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Chairman: Mr. DOLOINTSEREN (Mongolia)

later: Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 82: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued)
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(f) ENVIRONMENT (A/44/25, 256 and Corr.1, 264, 278, 295, 332, 339 and Add.1-11, 340, 349, 350, 362 and Corr.1, 386, 479, 480, 578, 632; A/C.2/44/L.2, L.6, L.7)

(g) DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT (A/44/25, 296, 351; DP/1989/50)

(j) ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND EXTRATERRITORIAL SPACES FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS (A/44/193)

AGENDA ITEM 85: PROTECTION OF GLOBAL CLIMATE FOR PRESENT AND FUTURE GENERATIONS OF MANKIND (continued) (A/44/260, 264, 340, 394, 409 and Corr.1, 463, 477, 484; A/C.2/44/2)

1. Mr. JOSEPHSON (United Nations Development Programme) said that in order for the environmental crisis to be tackled effectively, development and poverty eradication must be given priority attention. A balance must be found between immediate human needs, appropriate action for meeting them and the environmental legacy which would be left to future generations without losing sight of the harsh international economic conditions faced by the developing countries.

2. UNDP had expanded its collaboration with other agencies in the United Nations system, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the specialized agencies, the regional and international financial institutions and the regional economic commissions. In addition, UNDP field offices supported over 400 concrete development and environment projects, assessed, at the request of Governments, the implications of applying the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and ensured, together with Governments and agency partners, that the question of the environment was accorded greater importance in mid-term reviews of fourth-cycle programming. Resident representatives were organizing national workshops in collaboration with Governments and non-governmental organizations in order to promote public awareness of the environment and formulate country strategies and plans of action, including the mobilization of additional financing for that purpose.

3. UNDP, as part of the United Nations system, had pledged to devote its resources and its network of 112 field offices to lending technical assistance to environmental aspects of development and to helping Governments and people in general to prepare and convene in 1992 a United Nations conference on environment and development. Together with the World Bank, donor conferences had been organized for Madagascar and Mauritius and, at the initiative of UNDP, regional efforts were under way to adapt the Brundtland Commission report to the conditions, priorities and operational realities of each region. It was to be hoped that such actions would help to bring about more effective participation by developing

(Mr. Josephson, UNDP)

countries in the preparations for the 1992 conference and in the formulation and attainment of a global consensus for North-South co-operation. The conference should result in practical agreements on four essential questions: making available new and additional financial resources to developing countries in the form of grants or loans on a concessional basis; accelerating the transfer of affordable environmental technology to developing countries; strengthening the capacity of those countries to manage their natural resources effectively; and recognizing the vital function of women in relation to the environment. The conference must not be allowed to degenerate into a harmful North-South debate.

4. Mr. MANIKFAN (Maldives), speaking of the consequences of environmental deterioration for the small island developing countries, highlighted, in particular sea-level rise as a result of global warming by so-called greenhouse gases. That phenomenon would accelerate coastal erosion, increase the salinity of the aquifer, destroy farmland and damage marine and terrestrial ecosystems, placing the lives and property of millions of people at risk.

5. In various international forums, Maldives had alerted the international community to those consequences. In that context, Maldives had decided to organize for small States a conference on sea-level rise, to be held in Male in November 1989, which would attempt to establish a basis for co-operation among the most vulnerable small States. Such co-operation would be aimed at developing a unified approach to the problem and recommending practical policy options for taking immediate action.

6. Mr. CAMARA (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that since its very inception FAO had attempted to promote programmes and policies for the rational management and conservation of natural resources. In dealing with the environment, consideration must be given to three fundamental and interrelated tasks: resolving the conflict between farmers and their environment in the struggle for food and economic well-being; resolving the conflict between the satisfaction of current needs and those of future generations; and avoiding conflicts between environment and development.

7. In many developing countries, population pressure and poverty left no alternative to the felling of forests to make room for shifting cultivation or to provide firewood and the over-exploitation of soils and grasslands. In the developed countries, environmental problems stemmed more from agricultural policies than from poverty. On the one hand, their intensive crop and livestock systems had produced surpluses which had helped to ensure a food supply in times of drought and other natural disasters. However, they had damaged the agricultural export prospects of developing countries and created a number of problems in their own environments. The possibility of climate change, which was thought by scientists to be the consequence of greenhouse gas emissions from the developed countries, could pose a serious threat to the agriculture of developing countries.

8. In order to cope with environmental problems, political will, more appropriate policies and greater investment for research, technology transfer and farmer

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(Mr. Camara, FAO)

support services were needed. The substantial costs entailed were beyond the means of most developing countries, which were heavily indebted. It followed that international support for achieving environmental improvements and for sustainable agriculture must complement aid for development activities and current and future debt-reduction strategies.

9. FAO had devoted considerable technical resources to preventing current environmental degradation and its consequences for the future. Through its International Undertaking on Plant Genetic Resources, which was already operational and could serve as an institutional mechanism for the proposed international legal instrument on biological diversity, FAO was also giving impetus to a wide range of conservation measures. On the basis of that experience, FAO would concentrate, in the immediate future, on taking similar action in the field of animal genetic resources.

10. It was expected that the FAO Conference, to be held shortly, would approve the introduction of the principle of prior informed consent into the Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, which should reduce the export and dumping of highly toxic wastes. Through the Tropical Forest Action Plan and with the support of many donors, FAO was assisting developing countries with reforestation and in the conservation of forest genetic resources. Those were some examples of policies and action programmes designed and executed by FAO.

11. Everyone was responsible for carrying out the tasks mentioned above, for the burden could not be carried solely by FAO, the other United Nations agencies and a few major donors. Global approaches must be adopted, common responsibilities assumed, and costs and benefits shared equitably. FAO would do its utmost to help to solve environmental problems and looked forward to participating actively in the preparations for the 1992 United Nations conference on environment and development.

12. Mr. VARGAS (Brazil) said that high-level meetings had been held in the Latin American and Caribbean region to discuss and co-ordinate environmental policies. Brazil would be honoured to host a United Nations conference devoted to all aspects of the interrelationship between environment and development, in which recommendations would be made on measures to be taken by the international community in that regard.

13. Protecting the environment had become an issue of great importance for mankind. Yet, environmental problems were not isolated natural phenomena but resulted from the continuous interaction between man's economic activities and his natural surroundings. The global dimension of environmental degradation had been emphasized by two phenomena that could have dire consequences: the warming of the atmosphere and the depletion of the ozone layer. However, another dimension of the environmental crisis also needed to be taken into account: namely, the local effects of the degradation. The solution of global environmental problems might
11 for the adoption of concerted measures accepted by all States. On the other hand, to solve local problems, national measures would usually be required. The developing countries must receive financial and technical assistance for that

(Mr. Vargas, Brazil)

purpose, provided through multilateral agencies or bilateral co-operation mechanisms, and must be stimulated by a blend of international efforts and national policies to ensure the injection of the resources they needed and access to environmentally sound technologies. For their own part, the industrialized nations would have to enhance the efficiency of their energy consumption, and develop and adopt technologies that reduced the current squandering of those resources, in particular of natural resources.

14. The scientific community recognized that further investigation was required before appropriate responses could be found to the problem of climate change. Scientific research into the causes and consequences of climate change was essential if international standards were to be established to curb current trends. Nevertheless, the frequent convening by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change of technical meetings with limited participation had reduced attendance by the developing countries. Successful negotiation of a framework convention on climate change depended essentially on thorough mastering of the scientific data involved. The process must not be allowed to lead to the adoption of an instrument that was not acceptable to the entire international community.

15. Regarding the problem of the depletion of the ozone layer, there was an evident link between environmental degradation and the patterns of production and consumption adopted by industrial civilization. Although Brazil consumed less than 1 per cent of the substances controlled by the Montreal Protocol, and produced even smaller amounts of such substances, the Brazilian Congress was debating Brazil's possible accession to the Montreal Protocol and the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. Congress had also been seized of draft legislation to restrict the use of chlorofluorocarbons and halons, subjecting their use to stricter conditions than those laid down in the Protocol. The principle of differentiated treatment for developing countries that consumed smaller quantities of such substances should of course be applied. The developing countries could not replace their current equipment and update their production lines effectively unless they had access to new technologies and substitutes for existing substances.

16. The problem of the traffic in toxic wastes was of great interest for the developing countries. Brazil had taken an active part in the *ad hoc* working group and in the diplomatic conference that had drafted the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal. However, it considered that the Basel Convention should not be used as an instrument to facilitate international trade in wastes. Transboundary movements of hazardous wastes should be restricted to a minimum, and should not be encouraged as a "profitable activity".

17. Protection of the environment could not be considered from the narrow perspective of the marginal danger that might be posed for future generations by the development of the third world. On the contrary, it must be approached from the standpoint of the dimensions that environmental degradation had acquired and would continue to acquire unless there was a change in the patterns of production and consumption prevailing in the developed nations.

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18. Ms. PERKOVIĆ (Yugoslavia), referring in particular to the relationship between the environment, development and international economic co-operation, said that two years previously the General Assembly had adopted resolutions 42/186, on the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, and 42/187, on the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. On that occasion, her delegation had agreed that sustainable development should become a central guiding principle of the United Nations. Nevertheless, now that the time had come to assess the implementation of those resolutions, it was not easy to define precisely the concept of sustainable development, although it was clear that an inextricable relationship existed between environment and development. Sustained development could not be achieved without taking into account the protection of the environment, and vice versa.

19. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of those resolutions (A/44/350) contained the information provided by Member States, which, although incomplete, indicated that exceptional attention was being accorded to the protection of the environment. It was also evident that, despite enormous economic difficulties, the developing countries attached great importance to the environment. Given that views differed regarding priorities for specific environmental problems, the entire spectrum of environmental concerns must be included in the international deliberations being held on the matter. The report of the Secretary-General also indicated that almost all the crucial sectors were involved in activities to protect the environment. However, her delegation considered that, despite their importance for sustainable and environmentally sound development, the sectors of energy and transport had not received sufficient attention.

20. She concurred with the opinion expressed in paragraph 23 of the report, that account must be taken of the environmental dimension in development planning and policies. Yugoslavia was making every effort to treat the environment as an integral part of development. The concept of environmental protection was defined in the Federal Constitution, and in the constitutions of the republics and provinces, as well as in the economic and social plans. Economic and social development was being adjusted to preserve the environment. Among the specific measures contributing to balanced development and environmental protection, she singled out the Social Contract on Environmental Protection and Promotion and Territorial Management in Yugoslavia, whose signatories had undertaken to take account of the environmental aspects of development activities. With regard to legal instruments relating to the environment, Yugoslavia had taken the necessary steps to accede to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, and was considering the possibility of signing the Montreal Protocol.

21. With regard to the illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous products and wastes, it emerged from the Secretary-General's report on the topic (A/44/362) that the developing countries were receiving substances of that kind from the industrial countries. The correlation between the threat of illegal traffic and the debtor status of the receiving country was particularly alarming. Yugoslavia urged that increasing attention should be given to the problem and to the measures which could be taken at the international level. Her delegation generally supported the

(Ms. Perković, Yugoslavia)

recommendations contained in the report and believed, in particular, that every effort should be made to achieve the earliest entry into force of the Basel Convention and to ensure that all countries adhere to it. Funding should be provided for appropriate legal and technical assistance to the developing countries.

22. She emphasized the seriousness of the problem of drought and desertification, which had environmental as well as economic implications. Although the climate had been favourable over the past three years, the situation remained precarious and, in consequence, it was necessary to make extensive efforts at the international level to assist the efforts being made by African countries affected by drought and desertification.

23. Mr. Ghezal (Tunisia) took the Chair.

24. U AYE LWIN (Myanmar) said that the latest scientific findings, to the effect that half of the ozone layer over the Antarctic had been destroyed, necessitated the adoption of urgent measures to avert a catastrophe. It was therefore encouraging that the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer had been in force since 1988 and the Montreal Protocol since January 1989, and that at their first meeting, held in Helsinki in April and May, the parties to both agreements had given their undertaking to eliminate the production and consumption of chlorofluorocarbons by the year 2000. That and other environmental problems necessitated the concerted efforts of the entire international community. The developing countries, aware of the dangers of environmental degradation, had very clearly expressed their resolve and desire to intensify international co-operation. He reiterated that, if international measures were to be adopted to control the use of environmentally damaging substances, the need to redress the existing asymmetry in world consumption and production levels of such substances also had to be taken into account.

25. The issues of environmental protection and development could not be treated separately, since poverty also caused environmental degradation. The developing countries were struggling to achieve economic development and social progress in very difficult circumstances. It was therefore wrong to impose environmental considerations on the developing countries as an additional condition for aid or development finance, or to use environmental protection as a pretext to limit the sovereignty of nations over their own natural resources. His delegation welcomed the holding of a United Nations conference on environment and development, which, it was hoped, could provide new guidelines for effective international co-operation in the 1990s and beyond.

26. Myanmar attached great importance to environmental considerations, since its rich forest resources constituted one of its main assets. Forests covered 57 per cent of its land area. Forest products not only accounted for 30 per cent of the country's export earnings, but were also a major source of building materials in the country. In exploiting those resources, the authorities had given serious consideration to the environmental aspect. A limit had been placed on the amount of timber which could be extracted annually, so that teak and other hardwood trees

(U Aye Lwin, Myanmar)

of a given minimum girth were harvested once every 30 years in the assigned areas. The authorities had also taken steps, by introducing modern farming techniques, to halt the reduction of forest cover caused by shifting cultivation in the country's hilly areas. The authorities had set in motion a reforestation programme. Every year millions of tree seedlings were distributed free of charge, and in four years some 300,000 acres had been replanted with teak and other hardwood trees.

27. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific had sought the co-operation of Myanmar in convening a seminar on forest management at which it could share its experience with that of the other countries in the region, and the Executive Secretary of the Commission had stated in a letter about the seminar to the Myanmar authorities that Myanmar's rich natural resources, especially the forests, had been well managed.

28. Environmental protection was a task which merited the utmost attention and support. It could not be accomplished by nations acting in isolation nor by the developing countries alone, even if acting in concert, but could only be achieved through collaboration between the developed and the developing countries. On its success depended the future of the human race.

29. Mr. OKALI (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat)) said that environmental concerns were far-reaching and varied. They ranged from the problem of the ozone layer and the greenhouse effect to insalubrious urban slums, from the preservation of biological diversity to the pollution of village wells - in short, from what could be termed the "natural" environment to the "built" or "living" environment. In an ideal situation, both sets of problems would receive equal attention, but in the real world, in which resources were in short supply, it could happen that efforts were concentrated in one area to the detriment of the other. The United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) believed that the environmental problems of human settlements should be an integral part of all activities associated with the environmental issue. About one quarter of the world's population, mostly - but not exclusively - in the developing countries, lived in totally inadequate housing conditions. If it was accepted that nothing could be more important than the life and dignity of a human being, it followed that the improvement of environmental conditions, whose deficiencies deprived so many human beings of their health and dignity, deserved priority consideration.

30. The increased costs of health care and the productivity losses due to mortality and morbidity from gastro-enteric, respiratory and other diseases attributable to poor housing conditions well illustrated the drain on a country's economy arising from such conditions. The developing countries were undergoing a historic transformation from essentially agrarian and rural economies to economies with a high degree of urban development. As a result, the productivity and well-being of their urban centres was a major factor determining the productivity and well-being of their economies. That between 40 per cent and 60 per cent of city dwellers in the developing world lived in very precarious conditions could not therefore be a matter of indifference, not only because of the losses already mentioned, but also because of the consequent waste of human resources.

(Mr. Okali)

31. To those considerations could be added weighty political reasons. Estimates for 1980 indicated that 80 million households lived in conditions of absolute poverty in the rural areas of the developing world, and 41 million in the urban areas. It was predicted that, by the year 2000, the situation would be reversed, with 56 million households in absolute poverty in the rural zones and the number of poor households in the cities growing to 75 million. The migration of so many people from a normally tranquil rural setting to the more politically sophisticated urban setting could be expected to lead to an upsurge of political activism over people's living conditions. Such a situation would imperil the political and social stability of the affected countries, hindering the search for solutions to the problems of environmental protection and sustainable development.

32. There was a practical link between human settlement issues and environmental protection. Due consideration had not always been given to the fact that rural migration represented surplus labour and that absorption of that population into urban centres attenuated the pressure on the rural environment, given that those individuals, had they remained in rural areas, would have been obliged to cultivate marginal land, thus contributing to soil depletion, deforestation and desertification. Furthermore, income earned by such migrants in urban employment might help to support families in rural areas, possibly enabling them to afford fuels other than firewood. In other words, investments in the living environment could result in handsome dividends for the natural environment.

33. In its resolution 12/18 adopted at its twelfth session, the Commission on Human Settlements had recommended to the General Assembly that the contribution of human settlements and urbanization to environmentally sound and sustainable development should be among the issues to be considered at the United Nations conference scheduled for 1992. The road to sustainable development must begin at our front door.

34. Mr. ŠEPELÁK (Czechoslovakia) also stressed the importance of environmental issues and said that the preservation and protection of the planet's ecosystem had become a problem whose solution was unthinkable without the co-ordinated efforts of all countries. Already at the forty-third session of the General Assembly, his country had expressed its readiness to take an active part in negotiations on those questions, both within the framework of the United Nations conference on environment and development and in other forums.

35. Recent initiatives on the subject indicated that the international community was becoming more aware of the urgent nature of those problems and was giving serious consideration to the elimination of the growing risks of environmental emergencies and the minimization of countries' ecological vulnerability. He supported the Secretary-General's views, as contained in document A/44/256/Add.1-E/1989/66/Add.1, on the holding of a United Nations conference on environment and development.

36. On the basis of General Assembly decision 43/440 of 20 December 1988, his delegation and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic were submitting at the

(Mr. Šepelák, Czechoslovakia)

forty-fourth session a draft resolution concerning international co-operation in the prevention of threats to environmental security. Both delegations believed that the draft, modified on the basis of suggestions made in the course of bilateral talks would be supported by other delegations since it contained concrete proposals for reducing environmental threats by monitoring, evaluating and anticipating them.

37. His country's efforts to implement General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187 demonstrated how difficult it was to give effect to international instruments on a national level. In principle, his Government's approach was in keeping with the recommendations and conclusions contained in those resolutions. Under the Long-Term Outlook up to the Year 2005, currently being prepared for submission to his Government, several measures were under consideration, such as protection of drinking-water sources and waste recycling and elimination using the most advanced technology.

38. Czechoslovakia was attempting to achieve a balance between the availability of natural resources and the demands of economic and social development. Its environmental strategy called for substantial environmental investments in the short run and, in the long run, the creation of conditions enabling gradual structural changes in the economy, in particular in industrial production. For example, the use of low-efficiency sulphurous brown coal would be reduced substantially, with an attendant increase in the use of gas fuels and nuclear energy.

39. Czechoslovakia's development strategies were based on concepts which were in harmony with environmentally sound and sustainable development, as envisaged by the World Commission on Environment and Development. Thus, conditions were being created for its participation in the next stages of the debate on that subject at the regional, national and international levels.

40. His country attached great importance to the follow-up activities on the environment being carried out in individual countries and regions. In that connection, it was making preparations for the Bergen Conference on follow-up measures with regard to the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The conference of Government representatives from seven of Czechoslovakia's neighbouring countries held at Prague in May 1989 had also been attended by representatives of the European Community, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. The conference had adopted a set of principles and had defined further spheres of action for environmental co-operation in that subregion of Europe.

41. At the follow-up conference to the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, held at Sofia, his country had proposed the establishment of an international centre for ecological information, education and training and the preparation of a convention on prevention or early warning of industrial accidents that might cause transboundary environmental damage and exchange of information and granting of mutual assistance in such cases. It had further suggested recommending

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(Mr. Šepelák, Czechoslovakia)

to the Executive Secretary of ECE that he should appoint a group of experts responsible for assessing liability for damage caused by industrial accidents.

42. Mr. BORG OLIVIER (Malta) welcomed the fact that, as the Secretary-General indicated in paragraphs 26 and 27 of document A/44/266, a consensus was beginning to emerge on the nature of the problems affecting the international community, and was nowhere more evident than in the field of environmental protection. The convergence of views on environmental issues that had prevailed during the current session demonstrated that the international community had made important progress since the adoption of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States.

43. With respect to the holding in 1992 of a United Nations conference on environment and development, his delegation supported wholeheartedly Brazil's offer to host that conference. The general scope of the conference had been adequately defined; what remained was to determine the organizational and institutional aspects of the preparatory process. The General Assembly must decide on the date and site of the conference, establish an open-ended preparatory body and decide on the composition of the conference secretariat. In order for the conference to be successful, a spirit of compromise and conciliation must prevail, based on a balanced assessment of the legitimate concerns of all groups of States.

44. With respect to agenda item 85, he wished to recall General Assembly resolution 43/53, entitled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind", which had been adopted by unanimous vote, on the basis of an initiative taken by his Government. That resolution proposed conceptual guidelines for the elaboration of new international legal principles on the matter and defined a global strategy for the vital work being carried out by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. He urged all governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, and scientific institutions to promote the work of the Panel.

45. A large number of countries had expressed support for the elaboration of a convention on climate which would include the issues highlighted in General Assembly resolution 43/53. In fact, paragraph 10 (e) of that resolution referred directly to elements for inclusion in an international convention on climate. Such a convention could follow the format of the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer. Final agreement on the convention might be achieved within two years within the framework of a diplomatic conference under the auspices of the United Nations Environment Programme and the World Meteorological Organization. The convention on climate should emphasize the global implications of the problem of climate change so as to encourage the largest possible number of States to participate. The industrialized countries might well be in the best position to take the lead, in view of their resources and responsibilities in the domain. Nevertheless, unilateral measures were likely to prove insufficient in the medium and long term. The convention must give due consideration to the means at the disposal of the developing countries and the varying levels of their development. For example, it was reasonable to provide for measures in response to climate changes to be implemented in accordance with different time schedules by the developing and the developed countries.

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(Mr. Borg Olivier, Malta)

46. Referring to item 82 (j), his delegation believed that a major deficiency existed in the evolving process of environmental protection. So far, efforts to protect the environment had been made principally in areas of national jurisdiction. However, it was becoming increasingly evident that damage caused to extraterritorial spaces affected mankind as a whole. Consequently, environmental protection within national boundaries might prove useless unless it was supported by similar protection in extraterritorial spaces.

47. It was no longer reasonable to argue that States or entities which polluted extraterritorial spaces should not be held accountable to the international community. All too often, freedom of access to such spaces had been interpreted as freedom to pollute. For example, intensive navigation, the large-scale dumping of wastes, indiscriminate resource exploitation and increasing pollution from land-based sources threatened to disrupt the delicate ecological balance of the seas. The accumulation of wastes, including radioactive wastes resulting from nuclear-weapons testing in the high seas, was reaching intolerable levels. The 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea did not contain institutional or legal measures to ensure the effective and comprehensive protection of the high seas. While it could not be denied that advances in environmental protection had been made, the instruments which had been adopted in that area dealt with the problem in a fragmentary manner, since they neglected the interdependence of extraterritorial spaces and the areas under national control. His delegation proposed that the United Nations should establish a group of eminent persons to study how the international community could effectively protect the environment of extraterritorial spaces.

48. Mr. MOLLER (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, said that environmental problems were among the priorities on the global political agenda. The interest in international co-operation and the political will to make firm commitments and take action were growing. More efficient tools for co-operation were needed. The Nordic countries found it appropriate to continue the discussion on the ideas and proposals concerning the organization of environmental questions within the United Nations system; they also endorsed the decisions of the UNEP Governing Council and considered them to be the first steps in a more comprehensive process which should soon lead to a considerable improvement of the capacity of the United Nations system to halt environmental degradation and achieve sustainable and environmentally sound development. Preventive action was the only long-term remedy for problems of environment and development.

49. With respect to the concern of the developing countries that integration of environmental concerns into development planning, programmes and policies could lead to the introduction of new conditions for development assistance or financing, the Nordic countries were satisfied with the consensus reached by the Governing Council (A/44/350, para. 19).

50. The Nordic countries welcomed the UNEP Governing Council's opinions and suggestions on the implementation of General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187, and noted with appreciation the action taken by most of the organizations

(Mr. Moller, Denmark)

of the United Nations system to follow up those resolutions. They also welcomed the steps taken by a number of Governments to implement the recommendations contained in the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond and the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Those steps and the preparations for the 1992 United Nations conference on environment and development, formed part of a single process. The Nordic countries would put forward a draft resolution on the further implementation of those recommendations.

51. The Nordic countries attached great importance to regional conferences, such as the one held at Kampala, Uganda, and those which would be held at Bergen, Norway, and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to facilitate preparations for the 1992 conference. It was important to ensure wide participation in those preparations, involving trade unions, environmental non-governmental organizations, including youth organizations, the international scientific community and industry. A voluntary fund should be established in order to facilitate the participation of the developing countries in preparations for the conference.

52. The meeting of the States of Europe and North America on environmental problems, which was being held within the framework of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, should promote the adoption of measures to solve those problems in industrialized countries. In November, the Government of Denmark was organizing at Copenhagen, a seminar for States members of the European Community and the European Free Trade Association, on the follow-up of the recommendations of the World Commission on Environment and Development.

53. The Nordic countries supported the decision of the UNEP Governing Council to focus on a selected number of high-priority areas, areas to which the entire United Nations system should accord equal priority. The serious degradation of the global environment had led to a situation in which vital systems were being threatened. The world was currently faced with the prospect of the irreversible degradation of its ecosystems and, as a consequence, environmental emergencies might become ever more serious and frequent. In view of that situation, the Nordic countries welcomed the UNEP Governing Council's decision to consider the possibility of establishing a United Nations centre for urgent environmental assistance. Such a centre could help countries make the urgent environmental assessment of an emergency, drawing upon the resources of Earthwatch. Further, it could assist countries, in particular the developing countries, in eliminating the causes of environmental emergencies. The Nordic countries looked forward to concrete proposals in order to assess how such a centre could function, in particular in relation to other existing institutions.

54. The Nordic countries stressed the need to raise the level of resources of the Environment Fund and supported the Governing Council's decision to set a target of \$100 million for contributions to the Fund by the year 1992. Likewise, they joined in the appeal to all Governments to increase their contributions to the Fund by at least 35 per cent per annum from the 1 January 1989 level.

(Mr. Moller, Denmark)

55. The developing countries needed additional financial assistance and transfer of technology in order to solve their own environmental problems and contribute to the solution of major global environmental problems. That should be one of the most important topics to be considered in the negotiations on international co-operation on environmental issues. The Nordic countries agreed with the Governing Council that UNEP should play a much more vigorous role and be afforded additional resources to assist the developing countries in their efforts to achieve environmentally sound and sustainable development.

56. Mr. TANLAX (Turkey) said that environmental protection was a fundamental task of the international community because it was an issue not only for the present but was also of vital importance for future generations. The issue of the disposal of hazardous wastes in developing countries was yet another aspect of the environmental crisis. There was an urgent need to control transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, and his delegation supported the action of UNEP to prepare a global convention on the subject. Turkey also vigorously supported the Basel Convention, which it had signed in March 1989. Since many countries continued to dump wastes in areas of the high seas where it was difficult to exercise national and international control, international conventions on control and verification should be adopted, as a matter of urgency, by the United Nations system and competent international agencies such as UNEP.

57. Lasting economic development could be achieved only through the protection and rational use of natural resources. The concept of sustainable and environmentally sound development presupposed a profound and radical change in economic and social planning. His delegation was convinced that sustainable and environmentally sound development should be one of the main objectives of the new international development strategy. The industrialized countries should help overcome the difficulties which could arise in the developing countries, by transferring technologies which had proved to be environmentally sound and by providing financial support for environmental projects carried out in those countries.

58. With regard to the efforts made to achieve sustainable and environmentally sound development, it should be noted that his country had endorsed the recommendations contained in General Assembly resolutions 42/186 and 42/187. Since the beginning of the 1970s, Turkey had established legal and administrative structures to deal with environmental problems and had created various national commissions to prepare studies which would help to incorporate environmental factors into the sixth national development plan. It had also established a link between demographic and environmental policies in the development plan. Legislation relating to the impact of various activities on the environment would come into force shortly and would apply to those development projects likely to produce a high volume of pollutants. The plans and regulations dealing with the environment provided for the imposition of fines on industries which caused pollution.

59. As was clear from the note by the Secretary-General, the international community was becoming increasingly aware of the seriousness of environmental

(Mr. Tanlay, Turkey)

problems. In order to solve those problems, concerted international action must be carried out in a spirit of sacrifice and collective responsibility. All States had an obligation to solve environmental problems, but the industrialized countries had a very special responsibility: preventing damage to the environment and providing assistance to the developing countries so that they might achieve sustainable and environmentally sound development.

60. Mrs. LUO Xu (China) said that environmental pollution and degradation presented mankind with a major challenge, which the international community was attempting to address through concerted efforts. However, it was also an inescapable fact that the developed and developing countries did not have the same capabilities with regard to controlling environmental degradation. The developing countries were facing the difficult task of economic development, which required the full utilization of natural resources for industrial and agricultural production. It was necessary to establish an equitable international economic environment, conducive to sustainable development, in order to overcome the situation of poverty and under-development which made developing countries incapable of protecting their environment. The international community, and in particular, the developed countries, should help the developing countries solve their urgent environmental problems. In that regard, the meeting of the Group of 77 held at Caracas and the summit conference of the non-aligned countries held at Belgrade had put forward timely proposals worthy of the attention of the international community.

61. The protection of the ozone layer was an urgent task. Her country, wishing to contribute to that effort, had acceded to the Vienna Convention on the Protection of the Ozone Layer. The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, while taking into account the special circumstances of the developing countries, contained some unfair provisions. For various historical reasons, the industries in developing countries which consumed substances harmful to the ozone layer represented a tiny part of total global consumption. To acquire substitute technologies in accordance with the rules laid down in the Protocol was beyond the scope of those countries. Accordingly, her country believed that the developed countries should make specific commitments to provide financial assistance to the developing countries which were endeavouring to stop using substances harmful to the ozone layer. Only a mechanism of that type could induce more and more countries to join the global effort to save the ozone layer.

62. After noting the adoption at Basel, Switzerland, of the Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, she said that the fundamental task in controlling hazardous wastes was to eliminate them or at least reduce them to a minimum. The hazardous wastes already produced should be treated using methods which were not harmful to the environment; to the extent possible, they should be treated locally. Her country was especially opposed to the illegal dumping of hazardous wastes in developing countries. Constrained by a lack of capital and technology, those countries were ill-prepared to solve their own environmental problems, and therefore should not be overburdened with the need to treat hazardous wastes illegally brought in from developed countries. For those

(Mrs. Luo Xu, China)

reasons, the developed countries should provide financial resources and technology to assist developing countries in instituting low-waste and waste-free production techniques, as well as methods for waste treatment and integrated utilization.

63. Mr. PAWLAK (Poland) said that there was ample evidence that world public opinion was increasingly concerned with protection of the environment. Many were pointing to the importance of anticipating and preventing pollution or other ecological damage rather than trying to eliminate it a posteriori. Another major concern was that the deterioration of the economic situation in many developing and some other countries, exacerbated by the debt crisis, had led to a dangerous impairment of those countries' ability to protect their environment.

64. It had been said repeatedly that environmentally sound development should not be used as a pretext for placing new conditions on development assistance and that the concept of development could not justify any encroachment upon national sovereignty. Those countries which lacked sufficient budgetary or other resources should be given aid to preserve their environment and thus contribute to regional or even global environmental protection. On the other hand, respect for national sovereignty did not imply that a country was free to carry out in its territory activities which had a harmful impact on other countries, as those countries would then suffer an encroachment on their own national sovereignty.

65. The growing awareness of environmental problems was a pre-condition for concerted action. However, the solution required not only awareness or the establishment of a system of rules of behaviour, but co-ordinated efforts at the domestic and international levels, co-operation and assistance. Environmental considerations must become an integral part of Government strategies and decision-making if human civilization and nature were to be preserved, and economic activity must be re-oriented towards ecological balance, with a view to combining the preservation of ecosystems with a decent quality of life for all.

66. The central dilemma at the present time was not whether to opt for environmental protection or growth, but how to ensure harmony between the two. That should be the basic objective of the 1992 conference. Although there were many possible interpretations of sustainable and environmentally sound development, what mattered was to provide practical guarantees of environmental security, which meant intensifying each country's pro-ecological efforts and adjustments and strengthening international co-operation in assisting those most in need.

67. It might be useful to combine the debt reduction concept with environmental protection efforts by examining the possibility of arranging debt-for-nature swaps. His Government was aware of the serious state of the environment in Poland and was determined to change its economic strategy in order to improve the situation. It was counting on assistance from highly developed countries in that regard.

(Mr. Pawlak, Poland)

68. There was increasing support for the idea of only one Earth, as attested by the decision to convene in 1992 a United Nations conference on environment and development. His Government supported Brazil's proposal to host the conference. The common will to co-ordinate policies and actions at all levels could be seen in the proposal by the European Economic Community for the establishment of an open-ended environmental agency, the initiatives by Sweden and Poland for the establishment of a European fund for environmental protection and the convening of a conference of the Prime Ministers of the Baltic States, and his country's proposals for the establishment of an all-European council on environmental protection and a Baltic foundation. The proposal made at Mainz, Federal Republic of Germany, on 31 May 1989 by the President of the United States, Mr. Bush, that the United States and Western Europe should work together with Eastern Europe on environmental problems was of singular relevance in the European context. His country reiterated its support for the valuable proposal made by the Soviet Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Shevardnadze, regarding the establishment of a centre for emergency environmental assistance.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.