New York. Document A/C.3/L.1899 showed that the cost of establishing the office in Geneva would be \$80,100, as compared with \$91,300 for New York. In that connexion, he would also prefer operative paragraph 3 of the draft to reflect the wording of Economic and Social Council resolution 1612 (LI) and refer to a "small" rather than an "adequate" office. Geneva was also more desirable in that it was the headquarters of the International Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross. In addition, it would be possible to make use of the International Computing Centre in order to collate data before taking urgent decisions. Similarly, Geneva was much nearer the principal specialized agencies whose support was essential when emergency relief was required—FAO in Rome and UNESCO in Paris.

64. Lastly, his delegation felt that the title of the draft resolution should refer solely to "natural disasters" and not

also to "other disaster situations", for the latter might lead to jurisdictional conflicts with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and even enable the Co-ordinator to intervene in internal conflicts which fell solely within the competence of States. His delegation hoped that account would be taken of its views, in which case it would vote in favour of the draft resolution.

65. The CHAIRMAN suggested that amendments to draft resolution A/C.3/L.1897 should be submitted by 12 noon on 1 December 1971 at the latest.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.