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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 37th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GHEZAL (Tunisia)

later: Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 86: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/44/3, A/44/361, A/44/376, A/44/401, A/44/409 and Corr.1, A/44/477, A/44/551, A/44/646 and A/44/689)

- (a) COMPREHENSIVE POLICY REVIEW OF OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM (continued) (A/44/324 and Add.1 to 5)
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1. Mr. CHOO (Malaysia), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the economic crisis confronting the developing countries remained far from resolved. There was a sense of disillusionment with the operational activities, due in large measure to the failure to fully implement the General Assembly resolutions, and the consequent absence of improvement at the execution level. Clearly that level was fundamental to operational activities.

2. The Group of 77 reaffirmed the validity and relevance of the main principles of operational activities contained in the Consensus of 1970 (General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV)), including the universal character of operational activities, the responsibility of developing countries for formulating their own plans and priorities and the neutrality and non-conditional nature of operational activities.

3. The primary problem continued to be that resources for operational activities for development had, in fact, declined in real terms; that was further aggravated by the poor results of the recent United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities. The developed countries should seriously consider increasing their contributions to the various organizations of the United Nations development system.

4. Excessive centralization and bureaucratization of activities had limited the utilization of national capacities of the developing countries, even though that element should be central if the provisions of the Consensus of 1970 were to be fully implemented. TCDC would also be a very useful modality in that regard.

5. The triennial policy review of operational activities for development provided an excellent opportunity for achieving those goals and considering concrete solutions. It was also an opportunity for improving co-ordination among the

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(Mr. Choo, Malaysia)

various governing bodies. The Group of 77 was prepared to participate actively in the negotiation of an agreed text of operational activities at the current session.

6. Mr. FORTIER (Canada) thanked the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and his colleagues for the report on the triennial policy review of operational activities for development (A/44/324) and expressed general satisfaction with the way the system was evolving. However, his delegation was concerned at certain recent developments, such as the problematic relationship between the World Food Programme and FAO. By contrast, UNFPA was sharpening the focus of its programmes. His delegation would welcome greater collaboration between UNFPA, UNICEF and UNDP. UNICEF had made real progress with regard to the definition of its objectives and its financial management.

7. The Governing Council of UNDP had had an important debate and had adopted a decision giving priority to the strengthening of national capacity for self-reliant development, the goal being to ensure that technical co-operation programmes encouraged countries to achieve self-reliance so that they could manage the structural adjustment process according to their own aspirations. Improved forms of co-operation were necessary and he wondered whether the proliferation of thousands of separate projects, missions and mid-term reviews did not place too great an administrative burden on Governments. It would probably be far more effective to adopt a more comprehensive programme approach.

8. The question of objectives which could help focus programme activities had been of great interest to Canada. General principles should be formulated for those programmes without, however, infringing upon the rights of participating Governments. In addition, it was essential for the United Nations system to adapt to current realities, *inter alia*, by turning to more technical functions and intervening a little further upstream in the planning process. It would also be necessary to encourage national management of projects as a means of integrating external assistance into the national fabric.

9. For the last 20 years Canada had firmly advocated the concept of central funding of technical co-operation through UNDP, as that was the best means of achieving co-ordination and coherence of activities and respect for national priorities through the country programming system. Attainment of that objective was bound up with the effectiveness of the programming process. The various bodies could, as the Director-General had suggested, establish jointly, under the leadership of Governments, common country statements setting out national programmes and objectives requiring an input from the system.

10. The question of co-ordination was closely related to that of field representation. Co-ordination entailed selection of priorities and resources and their integration with national efforts so as to encourage in the host country a desire to administer external assistance. The current support cost system was one of the big structural disincentives to co-ordination, because it encouraged agencies to maximize the number of separate projects that they oversaw.

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(Mr. Fortier, Canada)

11. It would also be very useful to strengthen the resident co-ordinator system so as to permit implementation of the team leader idea first set out in General Assembly resolution 32/197. His delegation was glad to note that the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination had given careful consideration to that question. It would also be desirable for the field representation to function more as a multidisciplinary team so as to facilitate the provision, in the field, of integrated multisectoral advisory services under the leadership of the resident co-ordinator. The sharing of premises, which should be insisted upon, could only foster such co-operation.

12. The Director-General's proposal concerning a prospective study of emerging trends, goals and modalities of operational activities did not seem particularly relevant at the present time; it would be far better to carry out the proposed study on how the system could address the challenge of absolute poverty and to pursue various initiatives on proposals for harmonization of procedures and field representation.

13. Operational activities for development of the United Nations system were a practical expression of the ideal of human solidarity through international economic and social co-operation. The international community must continue to improve the ability of those activities to respond effectively to the needs of the developing countries. His delegation was ready to participate in the drafting of a comprehensive resolution to that end.

14. Mr. DOLJINTSEREN (Mongolia), associating himself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77, said that the operational activities for development of the United Nations system had played and were still playing a major role in the accomplishment of one of the Organization's most important purposes, that of achieving international co-operation in solving international problems. His delegation saw them as the model for future international economic relations based upon equality of rights, justice and solidarity.

15. The principle of consensus recognized by many countries today had for the first time become established as standard practice in technical co-operation in the Consensus of 1970 contained in General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV), where the basic principles of operational activities were laid down. That principle and the spirit of co-operation should also be extended to other spheres of international economic relations.

16. As the technical co-operation organ par excellence, UNDP occupied a prominent place in the operational activities. The excellent results of the 1989 United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities, especially as regards UNDP which had received a billion dollars, testified to the commitment of numerous countries to those activities.

17. Much remained to be done, however, to improve the efficiency of UNDP and the level of its resources. The majority of developing countries were going through a time of serious economic crisis. In order to enable them to meet new progress

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(Mr. Doljintseren, Mongolia)

challenges, new means would have to be found to mobilize financial, economic, technical and intellectual resources at the national and international levels. Mongolia therefore unreservedly supported the proposal of the Administrator of UNDP for a 16 per cent increase in the Programme's resources during the fifth programming cycle. It was also essential that voluntary contributions should be predictable and should be paid on time.

18. The programme for reinforcing management capacities was an interesting innovation and Mongolia was pleased to benefit from it.

19. The principal task of UNDP in the near future was to develop principles and fundamental criteria for planning the resources of the fifth programming cycle. Priority should continue to be given to the least developed countries, but account should also be taken of special difficulties encountered by other countries, in particular those which had suffered natural disasters. It would even be logical to create a special category of developing countries subject to natural disasters in order that the international community might mobilize itself on their behalf.

20. The increase in IPFs was also of very great importance; that objective should be readily attained by reducing administrative costs, and strengthening UNDP's operating efficiency.

21. His country was actively co-operating with UNFPA and UNICEF, and projects carried out in Mongolia with the help of those agencies had proved very fruitful.

22. Mr. KAGAMI (Japan) said that, without engaging in polemics over the principles involved, his delegation wished to state at the outset its views on the comprehensive policy review of operational activities so that members of the Second Committee might reflect together on the direction those activities should take in the future. He proposed to consider three major issues, namely, the objectives of operational activities, programming and country-level structures.

23. The basic objective of United Nations operational activities was to promote the self-reliance of developing countries through national capacity-building. All development activities should ultimately be internalized if they were to have a lasting impact on the national capacities of developing countries. The direct corollary of the concept of internalization was national execution of projects, which should become the norm for all United Nations operational activities. However, the emerging consensus to that effect was not enough; a variety of obstacles which discouraged governments from adopting that method had to be overcome. Many such constraints had been identified in the integrated country reviews.

24. As regards continuity, the other key factor in capacity-building, it should be understood that developing countries would not be able to derive experience and skills from development activities and incorporate them in national capacity unless those activities were perceived as an ongoing process. In that connection, his delegation was inclined to support the programme approach as opposed to the

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(Mr. Kagami, Japan)

traditional project approach. A development activity should not be a mere aggregate of individual projects; each project should be seen as a component of a package of measures undertaken jointly by the providers and recipients of technical assistance. Specific measures should therefore be taken to facilitate the transition from project approach to programme approach. For example, technical matters such as the existing budgetary systems of United Nations agencies should be reviewed. In his delegation's view, the traditional division between administrative and programme expenditures was no longer adequate to deal effectively with the requirements of technical assistance activities. The existing system tended to discourage the programme approach. The transition could also be facilitated by devising arrangements for agency support costs which could encourage specialized agencies to step up their efforts to provide technical advice and backstopping by making them less dependent on project support costs.

25. With regard to programming, the central question was for whom and by whom it was carried out. Programming within the framework of operational activities of the United Nations system should be done for the recipient countries and not for United Nations agencies. In practice, however, United Nations agency programmes, typified by the UNDP country programmes, were simply plans for spending the resources allocated for projects, necessary as such expenditure plans were from the point of view of financial planning and for ensuring the accountability for agencies to their governing bodies. What was needed was a genuine country programme which went beyond the expenditure plan and was integrated in the recipient country's national development plan and formulated by that country itself. In that connection, his delegation welcomed the proposal of the Director-General for a common country statement on the principal objectives for the achievement of which input from the system was required. However, if the proposed country statement was to avoid being forgotten like so many other United Nations documents, it should be formulated by the recipient Government itself as an essential component of its national plan and programmes so as to constitute an effective instrument in co-ordinating United Nations operational activities.

26. Harmonization and simplification of procedures were also essential in that connection. Different programming cycles, complicated and varying project implementation procedures and financial regulations placed an undue burden on recipient Governments with respect to the co-ordination and internalization of operational activities. In that regard, he welcomed the Director-General's recommendation that agencies of the system should harmonize their respective programme cycles between themselves and with each country's planning cycle. His delegation also supported the recommendation that project approval, implementation, evaluation and procurement procedures should be simplified and, where possible, harmonized with the recipient country's procedures.

27. Turning to the question of country-level structure and decentralization, he said that since country-level representation was in the best position to know the development needs of the recipients, it should be structured to respond to the different needs of recipient countries at different stages of their process of building their national development capacities. In that connection, the

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(Mr. Kagami, Japan)

evolutionary approach suggested by the Director-General made a valuable contribution to current thinking on how to structure United Nations country offices. In particular, changes would have to take place in the attitudes of those working at the country level and in the present degree of centralization. That would enable multi-disciplinary country teams to function as intended without having to look continually to their respective headquarters. However, decentralization raised another important issue, that of responsibility and supervision.

28. The United Nations was facing a dilemma: striking a reasonable balance between decentralization and requirements regarding accountability and oversight. In that connection, his delegation strongly supported the recommendation of the Director-General that the governing bodies should submit progress reports on decentralization. All United Nations agencies should participate in that exercise by preparing a comprehensive package of measures to achieve decentralization.

29. He hoped that the deliberations on those matters at the current session of the General Assembly and the debate in the Second Committee could possibly lead to a consensus resolution on operational activities for development. Such a resolution, however, should not simply reaffirm abstract principles, but should address the specific issues involved. There were three categories of problems. The first comprised those matters requiring immediate action; the second related to specific policy guidance for ongoing exercises; and the third category concerned those elements requiring further consideration. The following elements in the first category should be included in the draft resolution in question: all United Nations agencies engaged in operational activities should harmonize their programming cycles and synchronize them with the planning cycles of recipient countries; procedures pertaining to project implementation and monitoring, reporting and procurement should be standardized in such a way as to harmonize them with the procedures followed by recipient countries; funding agencies of the United Nations system should simplify approval and implementation procedures for nationally executed projects; all agencies should review their budgetary systems and make recommendations to their governing bodies on necessary modifications. With regard to specific guidance, future arrangements for agency support costs should be formulated to meet the changing needs of developing countries and promote better co-ordination of operational activities; the Governing Council of UNDP, in the preparation of the fifth programming cycle, should undertake a critical review of the current country programme system in order to determine relevance to emerging trends in technical co-operation activities; decentralization should be pursued to the maximum extent possible, in so far as was consistent with an adequate level of accountability. Lastly, with regard to elements requiring further consideration, the draft resolution should make it possible to further refine the concept of a common country statement and consider the question of multidisciplinary country teams, the introduction of which should, however, be preceded by a thorough review of the concept with the relevant United Nations agencies and the recipients; a more programme-oriented approach for providing technical assistance should be developed by the agencies concerned, and consideration should be given to the establishment of an intergovernmental committee on operational activities for development.

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(Mr. Kagami, Japan)

30. Without wishing to draw up a complete catalogue of the elements to be included in the draft resolution on operational activities, his delegation believed that, if there was agreement on the ones that it had proposed and if they were taken into account, United Nations operational activities for development would be made more effective.

31. Mr. ZVEZDIN (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that his country attached great importance to the consideration of questions related to operational activities for development, which should contribute to the economic and social progress of developing countries and enable them to participate in the international division of labour on the basis of sovereignty, equality of rights and mutual advantage and build an independent national economy. The comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development was the occasion to recall the need to adopt an overall approach to factors such as the interdependence of the world economy, economic development and integration, environmental protection and population; bring about a broad-based consensus within the United Nations concerning the balance of interests of all members of the international community; and make international economic relations stable and predictable.

32. United Nations operational activities for development should be organized in a balanced and democratic manner free of any ideology and, at the same time, it was necessary to ensure the strict implementation of General Assembly resolution 42/196 and Economic and Social Council resolution 1988/77, which had reaffirmed the central role of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for policy guidance and co-ordination of the operational activities of the entire system and the essential role to be played by developing countries themselves in defining their national development plans and priorities and co-ordinating United Nations operational activities at the national level.

33. Since operational activities must be considered from the viewpoint of the primacy of the interests of mankind as a whole and the interdependence of the countries of the world, the strategy adopted by the Soviet Union concerning foreign economic relations had already made it possible to expand economic co-operation with foreign countries, particularly in the multilateral field. The Soviet Union was prepared to increase its participation in United Nations operational activities. Referring to the considerable gap between the level of his country's multilateral technical co-operation and that of its bilateral co-operation, he pointed out that, within the framework of the basic economic reforms being carried out in the USSR, proposals were being formulated on the way in which the new economic machinery could make it possible to solve the problem of revitalizing co-operation with international agencies such as UNDP and UNICEF.

34. The basic question concerning United Nations operational activities for development was the future role of UNDP as the principal agency for providing multilateral technical assistance to developing countries, an issue which the representatives of the Soviet Union had already dealt with in detail on numerous occasions. His delegation welcomed the fact that UNDP was seeking new effective ways to organize its work within the framework of the preparation of the

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(Mr. Zvezdin, USSR)

international development strategy for the 1990s, the preparation of a special session of the General Assembly in 1990 devoted to international economic co-operation, in particular to the revitalization of economic growth and development in the developing countries, and the Second United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in 1990. It was necessary to continue the search for an optimum balance between the multisectoral activities of UNDP and the sectoral activities of the specialized agencies, scrupulously observing the principles laid down in the resolutions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, and particularly the consensus of 1970 on the work of the Programme. In that regard, the decision taken at the thirty-sixth session of the Governing Council of UNDP on the role of UNDP in the 1990s was only the first stage in developing a more effective mechanism for the Programme's activities. His delegation also supported the continuation of the decentralization of UNDP activities and the strengthening of the role of the system of resident co-ordinators, who helped adapt the decision-making mechanism to the needs of recipient countries.

35. Since the establishment of UNDP the Soviet Union had contributed tens of millions of roubles, including convertible currency, to support the Programme's economic and technical co-operation activities. It viewed UNDP as an important factor in international economic and social co-operation and an essential means of channelling aid to developing countries, and it supported the efforts of the third world countries to overcome their backwardness and contributed to the extent its means permitted to strengthening their production and export capacities. Between 1981 and 1988 the volume of aid it had given them had exceeded \$130 billion. In recent years official development assistance granted by the USSR on concessionary terms had been twice as high as the percentage of gross national product recommended by the United Nations. In respect of the least developed countries, the USSR had provided the equivalent of 0.21 per cent of its gross national product. Currently it was attaching far more importance to participation in multilateral programmes, without prejudice, of course, to its bilateral co-operation.

36. The use of the Soviet voluntary contributions to UNDP left something to be desired, and a collective effort must be made to find means of increasing the effectiveness of the use of financial resources. The Soviet Government was making practical efforts to that end, particularly by concluding with the Secretariat of the United Nations an agreement concerning the use over the period 1989-1991 of the roubles accumulated under the regular programme of technical co-operation.

37. In respect of technical co-operation, his delegation was satisfied with the work of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development and the volume and quality of technical co-operation it provided to developing countries. It was also satisfied with the prospects for reviving co-operation between Soviet organizations and the Department, and pointed out that the cause and the goal of development would be better served if the Department made greater use of the Soviet Union's vast multilateral experience of co-operation with foreign countries. It should also take full account of the recommendations of national services in respect of

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(Mr. Zvezdin, USSR)

staff recruitment because that recruitment was not being studied as closely as necessary, and that reduced the possibilities for using the services of specialists from socialist countries and developing countries.

38. With respect to the work of UNICEF, whose authority on the international scene was growing in direct proportion to the expansion of its role in solving problems of mothers and children, mobilizing resources and alerting Governments to the conditions required to ensure the survival, development and protection of children, the Soviet Union thanked the Director-General of UNICEF for his personal contribution to the work of the Fund, to which it had decided to increase its contribution twelvefold. His delegation shared the concern caused by the aggravation of the situation of children in many developing countries and felt that those problems could be solved only by adopting a comprehensive approach and taking into account all factors, such as the war against poverty, environmental protection and the campaign against the blatant contempt for the rights of children to survival, development and protection.

39. The United Nations system would have to overcome three problems if it was to ensure the success of its operational activities: the first was the external debt crisis, which had assumed global proportions, impeded the economic and social development of third world countries and was one of the sensitive issues in international economic relations. The Soviet Union was prepared to contribute to the drafting of international agreements that would define the scope of specific talks to be entered into between debtors and creditors, to establish a moratorium of perhaps as long as 100 years on repayment of the debt of the least developed countries, and in the vast majority of cases even to cancel that debt outright. As for the other developing countries, it had proposed that the international community should agree to limit public debt payments in accordance with their economic development indices and to grant a long moratorium on a large part of the payments. A second matter of common concern, protection of the environment, had in recent years become a priority problem for all mankind. Most developing countries were unable to mobilize the domestic resources required to preserve the environment, and the practical possibility of involving United Nations agencies in that vast undertaking should be studied. The environmental early warning centre proposed by the Soviet Union could help solve the specific problems of developing countries in that area. The third problem was the implementation of "disarmament for development", which would make it possible to release large-scale additional resources for participation in the multilateral aid programme, even in the developing countries themselves, which, according to UNDP, spent \$200 billion on weapons every year. His delegation was convinced that disarmament and the conversion of military production could not only strengthen the atmosphere of confidence and constructive co-operation between States but also free large-scale additional resources to solve the economic and social problems of the developing countries. Lastly, his delegation stressed the fact that the third world countries could overcome their economic backwardness only if international economic relations were normalized and made fairer and more democratic.

40. Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand) took the Chair.

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41. Mr. KUECK (German Democratic Republic) said that the new challenges to be faced in the 1990s in respect of operational activities required a constructive response with regard to the future role of those activities and the approach to be taken in order to enhance them. It was therefore right that the comprehensive review of the thrust of operational activities for development was devoted predominantly to those questions. Where determination of objectives for operational activities was concerned, it was quite correct to focus attention on the needs of recipient countries. However well-founded the objectives of the various programmes and funds, their activity must not be an end in itself but rather a contribution to the recipient countries' development efforts. Strengthening the self-reliance of recipient countries was therefore a basic imperative, and those countries must be able to exercise their sovereign right to determine their own development goals. Moreover, the planning of assistance from the United Nations system must be integrated with the national planning process. The United Nations system must serve as the frame of reference for all types of technical aid to a country only in exceptional cases. The German Democratic Republic therefore welcomed the objective set out in paragraph 83 (a) of document A/44/324, namely, that by the year 2000 all beneficiary countries should be able to design and effectively manage their national development programmes, and to co-ordinate and integrate into their national programmes all external aid.

42. It was entirely proper that development co-operation should make it possible to develop national capacities and thus to strengthen the foundations of self-sufficiency both on the material level and in terms of skills. In that connection, the attainment of the objectives already set must be pursued, and they must be supplemented by others, particularly in relation to the transfer of technology and to the environment. Human resources development in all countries and at all levels of economic activity was growing in importance, particularly where the strengthening of national planning and management capabilities was concerned, and efforts should be made to train national personnel by involving them in the preparation and execution of programmes and projects. The technical co-operation activities carried out by the German Democratic Republic within the framework of the United Nations system focused essentially on that component. The growing trend towards national execution of projects, particularly by Governments themselves, was evidence of the increasing capabilities of the recipient countries. It offered broad scope for the development of national self-reliance in many fields.

43. Another important goal for the 1990s was to enhance the effectiveness of the participating United Nations organs and specialized agencies and to further harmonize their efforts, particularly at the country level. Closer ties between the individual organizations need not threaten their independence and would allow them to fulfil their mandate of technological co-operation more effectively. To the extent that they led to a more flexible form of development co-operation, simplification and harmonization measures would be welcome in that regard. However, the increasing focus of the United Nations development system on country-level operations should not encourage the establishment of United Nations mechanisms in recipient countries, since the long-term objective was for the Governments to attend to project co-ordination and execution themselves and for the

(Mr. Kueck, German Democratic Republic)

United Nations bodies to act as advisors rather than as organizers. All decisions on measures taken at the country level should be guided by considerations of effectiveness. Operational activities should be available to all recipient countries, and should be aimed at promoting qualitative development in those countries rather than at achieving individual quantitative results.

44. With respect to the question of central funding, the main criterion should be the effect of assistance on developing countries, not the form or the channel used to deliver it. In any event, the leading role of UNDP was uncontested.

45. The current comprehensive review marked a specific stage in the assessment of United Nations operational activities, and would make it possible to decide what tasks should be accomplished in the near future. His delegation supported the idea of preparing a study on the trends, objectives and modalities of operational activities. The General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council were the competent forums for determining the orientations and for implementing unified guidelines. His delegation hoped that the basic elements of operational activities, as reflected in the 1970 Consensus and reaffirmed in General Assembly resolution 3405 (XXX) on new dimensions in technical co-operation, would continue to be fully applied in the future.

46. Mrs. PERKOVIC (Yugoslavia), said that her country supported the statement made by the Chairman of the Group of 77. With respect to operational activities for development, she said that such activities were a valuable contribution to the developing countries' own efforts. Because of its multilateral, non-political and impartial character, and because it was provided on a grant basis, United Nations assistance to developing countries went far beyond its quantitative value. Unfortunately, the measures for increasing the effectiveness of technical assistance requested by the General Assembly had been inadequately implemented, and, as a result, operational activities failed to meet the needs of developing countries fully. The question was not so much one of identifying shortcomings as of fully implementing the General Assembly resolutions. Operational activities should be carried out at the request of the Governments and in accordance with their own policies and priorities for development, and it was, therefore, the responsibility of the Governments of developing countries to design and manage external assistance programmes themselves.

47. A substantial, real increase in concessional contributions was needed, and such contributions must be both regular and predictable. National execution of the projects was indeed the best way of strengthening national capabilities, and must remain one of the key objectives of operational activities. Document A/44/324/Add.2 provided a good description of the problems still encountered in that area, one of which was the excessively complicated United Nations procedures, which discouraged Governments from executing projects themselves. The transition to national execution could be facilitated by implementing innovative, flexible, decentralized methods.

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(Mrs. Perkovic, Yugoslavia)

48. All the developing countries were showing an increasing interest in technical co-operation among developing countries, but the United Nations system was perhaps not doing enough to encourage greater recourse to such co-operation. Certain obstacles remained. Because developing countries were ill informed of each other's potential for technical co-operation, it was essential for national institutions and United Nations country-level staff to have access to correct information about the actual quality of the technical co-operation that other developing countries might be able to provide. Procurement from developing countries continued to increase, albeit too slowly, and the United Nations organizations needed to take concerted action in order to facilitate such procurement. Greater decentralization of decision-making would be particularly useful in that regard.

49. The country programme should remain the frame of reference for all other UNDP country activities. However, only one "country programme" was really conceivable in a developing country, namely the development plan drawn up by the Government. For that reason, the Government should be responsible for co-ordinating and managing all external assistance inputs and for adapting and integrating them into national development efforts. It was essential to adopt common procedures, to have a single development strategy, to harmonize programming cycles and, in particular, to delegate authority to field offices. To that end, the role of the resident co-ordinator should be strengthened, especially in the light of the importance of coherent funding. The country-level presence of the United Nations system should be reorganized in a manner that reflected each country's specific nature and expressed needs. The best approach might be multidisciplinary programming. Various measures could be taken to allow the resident co-ordinator to play a real leadership role and thereby to strengthen United Nations development activities at the country level.

50. Mr. Ghezal (Tunisia) resumed the Chair.

51. Mr. TAHSIN (Afghanistan) praised the operational activities of the United Nations system and expressed the hope that current funding levels would be maintained, if not increased. Operational activities should reflect the strategies, policies and priorities formulated in the International Development Strategy and should contribute to its implementation. However, national development plans should also be used as a frame of reference. Afghanistan appreciated the economic and technical assistance it received from different United Nations organizations and programmes. It was particularly grateful to UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA) and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), which were currently participating in its socio-economic recovery. UNDP activities were being harmonized with its national socio-economic development plan, and the Afghan authorities hoped that they would be continued and expanded. UNICEF programmes, which had proved extremely useful in meeting the tremendous needs of children, should be expanded. Afghanistan was deeply grateful to Finland and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics for the food aid that they had provided. FAO activities in the area of plant protection, forestry and irrigation were also very

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(Mr. Tahsin, Afghanistan)

much appreciated. Given the success of the activities of those United Nations bodies, there was no reason why the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank should not reconsider their position and resume their development activities in Afghanistan. They might begin by sending fact-finding missions to Afghanistan to evaluate the situation and select projects that they considered feasible.

52. In spite of its difficult situation, Afghanistan was attempting to consolidate the economy, to increase industrial, agricultural and handicraft production, and to promote trade. The Government had provided financial assistance and material incentives for the growth of the private sector. The State was also trying to attract foreign capital. A certain amount of economic growth had been achieved. For the immediate future, the most pressing tasks were to rebuild factories, reopen mines, power plants and transportation networks and to restore public services. Every year, 40,000 jobs were created in the State sector.

53. Nevertheless, the situation remained tense owing to the policy of armed aggression against Afghanistan. Imposed from the outside, the war had had devastating effects: hundreds of thousands of Afghans had died and millions had lost their homes. Villages had been destroyed and traditional irrigation systems and public and cultural institutions had sustained enormous damage. In order to heal those wounds and rebuild a ruined economy, the economic and humanitarian assistance of the international community, in particular UNDP, would be invaluable.

54. Mr. PIBULSONGGRAM (Thailand) said that United Nations operational activities could provide the developing countries with the resources they needed to attain the social and economic progress necessary in a world of rapid economic and social changes. Various socio-economic development projects sponsored by the King of Thailand had contributed substantially to raising the people's standard of living and he wished to thank the organizations of the United Nations system for their assistance. International co-operation was vital to the promotion of the people's welfare and international organizations such as UNDP could make a difference. UNDP would no doubt continue to play an important role in the future. Its ability to anticipate the needs of member States would be of vital importance and its policies must change to meet those needs. He supported the consensus on the role of UNDP during the 1990s, agreed upon during the thirty-sixth session of the Governing Council and elaborated in particular in decision 89/20, in which the Council had recognized that further improvements in its working methods were needed in order to make it more effective.

55. The comprehensive policy review of operational activities of the United Nations system (A/44/324 and Add.1-3) had taken into account the changing needs of its member countries. His delegation agreed with the recommendations suggested therein and hoped that they would contribute to a sustained and sustainable socio-economic development, which in turn would improve the well-being of peoples around the world, in particular in the developing countries. For the future, technical co-operation should be flexible in terms of its content and modalities, to facilitate maximum adaptability to the specific needs of countries. The

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(Mr. Pibulsonggram, Thailand)

inter-country programme should be improved. The fundamental principles guiding UNDP - universality, neutrality, flexibility, multilateralism and the grant nature of its assistance - must be maintained. As emphasized by the Governing Council in decision 89/20, section I A, paragraph 7, government execution should be the ultimate goal for all UNDP projects. Other transitional modalities in project design should be explored further in order to strengthen national capacities. His delegation saw merit in the proposal that long-term agency-executed projects should seek to transfer project execution and management responsibilities to Governments. The consensus of 1970 remained valid. The leadership role of UNDP would help end duplication of activities and differences between United Nations agencies, thereby enhancing the ability to help Governments achieve their development objectives.

56. The interdependence of the modern world demanded multilateral co-operation and demonstrations of strong political will on the part of States. It was only by working together through international organizations such as UNDP that States could promote real socio-economic development which, in turn, would revitalize the developing countries and the entire world. Success would depend on the extent to which States could translate their noble ideas into effective action, especially in a multilateral context.

57. Mr. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka) said that he feared that the 1980s would be relegated to oblivion condemned by its contradictions. Those years had witnessed unprecedented peace and prosperity on the one hand and economic stagnation and poverty on the other. In 1988, the United Nations had spent \$7.8 billion on operational activities, representing a 13 per cent increase over the previous year; the bulk of that assistance had gone to developing countries and to the least developed countries of Africa, Asia and Latin America. The primary aim of operational activities was to enable developing countries to achieve self-reliance through national capacity-building. Technical co-operation among developing countries had a vital role to play in that process. For its part, Sri Lanka had benefited immensely from development assistance programmes undertaken by UNDP and other United Nations agencies. He wished to express his country's appreciation to those organizations.

58. The improvement in the international political environment should go hand in hand with a stable economic development, which was sorely lacking. It was therefore vital to improve the effectiveness of operational activities, which were often carried out in a less than optimal manner, while the majority of developing countries were suffering from crippling debt burdens, rising interest rates and increasing poverty. Several measures could be taken in that regard: decentralization, strengthening of the role of resident co-ordinator, rationalization of field office structures, diversification of procurement and simplification and harmonization of the rules for programme and project formulation, implementation and monitoring in order to adapt them to the priorities of developing countries. It was the Government which must be at the centre stage of, and also the lead player in, efforts to build national capacity.

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(Mr. Fernando, Sri Lanka)

59. The human factor - the individual himself, whose improved well-being was the goal - must remain central to the development process. To lose sight of the human factor and to take it for granted would inevitably lessen the effectiveness of the activities undertaken. In particular, before carrying out operational activities, it was essential to investigate the availability of local expertise. That would reduce costs and would also help developing countries to curb the brain drain.

60. Mr. AGUILAR HECHT (Guatemala), speaking on behalf of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Honduras and Nicaragua, said that operational activities for development represented one of the most important tasks of the United Nations system, because they were designed to attain one of the fundamental goals and principles set forth in the Charter, namely, to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural or humanitarian character. The countries of Central America reaffirmed their support for the Consensus of 1970, contained in General Assembly resolution 2688 (XXV), which had spelt out the basic principles guiding operational activities for development. Those activities should continue to be implemented at the request of Governments and in accordance with their priorities and national or regional development plans, since it rested with them to identify which development strategies were best suited to their population, their situation and their culture. Operational activities should therefore be implemented in a rational and effective manner.

61. During the 1980s, which some had called the lost decade, poverty had increased inordinately. Foreign debt obligations had forced developing countries to allocate substantial economic resources, which they had earmarked for development, to debt service payments. In that connection, the study on poverty which the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation was to submit in 1991 should include a description of the negative impact of the world economic situation and of the spectacular slump in prices of primary products.

62. It was estimated that that tragic situation, instead of improving, could get worse. While the international political climate seemed to have improved and the harmony between the major Powers gave grounds for hoping that there would be a resurgence of peace, the challenge of the 1990s must be met. The international community must show the necessary political will to co-ordinate its efforts and to find effective ways to bridge the gap between rich and poor nations and bring about the genuine exercise of the inalienable human right represented by the right to development and to economic and social well-being.

63. The Central American countries, whose standards of living had declined considerably, hoped that the Special Plan of Economic Co-operation for Central America would be implemented as a matter of urgency, in view of the political, economic and social crisis which had shaken the region. They had made enormous efforts to arrive at historic agreements strengthening the aspirations to peace, development and democracy, and the international community had fully supported that process. Their ability to undertake projects aimed at responding in a more dynamic way to the region's needs would be enhanced as collaboration between the organizations of the United Nations system became closer and more co-ordinated. It

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(Mr. Aguilar Hecht, Guatemala)

was therefore necessary to strengthen the transfer of technology, to develop human resources and to increase national and regional capacity in the planning and administration of development activities.

64. The United Nations system could assist the developing countries by giving greater emphasis to participatory approaches to development, in order to enhance the potential of the greatest possible number of recipients. In order for operational activities to be effective, they must be in line with the national and regional priorities established by the recipient countries and contribute to the effective implementation of the international development strategy for the fourth United Nations development decade and facilitate implementation of the plan to be drawn up at the forthcoming special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation, and in particular to the revitalization of economic growth of the developing countries. Operational activities should also be co-ordinated with regional and subregional development plans, so as to maximize their effectiveness and encourage the creation of additional technical capacities. They must also have a solid foundation, so that the resources needed for their implementation could be mobilized.

65. If the United Nations system was to meet the growing demand for operational activities and take up the challenge of the coming decade, there must be a substantial increase in financing in real terms. The system should improve its capacity for co-ordination at the project implementation stage, in order to avoid overlapping and to ensure proper use of the scarce financial resources available to it. The countries of Central America appealed to the industrialized countries to invest in the development of mankind, to reduce expenditure on research aimed at the destruction of mankind, and to halt and reverse the conventional and nuclear-arms race. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, the United Nations could play a considerable role in that regard, by promoting social progress.

66. The fifth programming cycle of the United Nations Development Programme should at the very least uphold the 1970 Consensus. The indicative planning figures should duly reflect the situation and growing needs of the developing countries, particularly in Latin America and Africa. The developed world should fulfil its obligation to contribute, in terms of resources and technology transfers, to the strengthening of operational activities for development, in particular by allocating sufficient financial resources to the United Nations system. The international community must reaffirm its faith in multilateralism and in the capacity of the United Nations system to assist the developing countries to achieve progress in economic and social terms. For that reason, the Central American countries supported the activities of the Office for Project Services, both in their own region and in Latin America.

67. Operational activities for development should also be geared to the creation and improvement of technical capacity which would enable the authorities in the developing countries to meet their own needs with regard to development administration at the national, sectoral and local levels, thus enabling them to fulfil their primary responsibility in respect of the planning, formulation,

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(Mr. Aguilar Hecht, Guatemala)

co-ordination and evaluation of development programmes. In that connection, it was important to strengthen co-operation with regional institutions so that they could come to grips with the new and increasingly complex socio-economic realities.

68. The countries of Central America reaffirmed that development required concerted efforts on behalf of human beings, whose fundamental needs must be met as a matter of priority.

69. It was important for the United Nations to strengthen its activities in connection with the promotion of technical co-operation among developing countries. For those countries to exchange their experience they must have at their disposal the most comprehensive and detailed information possible regarding resources and needs, and they must adopt policies capable of facilitating the exchange of personnel, equipment and technical experience. In that regard it would be appropriate to welcome the organization, particularly at the subregional level, of training activities intended for administrators in the United Nations system responsible for development co-operation, with the participation of officials from the developing countries, from certain institutions, and from enterprises and financial institutions.

70. The United Nations system must make serious efforts to simplify and standardize the rules and procedures governing operational activities for development. The recommendations contained in the Director-General's report (A/44/314 and Add.1, 2 and 3) provided a useful starting-point; however, clarity must not be sacrificed to brevity, since the result could be confusion, particularly for the developing countries.

71. Mr. NIKULIN (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that the United Nations operational activities played an extremely important role, inasmuch as they helped the developing countries to strengthen their capacities and to overcome their socio-economic development problems. UNDP obviously played a leading role in those activities. However, to enable it to carry out its tasks effectively, care must be taken to ensure that the basic characteristics of the Programme, namely its universality and the voluntary nature of its assistance, were respected. Moreover, the Administrator of UNDP must continue trying to improve the effectiveness of the Programme and to rationalize the use of its resources. The implementation of resolution 85/39 of UNDP's Governing Council would help to achieve those objectives. In particular, the Programme must aim to ensure a more equitable geographical distribution of the sources of procurement for technical co-operation projects (A/44/646). Furthermore, it was essential that, in providing technical assistance, UNDP comply with the national strategy of each sovereign State, taking full account of the goals and priorities of autonomous development of the developing countries. The Byelorussian SSR associated itself fully with the introductory statement by the Administrator of UNDP, Mr. William Draper, in which he stressed the need to combine economic growth with personal development and to continue to make the individual the central figure in all development activities.

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(Mr. Nikulin, Byelorussian SSR)

72. UNDP and the other technical assistance programmes should study ways of making more effective use of voluntary contributions in national currency. In that connection, his country wished to point out that it was in a position to expand its technical assistance, due to the recent restructuring of its economy. Currently, its technical assistance related largely to the training of skilled personnel and the transfer of technology. Nationals of more than 90 countries were currently benefiting from training in the Byelorussian SSR. In addition, large numbers of Byelorussian specialists were working in the developing countries, providing them with the benefit of their experience and knowledge. UNDP should also consider making use of the experience of those specialists and consultants in the field.

73. The Byelorussian SSR, which was a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, approved the general orientation of UNICEF's activities, and had considerably increased its contribution to that organization. However, it would be desirable to rationalize UNICEF's activities and to make better use of its resources by concentrating them in key areas.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.