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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 23rd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand)

later: Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.20 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 82: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (A/44/3, 84, 139, 187, 188, 235, 254, 260, 355, 409 and Corr.1, 467, 499, 598, 617)

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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. ROKOTUIVUNA (Fiji) said that the 1992 conference on environment and development would be most timely, but the many legislative, scientific and practical initiatives and measures currently under consideration should not be left pending during the preparations. Work must continue on protocols relating to "greenhouse" gases, strengthening the Montreal Protocol, outlawing of drift-net fishing and other urgent measures.

2. Poor States unquestionably bore only limited responsibility for the environment; environmental damage caused by industrialized countries outweighed that produced by all the others by a factor of over 10 to 1. Given the seriousness of the problem, however, the only possible solution was world-wide action to address all causal factors simultaneously. Putting pressure on developing countries in environmental matters as a further condition for granting development relief would do a serious disservice to the joint efforts which lay ahead.

3. Development depended not only on favourable circumstances but on the elimination of factors which hindered its progress, such as poverty and hunger. His delegation agreed without reservation that the environment was a just and noble cause, but it was one which required solutions to be found to social problems and encouragement to be given to development.

4. A wide variety of factors hindered sustainable development in the southern Pacific region. One was the habit adopted by certain industrialized countries in recent years of treating small island States as private dumping grounds. Small island countries did not have the technical facilities or manpower to enforce regulations on the dumping of waste. His delegation proposed that the United Nations Environment Programme should assist small developing countries in dealing with the problem.

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(Mr. Rokotuivuna, Fiji)

5. Fishing was an activity of great importance to many Pacific countries. The recent spread of drift-net fishing imperilled the future of fishing industries and the livelihood of many inhabitants of the region. His delegation condemned drift-net fishing, not only because it created an imbalance in the aquatic environment but also because it was not conducive to the sustainable exploitation of marine resources. The Tarawa Declaration issued by the South Pacific Forum in July 1989 expressed the united opposition of the Pacific island States to drift-net fishing. He welcomed the fact that some distant-water-fishing nations had decided to reduce and curtail the practice.

6. His delegation considered it essential to discuss the relationship between nuclear tests and the environment under item 82 (f). The effects of tests conducted more than 30 years previously could still be seen: some islands remained uninhabitable because radiation had rendered them sterile. Tests were now conducted underground; although the effects were not known, action should not be delayed until they manifested themselves but taken immediately, calling for an end to nuclear tests for the sake of the future environment.

7. His delegation endorsed the statement by the representative of Samoa on the protection of the global climate for present and future generations. Unless an effective way of dealing with climatic change in the Pacific region was found, some parts of the States in the region would ultimately disappear. The nations of the Pacific region were already taking action to cope with the problem, and called on other groups of States to collaborate in that important endeavour.

8. Mr. FISHER (Australia) said that scientific field research was needed to respond effectively to climatic change. When strategies on the subject were adopted, the views of all countries would have to be taken into account, resisting the tendency to allow the most politically and economically powerful countries predominant influence.

9. His Government was concerned not only at the potentially catastrophic effects of rising sea level on low-lying island countries, but at other regional and world problems. The Prime Minister had said that international action on the environment should concentrate on four elements, namely, the early development of an international convention on climatic change, the development and acceptance of an international convention for the protection of biological diversity, the promotion of better forestry management practices, and a ban on drift-net fishing.

10. Land degradation affected more than two thirds of the cultivable area of the continent of Australia, where 50 per cent of the tree cover had been destroyed in 200 years of European settlement. His Government had proclaimed the 1990s as the decade of land care. There were plans to plant 1,000 million trees and set minimum environmental standards. The country was developing forestry management measures which it intended to pursue through the International Tropical Timber Organization and other international bodies.

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(Mr. Fisher, Australia)

11. His country shared the concern at the spread of pelagic drift-net fishing, particularly on the high seas in the southern and western Pacific. The economic future of many countries in the region depended largely, if not totally, on the effective management of the fish resources within their exclusive economic zones. In that connection he drew attention to the most recent report of the South Pacific Albacore Research Group, sponsored by the South Pacific Commission and comprising scientists from Australia, New Zealand, the United States of America, Canada, France, Japan and Taiwan. The Group had concluded that the albacore catch was increasing at an alarming rate because of a widespread increase in the use of drift nets over the past two years.

12. In July, Australia and other members of the South Pacific Forum had signed the Tarawa Declaration calling for a ban on drift-net fishing in the region. In October, the South Pacific Conference had expressed concern at the deleterious effects of drift-net fishing and had called for an immediate ban. Australia had also subscribed to the Langkawi Declaration on Environment recently issued by the Commonwealth Heads of Government in Malaysia. The Declaration called, *inter alia*, for immediate action to discourage and restrict non-sustainable fishing practices and to ban tangle nets and pelagic drift-net fishing.

13. Mr. NATHON (Hungary) recalled that 20 years earlier the United Nations had taken the first global measures to save the earth from destruction. There was no doubt that all countries must be concerned with conservation and the protection of ecosystems. Problems relating to the destruction of the ozone layer or global warming, the maintenance of biological diversity, the protection of soils, flora and fauna, and environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and toxic chemicals must be tackled without delay.

14. If countries were to achieve sustainable and environmentally sound development, a spirit of international co-operation must prevail in the economic sphere. His Government realized that much higher priority should be given to environmental considerations in economic and social planning, in various sectors of the economy and in education. Hungary's interest in the environment had led it to examine earlier agreements and to take new initiatives, such as the establishment, in co-operation with the United States of America, of the Environmental Protection Centre for Central and Eastern Europe. Hungary had also participated actively in the preparation of the Basel Conference and in the work of the Brundtland Commission. The Hungarian Government supported the establishment of a preparatory committee for the conference on environment and development. It also believed that, in order to give further impetus to the preparatory process, a conference secretariat should be set up at Geneva in the near future. His delegation wished to express its appreciation to the Government of Brazil for its generous offer to host the conference.

15. Mr. KREISEL (World Health Organization) said that the WHO environmental health programme in developing countries had consistently focused on improving water supply and sanitation facilities through human resource and institutional development, community participation, appropriate technology and better use of

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available resources. The reason for that was evident: in most developing countries, disease was largely associated with contaminated water and unsanitary disposal of human waste. Consequently, even though the International Drinking Water Supply and Sanitation Decade was drawing to a close, efforts to improve those aspects of sanitation by co-ordinating the inputs of other support agencies would not cease.

17. WHO had convened a working meeting of world-renowned experts to assess the impact on health of climate change, including depletion of the ozone layer. The findings would be published and made available to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and to the Second World Climate Conference, to be held at Geneva in 1990. Primary health care and sustainable development were concepts that explicitly acknowledged the significance of improving health and the importance of a healthy environment for the current and future generations.

19. Mr. MINET (International Labour Organisation) said that the International Labour Conference meeting in June 1990 would have as the main item on its agenda the subject of environment and the world of labour. The report of the Director-General of ILO would contain an overview of issues related to the environment and development in the activities of the United Nations system and would consider the potential impact of environmental problems and policies on the world of labour. The aim of the report was to encourage ILO to play a more active role in order to ensure that future environmental policies effectively and equitably took into account their potential impact on the tripartite world of work. An example of the interest ILO took in those subjects was to be found in a

(Mr. Minet, ILO)

recent report on the effect of environmental policies on employment in certain Western countries. While the data suggested that employment cut-backs attributable to environmental causes had been rather limited, environmental policies had not yet begun to generate employment. Political statements had not been translated into action and, according to the data available, public funds for the environment in many countries stood at the level they had been at a decade earlier.

20. Currently, it was impossible to distinguish completely between environment in the work-place and the environment in general. ILO would give increasing priority to protecting the environment of workers employed outside the industrial sector and in other organized sectors of the economy, particularly in rural areas, as well as in the informal sector, especially in developing countries. Rapid population growth was making the creation of millions of new jobs imperative, and those jobs must be healthy, safe and compatible with sustainable and environmentally sound development. ILO was closely following the preparations for the United Nations conference on environment and development scheduled for 1992 and would make an appropriate contribution.

21. Mr. ZIARAN (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that serious threats menaced the global environment without regard to frontiers; environmental protection was thus the responsibility of the international community. The inclusion of the environment in the international development strategy and the adoption of General Assembly resolution 43/196, on the United Nations conference on environment and development to be held in 1992, demonstrated that the international community was ready to take collective action in that regard.

22. His delegation welcomed the request by UNEP's Governing Council for negotiations to establish a convention on climate change. That process must commence at the earliest possible date in order to avoid climate changes which could not be controlled.

23. In view of the marine environment's role as a source of human nutrition, marine pollution gave cause for concern. The Islamic Republic of Iran was attempting to protect the Persian Gulf against pollution and, to that end, was collaborating with other countries in the region through the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment. Despite the measures and devices existing to control transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, including the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the situation remained critical. His delegation wished to draw the Committee's attention to the fact that barrels containing hazardous waste had recently been dumped in the Persian Gulf by unknown ships. It should be reiterated that the countries which generated such waste were solely responsible for the pollution caused. The 1992 United Nations conference on environment and development must address those problems. The developing countries must be provided with technology and financial resources to cope with marine pollution.

24. His delegation welcomed the UNEP Governing Council decision to continue according priority to the question of desertification within the field of environmental management. Financial resources must be provided urgently to

(Mr. Ziaran, Iran, Islamic Republic of)

anti-desertification programmes at the local, national and regional levels. His delegation had expressed its willingness to co-operate with UNEP and the regional commissions for the exchange of experience and information in the field. The Government of Iran would establish a centre to combat desertification in Tehran, which would be responsible for providing information to affected countries in the region. Iran hoped to benefit from the co-operation of FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and UNEP, which would greatly facilitate the work of the centre.

25. The responsibility for degradation of the environment did not rest equally with developed and developing countries. Industrial and agricultural activities in developed countries had endangered the environment. Developing countries, for their part, which lacked resources, were exposed to tremendous environmental problems created by the industrialized countries.

26. Lastly, in view of the growing importance of the question of the environment, it would be necessary to strengthen UNEP, which would mean allocating greater financial resources to the Programme. Therefore, his delegation welcomed the budget proposed for UNEP at the fifteenth session of its Governing Council.

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

28. Mr. ALMABROUK (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that no country or group of countries could cope single-handedly with the problems of environmental deterioration. International co-operation within the United Nations system must therefore be stepped up in order to find a global solution to the question.

29. The discussion on environmental protection should be placed in the context of the development process. The international community must allocate more resources to the initiatives taken by countries to preserve the environment. The industrialized countries, which had contributed the most to the deterioration of the environment by producing and consuming harmful substances, had a greater obligation than the rest to seek ways of coping with such deterioration and to facilitate the transfer of less environmentally damaging technology to the developing countries.

30. His delegation was very concerned that exports of toxic and dangerous wastes to developing countries by certain developed countries and transnational corporations were becoming an increasingly frequent occurrence. Such practices were to be categorically condemned, and measures to ban them must be adopted at the international level.

31. His delegation was concerned about the environmental threats posed to the Mediterranean basin as a result of the concentration of foreign fishing fleets in the region. Certain countries outside the region were indiscriminately exploiting a number of species, such as tuna, which were already on the way to extinction. The countries of the Mediterranean and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries demanded an end to such overfishing.

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(Mr. Almagrouk, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya)

32. His delegation was particularly concerned over the increasing desertification of Africa. Drought had already caused a drastic decline in agricultural production on the continent, further impairing its economic and social situation. His delegation urged the international community, the organizations of the United Nations system and non-governmental organizations to continue lending support and financial assistance and technology to the African countries' efforts to combat desertification and drought.

33. Mr. PAOLILLO (Uruguay) said that his country, located in the temperate zone of the southern hemisphere with sea coasts facing the southern regions of the Atlantic Ocean, had an economy based on livestock breeding and lacked mineral resources. The effects of phenomena such as depletion of the ozone layer, climate change and global warming would be disastrous for its inhabitants and its economy. A rise in sea level, for example, would affect most of the population, which lived along or near the coast, and would put an end to tourism, which was one of Uruguay's principal industries and depended on the natural beauty of the coastline.

34. In addition, overfishing in the south Atlantic by fishing fleets from outside the region had already had adverse effects on fish stocks in the zone under Uruguay's maritime jurisdiction.

35. However, the international community had demonstrated its capacity to react effectively against the dangers caused by environmental degradation. That was borne out by the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, together with the proposal to convene a United Nations conference on environment and development in 1992.

36. Climate protection was another area of vital importance. His delegation supported resolution 43/53 on protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind, and would support any other initiative aimed at promoting international co-operation to prevent, limit and reduce harmful climate changes.

37. As stated at the Sixth Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Latin America and the Caribbean, held at Brasilia in March 1989, the solution to the environmental problem required unprecedented co-operation between developed and developing countries. The origins of ecological imbalances and the social and economic factors underlying them must be considered. There were two types of environmental degradation: that which originated with production and the enjoyment of wealth, and that which could be traced to the hardships of poverty. Hence, the ecological issue might well be approached differently by industrialized and developing countries. During the preparations for the 1992 conference, therefore, certain agreements must be reached on establishing the conceptual basis for legal instruments aimed at preserving the environment. The Brundtland Report, the Caracas Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Group of 77 and UNEP Governing Council decision 15/2 could be useful in that connection.

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(Mr. Paolillo, Uruguay)

38. Genuine progress in environmental protection could only be achieved in the light of the environment-development relationship. On the one hand, the aim was to introduce the environmental dimension in development policies and strategies, notwithstanding the sovereign right of States to exploit their natural resources. On the other hand, the objective was to let the economic development factor play its rightful part in environmental protection strategies and policies. His delegation was convinced that economic development and environmental protection must be viewed not as incompatible, but as complementary. Sustainable development should include the elimination of poverty, the meeting of basic needs and the maintenance of an adequate level of growth in order for the developing countries to be able to achieve their economic and social objectives and improve the quality of life.

39. Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand) resumed the Chair.

40. Mr. SHEK (Israel) said that all countries must help to overcome environmental problems to the best of their ability. An overall willingness to share knowledge, technical know-how, experience and resources must prevail. Israel supported the convening of the conference on environment and development to be held in 1992 and intended to participate actively in the preparatory work.

41. The Mediterranean Action Plan was an example of what could be achieved through the concerted efforts of countries to eliminate environmental pollution. Israel attached paramount importance to studies attempting to make economic, social and demographic forecasts which helped to solve environmental problems. It was inexcusable that in 1989, despite the knowledge of the earth's fragility, most development projects were carried out without a proper environmental assessment.

42. Contrary to traditional beliefs, development and environmental issues did not have to be at variance, but might be complementary. Examples were the harnessing of solar and wind energy, the development and construction of solar energy plants operating in Israel and in other countries and the use that should be made of biological control in agriculture as a more economical and lasting alternative than chemical pesticides. International co-operation and the possibility of sharing knowledge were needed to that end.

43. Reforestation was a means of controlling desertification and protecting the environment. Regrettably, not everyone respected the environment. Arab terrorists had recently set fire to around 2,000 acres of natural forests on Mount Carmel, which had been devastated, with resulting harm to wildlife in danger of extinction living in the protected habitat of a nature reserve. The perpetrators of such acts should be duly condemned and reprimanded.

44. Mr. KANDA LONSA (Zaire) said that his country complied fully with the basic provisions of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, particularly article 30 concerning the protection, preservation and enhancement of the environment for the present and future generations. Zaire devoted 5 per cent of its national territory to the protection of rare and endangered animal species.

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(Mr. Kanda Lonsa, Zaire)

Zaire endorsed the New Zealand proposal on the protection of the ozone layer in conformity with the Vienna Convention, and joined those States Members which had declared that fishing with drift nets threatened some rare fish species with extermination.

45. The industrialized countries systematically violated the World Charter for Nature and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal and General Assembly resolution 43/212 on the responsibility of States for the protection of the environment. The industrialized countries had transformed Africa into a toxic waste dump. Accordingly, Zaire urged that strict international regulations should be drafted without delay in that vital area, and strongly supported the strengthening of the United Nations Environment Programme and the holding in 1992 of the conference on environment and development.

46. His delegation once again called upon the international community to seek the means enabling the countries producing and exporting toxic and dangerous wastes to incinerate or recover those wastes themselves. Moreover, the draft resolution on the monitoring, assessment and anticipation of environmental threats should be adopted with a view to consolidating the Earthwatch programme established to that end in 1972 by the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. Effective environmental development should be linked to growth and development with a view to improving the living conditions of the peoples so that the socio-economic situation of the South was also of concern to the North in the framework of international co-operation.

47. Mr. CAHILL (United States of America) said that the world appeared to recognize the global nature of the threat of environmental deterioration. Air and water pollution did not respect national boundaries. Global warming and the depletion of the ozone layer, the strangulation of biological diversity, erosion and destruction transcended borders and required comprehensive study. The crucial ecological or environmental problems, desertification or climate changes could only be addressed if all countries adopted joint measures.

48. The large-scale use of pelagic drift nets endangered virtually all living marine resources. As those nets were made of a slowly degrading plastic, abandoned nets continued to ensnare and kill marine wildlife indefinitely. He referred to some examples of the use of such techniques in the North and South Pacific. Following several years of negotiations, the United States had concluded bilateral agreements with Japan and other countries for the monitoring and regulation of the fleets using those fishing nets in the north Pacific.

49. In the South Pacific, conclusive evidence that the stocks of albacore tuna would be considerably depleted in the near future had led the countries in the region to call for an end to fishing with those nets. The Republic of Korea should be congratulated on its decision to cease all its operations in the South Pacific in which such nets were used, as should Japan for its decision to reduce its drift-net fleet by two thirds to 1988 levels. The United States intended to introduce a draft resolution calling for further restraints on the use of those types of nets on the high seas.

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50. Mrs. SCOTT (Jamaica) said that her delegation hoped that the verbal commitments made to finding means of resolving problems that threatened to destroy the ecological balance and undermine development efforts would be matched with meaningful action. Her delegation firmly believed that any attempts to consider environmental issues in isolation would be worthless. Instead of converting the environment into a new form of conditionality in aid and development financing, what was needed was additional capital to assist developing countries with their environmental projects. The recent Langwaki Declaration by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, had reaffirmed the need to adopt a balanced perspective with regard to protection of the environment and to accord due emphasis to promoting economic growth and sustainable development. Any discussion of the environment at the international level must recognize the need to put an end to economic inequities, so that the developing countries could begin to pay attention to long-term environmental issues.

51. Her delegation was conscious of the need to incorporate environmental concerns in economic planning and policy. The Jamaican Ministry of Development, Planning and Production had assumed overall responsibility for environmental questions. In addition, the Conservation and Development Trust was responsible for indigenous flora and fauna and had identified poverty as the single most serious threat to wildlife resources. The Natural Resources Conservation Authority dealt with the proper management of environmental matters.

52. The Caribbean Community had issued the Port of Spain Accord on the management and conservation of the Caribbean environment, following the first CARICOM Ministerial Conference on the Environment. The Community had recognized that the fundamental element in all activities relating to the environment should be human survival in a manner that was both in harmony with nature and consistent with human welfare.

53. Her delegation supported the need for the adoption of a convention on climate change, which should take account of the differences in responsibilities and capacities of various countries for tackling environmental problems. Furthermore, adequate financial provisions should be incorporated in the Montreal Protocol, and the Basel Convention must also include rules on liability and compensation.

54. The 1992 conference on environment and development should address such problems as coastal erosion, land and marine pollution and the preservation of genetic resources. Her delegation hoped that the conference would coincide with the celebration of World Environment Day in 1992. The committee responsible for the preparations for the conference should ensure universal participation at a high level. Her delegation believed that a voluntary fund should be established to assist developing countries to participate in the conference, in accordance with the Governing Council of UNEP.

55. Mr. BUDDRUDIN (Pakistan) said that in order to solve current environmental problems it was necessary to have a clear agreement on the causes of environmental degradation and reach agreement on the matter. It had to be recognized also that the developing countries had contributed only insignificantly to the current state

(Mr. Buddrudin, Pakistan)

of the environment and that in those countries environmental deterioration was linked intrinsically to economic development. Poverty was the main cause of deforestation and desertification, two environmental problems that were very common in those countries. As long as poverty left the population no other alternative to the exploitation of the environment, degradation would continue.

56. Undoubtedly, the industries of the developing countries did not function adequately from the environmental point of view. In order to change that situation, a mass transfer of technology was needed, and the capacity of each country should be developed. The refusal of the developed countries to share and transfer environmentally appropriate technologies might constitute a grave obstacle to the formulation of a world strategy to prevent the continuing deterioration of the environment.

57. In Pakistan, the prime environmental problems were desertification, water-logging and salinity, soil degradation and water-borne diseases. The Government of Pakistan recognized the need to adopt a strategy for environmentally sound and sustainable development that would also deal with research, legislation and co-ordination among the parties involved in environmental management. The co-ordination of the activities undertaken at any level was considered to be of fundamental importance. Such co-operation was concentrated at the federal and the provincial levels and was reflected in the establishment of environmental protection bodies, the adoption of laws relating to the environment, development planning, the adoption of environmental control rules, evaluation, training, the formulation of a national conservation strategy and education on the environment.

58. Mr. GALGAU (Romania) said that, since the adoption of the Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond, the international community recognized that ecological problems constituted a global threat requiring global co-operation. During the past two years, a new awareness of the interrelation between the environment and development had been acquired. It had been recognized that man lived in a world with limited and finite resources and that his capacity for survival would depend increasingly on maintaining the delicate balance between human activities and life support systems. There was a growing trend towards support for environmental protection programmes, even at the expense of another area of economic growth.

59. In international co-operation, account should be taken of the fact that the bulk of pollution so far had stemmed from the industrialized countries, causing great damage to the natural resources not only in those countries but also in the rest of the world. In the developing countries, the elimination of underdevelopment and extreme poverty was a necessary condition for preventing the continuation of the deterioration of the environment. Desertification, deforestation, soil erosion and salinization were to a large extent the result of desperate attempts on the part of the poor population to obtain food and fuel. The policy of many multinational companies to relocate heavily polluting industries in developing countries, thereby side-stepping pollution abatement standards and paying little attention to health and safety hazards, had aggravated the problems in those countries.

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(Mr. Galgau, Romania)

60. Romania supported the proposal to establish a preparatory committee for the conference on environment and development, that would meet either in New York or in Geneva, as well as the idea of establishing a secretariat for the conference. Romania whole-heartedly supported the offer of the Government of Brazil to host the future conference.

61. International efforts in the area of transboundary movements and the disposal of hazardous wastes had culminated in the adoption of the Basel Convention. By stating the sovereign right of every State to ban the entry into or disposal in its territory of foreign hazardous wastes, as well as the principle of prior informed consent of importing and transit countries for any transboundary movement involving hazardous wastes, the Convention could have a decisive impact on efforts to combat the illegal traffic in toxic wastes. However, notwithstanding the provisions of resolution 43/212 of the General Assembly and those of the Basel Convention, the report of the Secretary-General, contained in document A/44/362, clearly indicated that cases of illegal international traffic in hazardous wastes continued to occur. The growing number of proposals from the industrial world to build so-called waste-to-energy plants in developing countries or to provide supposedly non-hazardous waste landfill or incineration facilities therefore constituted a disturbing trend.

62. Romania was convinced of the need to take immediate practical measures pending the entry into force of the Convention, and it urged all Member States to refrain from the aforementioned practices and from any activities that were contrary to the provisions of the Convention. It also believed that the establishment of rules on liability and compensation for damages as soon as practicable would contribute significantly to the elimination of such harmful practices by defining in more precise terms the responsibility of those who engaged in such illegal traffic. The development of low and non-waste technologies and their unobstructed transfer to developing countries, together with the provision of appropriate assistance to those countries to enable them effectively to combat illegal traffic, were imperative for progress in that specific area and in global co-operation as well.

63. Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia) resumed the Chair.

64. Mr. ALEMU (Ethiopia) welcomed the increasing attention accorded to environmentally sound and sustainable development. However, the international community was still far from agreeing on a common interpretation of that concept. Ethiopia believed that the defining elements of sustainable development agreed upon by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme at its fifteenth session, contained in annex II of its decision 15/2, could provide the basis for a universally acceptable interpretation.

65. The current world environmental crisis was rooted in the abuse of nature by both developed and developing countries. In the developed world, the abuse resulted from the pursuit of growth which had been thought to be limitless, while in the developing world, it was inextricably bound up with the needs created by poverty.

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(Mr. Alemu, Ethiopia)

66. Ethiopia agreed with what the representative of FAO had said in his address to the Second Committee. In many developing countries, the combination of demographic pressure and poverty left no other alternative than to fell the forests and to over-exploit soil and grazing lands.

67. The only way to break the vicious cycle set off by poverty and ecological degradation was through international co-operation. Ethiopia hoped that the United Nations conference on environment and development would lay the basis for effective international assistance to developing countries with a view to helping them to overcome the specific and long-standing ecological difficulties in which they were mired. It fully supported Brazil's offer to host the conference.

68. Ethiopia believed that the major obstacle to the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification was the lack of financial resources. The affected countries should accord priority to programmes to combat desertification within the context of national plans for the development of natural resources and the rehabilitation of the adversely affected ecosystem. In that context, the Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development (IGADD) was of the highest importance. Ethiopia wished to commend the valuable work of the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) in facilitating the work of IGADD and it welcomed the establishment of the regional office at Nairobi. UNSO was also doing valuable work in reforestation and in fuel-wood plantation, with funds from the Danish International Development Agency and the Finnish International Development Agency. Those agencies were taking on one of the major environmental problems facing Ethiopia - the loss of a tremendous amount of forest cover, which had reached dangerous proportions.

69. Mr. CHUNG (Observer, Republic of Korea) commended the decisions and recommendations concerning depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, transboundary air and water pollution, deforestation and desertification, contained in the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its fifteenth session. It was gratifying to note that there seemed to be broad agreement on the responsibility for environmental tasks.

70. His delegation attached great importance to the United Nations conference on environment and development which was scheduled for 1992. The success of the Conference depended more on political will than on technological means. It was necessary to hold a sufficient number of preparatory meetings, and to ensure that the secretariat was large enough to deal with the task at hand. In addition, the United Nations Environment Programme should be strengthened in view of its role as co-ordinator of wide-ranging environmental programmes.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.