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First regular session of 1990

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 5th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Tuesday, 1 May 1990, at 10.30 a.m.

President:

Mr. GHAREKHAN

(India)

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Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS (E/1990/23, annex V, E/1990/30 and Corr.1, 45, 63 and 64; E/1990/L.18/Rev.1 and L.19)

Mr. KITCHKAILO (Observer for the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) referred to the letter dated 26 April 1990 from the Permanent Representatives of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic and the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General (E/1990/64), in which the three Governments requested the inclusion of an additional item, entitled "International co-operation in the elimination of the consequences of the accident at the Chernobyl nuclear power plant", in the agenda of the first regular session of 1990 of the Economic and Social Council. He hoped that the members of the Council would respond positively to that request.

In the four years since the accident, the State bodies of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the Byelorussian SSR and the Ukrainian SSR had made considerable efforts to eliminate the consequences of the Chernobyl accident. New and thorough inspections and scientific research had revealed that the scope of those consequences had been underestimated at the national level and that their international social, human, economic, ecological and technological aspects had been greater than expected.

Vast populated areas of the Byelorussian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR and some western regions of the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic, including some 7 million hectares of arable land and more than 2.5 million hectares of forests, had been contaminated. One fifth of the entire population of the Byelorussian SSR, or 2.2 million people, lived in the contaminated areas. The Byelorussian SSR had lost 20 per cent of its farmlands and nearly 15 per cent of its forests. The loss to the Republic's economy had been estimates at 82 billion roubles, and the Republic's six-year State programme for the elimination of the long-term consequences of the Chernobyl accident had been estimated at 18 billion roubles.

(Mr. Kitchkailo, Observer,  
Byelorussian SSR)

The Governments of the Byelorussian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR and the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic were continuing urgent and large-scale measures to eliminate the consequences of the accident. By a decision of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, 26 billion roubles had been allocated for that purpose for the years 1990 to 1992. Some of the measures being undertaken included the resettlement of families and whole communities to areas free of radionuclides, the decontamination of affected areas and the prevention of the spread of contamination to contiguous areas.

In appealing for international assistance for the first time in their history, the USSR, the Byelorussian SSR and the Ukrainian SSR did not simply wish to solve their national problems at other countries' expense. International co-operation in overcoming the consequences of the disaster was in the interests of all mankind. Such co-operation should include the creation of reliable safeguards for public health, in particular the health of children. The competent bodies of the Byelorussian SSR, the Ukrainian SSR and the Russian Soviet Federal Socialist Republic were extremely interested in beginning technical co-operation with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to study the ecological and medical aspects of irradiation. They also supported the proposal to launch the "Children of Chernobyl" project with the participation of UNEP, WHO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

Scientific organizations, health service institutions and environmental protection bodies in the Ukrainian SSR and the Byelorussian SSR intended to join the Agreement between the USSR and IAEA on establishing the International Chernobyl Research Centre. The Byelorussian SSR was prepared to establish a branch of the Centre at Mogilev or Gomel, and proposed that an international committee be established to study the effects of the Chernobyl accident on the ecosystem.

Mr. GALAL (Observer for Egypt) said that his delegation was pleased to submit a request for the inclusion under agenda item 1 of the first regular session of the Council of 1990 of the question of the revival of the Library of Alexandria. The Library had been a beacon for science and culture during the Ptolemaic era, and had contained priceless reference works on Egyptian and other

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(Mr. Galal, Observer, Egypt)

Middle Eastern cultures as well as on Greek, Christian and Islamic civilization. The International Commission for the Revival of the Ancient Library of Alexandria had held its inaugural session at Aswan in February 1990, under the leadership of Mrs. Susan Mubarak. His delegation planned to submit a draft resolution on the subject to the Council at a later date.

Mr. HAYES (Ireland) suggested that the Council should defer its decision on the requests made by the representatives of the Byelorussian SSR and Egypt in order to give members time to consider them.

Mr. SOTIROV (Bulgaria), Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia), Mr. MENON (India), Mr. MUNTASSER (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya), Mr. SHIHABI (Saudi Arabia), Mr. AL-ANBARI (Iraq), Mr. BAGBENI ADEITO NZENGEYA (Zaire) and Mr. ARABIAT (Jordan), supported the request of the Byelorussian SSR for the inclusion of an additional item on international co-operation in the elimination of the consequences of the accident of the Chernobyl power plant, and the request of Egypt for the inclusion under agenda item 1 of the question of the revival of the Library of Alexandria.

The PRESIDENT said that, bearing in mind the request of the representative of Ireland and also the importance of the requests, by the delegations of the Byelorussian SSR and Egypt, he suggested that the Economic and Social Council defer its decision on them for a few days. If he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council agreed to consider the requests made by the Byelorussian SSR and Egypt at a subsequent meeting.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to adopt the agenda for the first regular session of 1990 as contained in documents E/1990/30 and Corr.1, and that it approved the organization of work as contained in document E/1990/L.19.

It was so decided.

Mr. STOBY (Secretary of the Council) drew attention to document E/1990/L.18/Rev.1 on the status of documentation for the session, and informed the Council that document E/1990/31 would be issued only on 2 May, while document E/1990/39, containing the report of the Advisory Committee on Co-ordination on the development of a United Nations system-wide action plan on drug abuse control, would be issued only on 18 May. Since the latter would have to be reviewed by the

(Mr. Stoby)

Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC), and since the Council would be considering it together with the relevant chapter of the CPC report on its thirtieth session, the Council might wish to postpone consideration of document E/1990/39 until its second regular session of 1990, under the item entitled "Co-ordination questions".

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider the report of the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations (E/1990/63) on requests from non-governmental organizations for hearings. He would take it, if he heard no objection, that the Council approved the Committee's recommendation in paragraph 2 of its report.

It was so decided.

Mr. AHMED (Under-Secretary-General for International Economic and Social Affairs) observed that the interrelationship of the social situation and economic development and questions relating to the advancement of women had been given intensive consideration during the preparation of the international development strategy for the coming decade and during the current special session of the General Assembly devoted to international economic co-operation. The special session was about to conclude with the adoption by consensus of a Declaration that provided a historic occasion to usher in a new era of economic growth and development in the developing countries, and the Council must now decide how best to implement its goals. The Council's debate of such matters was therefore timely.

The Department of International Economic and Social Affairs had submitted a supplement to the 1989 Report on the World Social Situation to assist the Council in its consideration of the item on social development. The main finding of that supplement was, of course, that economic stagnation and decline during the 1980s in developing countries, particularly in Africa and Latin America, had set back social progress and reversed the positive trends of the three preceding decades. Of the 53 developing countries so affected, 27 were in Africa, 18 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 7 in West Asia and 1 in Asia. Despite the remarkable rise in living standards in the most populous developing countries during the 1980s, the total number of those living in absolute poverty had increased to about 1 billion, or a fifth of the world's population, by the end of the decade. More than half of the

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(Mr. Ahmed)

world's poor were still to be found in Asia, and poverty had become more severe in Africa.

It was a recognized fact that the deterioration of the external economic environment had been a major factor in the drastic declines in so many developing countries. Structural adjustment programmes undertaken to cope with that situation had had their own impact, particularly on social conditions, by slowing down growth in output and incomes, cutting government expenditures on social services and food subsidies, and generally hurting the poorest and most disadvantaged. The inevitable pain of structural adjustment might have been lessened if it had been attempted over a longer period, accompanied by economic growth and increased resource inflows, and if appropriate international support had cushioned some of the shocks generated by adverse terms of trade and interest rates; unfortunately, none of those conditions had obtained in recent years. There was ample evidence of the deterioration in living conditions and the aggravation of poverty in the countries affected, and the socio-political situation had, indeed, become so combustible that many of those societies were becoming ungovernable.

On the other hand, the 1980s had also been a decade of remarkably fast and radical transformations in both the economy and society. Scientific and technological advances and their application to production had been one of the outstanding features, as had the emergence of new poles of economic strength and new economic activities and products. The world economy had, moreover, moved towards greater integration because of the far-reaching changes, particularly in former centrally-planned economies, in the ways societies organized themselves for production and governance, which had led to a gradual convergence of views on economic and social policy formulation. The principal challenge in the 1990s would be to ensure that developing countries could benefit from those changes. The thaw in international tensions and the lessening of the arms race held out the promise that resources would be released for that purpose. The restructuring and modernization of the developing countries' economies and their revitalized growth depended upon non-discriminatory access to markets, relief from the debt trap, increased concessional resources to the low-income countries, and better access to new technologies. Adjustment with a human face was also a necessary part of that process, but by itself was unlikely to regenerate growth in the hard-hit

(Mr. Ahmed)

economies. A substantial improvement in the external economic environment and a significant strengthening of international economic co-operation would be necessary to support the changes in institutions and policies required to build prosperity and ensure more even distribution of wealth and opportunities and vastly wider participation by the people. If such policies were put into practice by all Governments, the prospects of the developing countries in the 1990s would improve dramatically.

Turning to issues related to women, he noted that the Commission on the Status of Women had recently concluded a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in implementing the Nairobi Forward-looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women. After five years, or one third of the time set for achieving the goals, major obstacles remained. Continued efforts by women had begun to have an effect at the grass-roots level, but it was an invisible success, since it had not been substantial enough to affect official statistics and governmental policies. The entrenched resistance to the advancement of women and the reduced resources available for change had meant a loss of impetus and even stagnation in some areas. The World Economic Survey had for the past two years included a special section on the socio-economic attainment of women worldwide. The World Economic Survey, 1989 had examined the role of women in the family and the trends in female participation in the labour force, and the forthcoming Survey would focus on indicators of economic distribution, health, nutrition, fertility and education, with particular attention to assessing the progress in ensuring women's access to the development process and scientific and technological advances, and to surveying the political role of women around the world, especially in Eastern Europe.

Furthermore, the United Nations Statistical Office continued to develop statistics and indicators on women, and promoted and co-ordinated uses of statistical data on women in the United Nations system, an activity that had been greatly enhanced by the development of the United Nations microcomputer, Women's Indicators and Statistics Data Base (WISTAT). The preparation of that data base and the publications based on it had been a collaborative effort involving the Statistical Office, the Population Division, the Division for the Advancement of Women, the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW), and the statistical services of the specialized agencies. Some of

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the publications issued recently were the Compendium of Statistics and Indicators on the Situation of Women, the Compendium of Statistics on Women in Africa, and a new wall chart, The Situation of Women, 1990, the latter being part of a publication on statistical trends relating to women that was being prepared in collaboration with a number of other agencies. WISTAT had also provided extensive statistics for the 1989 World Survey on the Role of Women in Development and the chapter on women in the forthcoming World Economic Survey. Although General Assembly resolution 44/171 had requested that WISTAT should be updated regularly at two-year intervals, he regretted to report that much of the work to date had been done with extrabudgetary funding and that the funding for continued work on the project had not been secured.

One of the far-reaching recommendations in the Forward-looking Strategies concerned the measurement of women's contribution to development as reflected in national accounts. The importance of that area of work had recently been reaffirmed by the Commission on the Status of Women, and the Statistical Commission had agreed that a technical report on methods of compilation, valuation and analysis should be prepared to assist countries in developing such statistics, as a way of understanding women's role in the economy, rectifying inequities in their economic situation and providing a better basis for social and economic planning. Methods of compiling statistics from the informal sector had also been developed in special field studies in Africa, and the statistics were now being compiled.

Mr. MARTENSON (Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights) said it had become ever more apparent that international peace and security and social and economic development must be founded on respect for human rights. Even in a world of reduced international tension, the failure to ensure human rights could once more ignite discord and conflict. The established international machinery for the protection of human rights must be maintained and reinforced, and international efforts in the field of public awareness and information must touch every corner of the globe to create a universal culture of human rights. Countries must receive technical assistance in strengthening their national laws and institutions, and the United Nations must expand its capacity to identify human rights violations at an early stage and act effectively to end them.

The striking restoration of democratic political institutions in a number of



(Mr. Martenson)

countries had underscored the interdependence of peace, human rights and economic and social development. The recent events had clearly informed the deliberations at the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights, where constructive dialogue had produced consensus on difficult issues, as reflected in its report to the Council. The Commission had heard 883 statements from Member States, observers and non-governmental organizations in the course of 54 meetings, and its work had been held within the projected time-limits in an unprecedented manner. The work of the pre-sessional and in-session working groups of the Commission must be underscored. After 12 years of tireless efforts, the Working Group entrusted with the drafting of a declaration on the rights of minorities had submitted a draft for consideration at the forty-sixth session.

The draft resolutions and decisions recommended by the Commission for adoption related to the situation of human rights in southern Africa, the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, the implementation of the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid, and the updating of the list of organizations assisting the racist régime of South Africa; support for country-monitoring mechanisms; a renewal of the mandates of the various Special Rapporteurs, and the appointment of a new Special Rapporteur to consider such matters as child prostitution and pornography, as well as of an independent expert on the human rights situation in Haiti. The Commission had also proposed the establishment of a sessional working group to formulate recommendations pursuant to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 44/167. He hoped that the Commission's recommendations would meet with approval.

The Centre for Human Rights was focusing on action-oriented projects to assist Governments through the services of experts, the organization of seminars, workshops, fellowships and internships, and the dissemination of information on human rights issues. Among the most recent activities, for instance, the Centre had sent two experts to discuss the legal and technical aspects of democratic elections with members of the Government of Romania, and was organizing an Asia/Pacific Workshop for Administrators of Justice on International Human Rights Issues in co-operation with the Government of the Philippines.

Commenting on the Second Decade to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination, in

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(Mr. Martenson)

his capacity as the Decade's Co-ordinator, he noted that in the current favourable international situation, the global campaign against racism, racial discrimination and apartheid had entered a new phase. Developments in southern Africa indicated that peaceful and fundamental change might eventually be possible there. The time was indeed opportune for increased efforts to overcome obstacles to the dismantling of apartheid. The Declaration on Apartheid and its Destructive Consequences in Southern Africa, adopted by the General Assembly at its sixteenth special session in December 1989, expressed the international community's commitment in that connection.

In December 1990, the United Nations would celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the adoption by the General Assembly of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. The current year also marked 20 years of activities by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which had made a contribution of inestimable importance to United Nations efforts to eliminate racism and racial discrimination. He hoped that the Committee's serious financial situation would be solved constructively so that the Committee could carry out its mandate fully. The international community should continue to give the highest priority to programmes combating racism and racial discrimination, and to intensify its efforts to provide assistance and relief to the victims of racism and all forms of racial supremacy and prejudice and apartheid.

The fundamental objectives of the Second Decade were: to promote human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin; to eliminate prejudice and racial discrimination; and to abolish régimes and policies based on racism. With those objectives in view, the General Assembly had approved a broad programme of activities for the entire Decade, supplemented by detailed plans of action for the periods 1985-1989 and 1990-1993. It had mandated the Council to take charge, with the Secretary-General's help, of co-ordinating the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Second Decade and of evaluating the activities undertaken during the Decade. The activities foreseen were numerous and varied. The elimination of apartheid was one of the prime objectives of the Second Decade. The release of Mr. Nelson Mandela after 27 years of imprisonment had lit a beacon of hope for the future. The Special Committee against Apartheid had a mandate to lead the combat

(Mr. Martenson)

against apartheid, and the Commission on Human Rights and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities repeatedly took firm stands against apartheid and undertook their own anti-apartheid activities.

As Co-ordinator for the Decade, he maintained contacts at the senior level within the various United Nations offices with a view to co-ordinating activities already under way or planned, and in order to identify areas in which new initiatives might be taken. Furthermore, at the second regular session of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination, held in New York in October 1989, he had drawn attention to the question of the implementation of the Programme of Action. He had reported on recent progress in the field and made specific recommendations for future action. The matter remained on the Committee's agenda and programme of work, and would be dealt with again in October 1990. The aim was to mobilize the resources of the entire United Nations system in the fight against racism. In that context, the Centre for Human Rights was organizing an inter-agency meeting in Geneva later in the current month in order to consider further steps in the common endeavour to achieve the aims of the Second Decade.

Public information activities were clearly essential as a way of making the United Nations role in the combat against racism better known and of mobilizing public support for the objectives of the Second Decade. On numerous occasions both he and his colleagues had spoken of the fight against racism and racial discrimination in television and radio interviews on stations world wide and in United Nations broadcasts, and had also reviewed with the press the implementation of the overall programme of activities. The strengthening of contacts and co-operation with non-governmental organizations was another priority area in furthering the realization of the Programme of Action.

The Centre for Human Rights itself was giving priority to strengthening its Decade-related activities and to placing renewed emphasis on the fight against racism and on the Decade. For example, on United Nations Day in October 1989 it had held a round-table discussion in Geneva on the role of the United Nations in the promotion and protection of human rights, with specific reference to the fight against racism and racial discrimination. The Centre's activities aimed at eradicating racial discrimination figured prominently on the agenda of its workshops, training courses and seminars in the field of technical assistance and

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(Mr. Martenson)

advisory services, as well as in the World Information Campaign for Human Rights. In the context of the Decade's activities for the period 1985-1989, the Centre had also held, at Athens in September 1989, a seminar on cultural dialogue between the countries of origin and the host countries of migrant workers. Later in the year, the Centre intended to focus attention on the root causes of racism through a seminar to which experts, governmental officials and representatives of non-governmental organizations would be invited. The Centre intended the seminar to consider a variety of factors contributing to racism and racial discrimination from the perspectives of especially vulnerable sectors of the population, and to review the causes and current manifestations of racism. The proceedings of the seminar would be widely disseminated.

As reflected in document E/1990/20 and Add.1, the information received by the Secretary-General indicated the considerable volume and wide-ranging nature of the activities carried out by the international community in the struggle against prejudice, racial discrimination and apartheid.

Over the past 12 months the more temperate international climate had also been reflected in the field of human rights, since there had been four ratifications or accessions to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and seven to the Optional Protocol in the past year. The new States parties to the Covenant were Algeria, Ireland, the Republic of Korea and Somalia, and those same States had also become parties to the Optional Protocol, together with the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, New Zealand and the Philippines. Thus, 91 States were now parties to the Covenant, and 50 were parties to the Optional Protocol. By resolution 44/128, the General Assembly had adopted the Second Optional Protocol to the Covenant, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty: it had been opened for signature on 15 December 1989, and had to date been signed by 14 States and ratified by one State. Where the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was concerned, he was happy to report that to date 84 States had signed the Convention and four had already ratified it.

It could be predicted with confidence that respect for human rights would be one of the principal themes, both nationally and internationally, of the 1990s. The corresponding vastly increased demands required increased resources. Commission on Human Rights resolution 1990/25 requested the Secretary-General to

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(Mr. Martenson)

submit to the Council a report on the situation and developments regarding logistical and human resources support for the Centre's increasing activities in the field of human rights, in particular with respect to servicing needs of the human-rights treaty bodies, the provisions for servicing included in the United Nations budget and the implementation of those provisions. The report (E/1990/50), which would soon be before the Council, outlined the mandate of the human-rights programme; it briefly referred to the relevant earlier resolutions and to the Centre's former and current activities, and indicated the servicing and resources required to implement the mandates. The human rights programme was greatly expanding at a time when the Centre's resources had been reduced. That expansion of mandates had to be matched by appropriate resources.

The PRESIDENT drew attention to the letter dated 2 February 1990 addressed to him by the Chairman of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/1990/23, annex V).

Mr. STOBY (Secretary of the Council) said that under the existing rules and regulations the chairman or rapporteur of a subsidiary organ who was called upon to present a report of such an organ to a parent organ was entitled to travel and subsistence at the expense of the United Nations.

If the Council were to decide to invite the Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to present the Committee's report to it in person, the estimated costs would be \$7,500, assuming that the Rapporteur would come to New York for one week. No provision was made in the programme budget for such travel and subsistence. However, it was likely that the costs in question could be absorbed in the programme budget for the period 1990-1991.

The PRESIDENT said that, if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Council wished to invite the Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to attend its meetings for one week, from 14 to 18 May 1990, during its review of the Committee's composition, organization and administrative arrangements.

It was so decided.

Mr. HASHIM (Special Co-ordinator for Emergency Relief Operations in Somalia) said that General Assembly resolution 44/178 contained an appeal to the international community to contribute generously and urgently to meet Somalia's humanitarian relief assistance needs. As identified earlier in 1989 by a United Nations inter-agency mission, those needs had comprised food for approximately 67,000 people and assistance to rehabilitate damaged infrastructure, at a total cost of around \$19 million.

Unfortunately, since that report had been issued the security situation in the affected areas had shown no improvement. The difficulties under which humanitarian relief operations were being carried out could be gauged by the decision of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the World Food Programme to suspend, with effect from October 1989, their regular programmes for assisting refugees located in those areas. Both agencies had stressed that humanitarian assistance would be resumed as soon as conditions allowed.

In February 1990, in response to an appeal by the Somali Government, the Secretary-General had announced his decision to launch an Extraordinary Interim Emergency Programme in north-western Somalia to provide emergency relief assistance to affected persons, including 140,000 refugees, over a six-month period. The Programme represented an exceptional humanitarian initiative undertaken on the understanding that its duration would be limited. Both the High Commissioner and the World Food Programme were in touch with donors in order to obtain the necessary resources. Donors' diffidence had stemmed from uncertainty whether successful relief activities could be carried out in a continued state of insecurity in much of northern Somalia. Concern about the political situation and the wish to see more active efforts to achieve national reconciliation had also been expressed. The principal target of the Emergency Programme was the provision of 2,000 tons of food aid each month. A non-governmental organization, ELU/CARE, would assist the Somali Government in its distribution. The Emergency Programme had been faced with a number of operational and logistical difficulties since it had begun in the second half of February, resulting in delays in meeting the implementation target. The mid-term inter-agency assessment mission had therefore been advanced to the third week of March. Its appraisal exercise had been reported on at the third

(Mr. Hashim)

meeting of the Consultative Group on the Emergency Situation in the Horn of Africa, held at Nairobi in early April. The mission had determined that only just over half of the planned 2,000 tons of food had been delivered each month. Even in the best of circumstances food delivery could reach only two thirds of the original target.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) had envisaged expanding its current humanitarian programmes for internally displaced persons to include refugees once the Emergency Programme ended. The ICRC programme would continue until the United Nations system was able to resume normal humanitarian assistance activities in the region. ICRC and the Somali Government had been discussing the operational arrangements required.

Many observers felt that there would be no permanent peace in northern Somalia until most of the refugees had returned to Ethiopia. Repatriation activities must therefore receive the highest priority. Registration of refugees in the north for repatriation should be facilitated, and any obstacles to their positive reception at home should be dealt with expeditiously. Donor support for that effort to achieve a lasting solution must also be ensured.

Access in order to carry out United Nations relief activities on behalf of displaced and war-affected persons was currently limited to the town of Berbera and a small area in and around the town of Boroma. The aim was to establish that there were parts of northern Somalia where security was such that United Nations staff could work and professional programme implementation and monitoring was possible. Those efforts could then be expanded into other parts of the north. So far, the signs were encouraging.

However, there were many people in need beyond the small areas that could now be reached. There was still no mechanism in place in Somalia for reaching those in need in contested areas. The ICRC was continuing its dialogue with the relevant parties to obtain such access.

The effects of conflict had also been felt strongly in the south of Somalia, where urban centres had had to absorb large numbers of displaced persons. The resulting problems were most strikingly evident at Mogadishu. The Somali Government and the United Nations would assess the problems at Mogadishu and look for ways to alleviate at least the worst problems.

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Mr. OSMAN (Observer for Somalia) said that his Government was seriously concerned at the massive displacement of populations and the widespread destruction of both public and private property in the northern districts of Somalia caused by intensive attacks by armed groups in May and June 1988. It had been estimated that as a result of those attacks over 600,000 people had been internally displaced, while another 400,000 had been scattered in the countryside. In October 1988 Somalia had appealed to the international community for assistance in coping with the situation. In resolution 43/206 the General Assembly had called on all States and the competent intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to respond fully to Somali requests for emergency humanitarian rehabilitation assistance. In May 1989 the Secretary-General had appealed to the international community to provide Somalia with humanitarian rehabilitation assistance in an amount of \$19.4 million to help the Government deal with the emergency situation. That appeal had been based on assessments made by the United Nations inter-agency mission referred to by the Special Co-ordinator for Emergency Relief Operations in Somalia. An additional programme of assistance would be needed for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of public services and infrastructure in the affected areas.

The Somali Government had taken a number of significant political and administrative measures to restore public confidence, strengthen protection of human rights and create a climate of national reconciliation. A general amnesty had been proclaimed in 1989 and in previous years, and a large number of political prisoners had been released. A high-level committee for resettlement and rehabilitation had been set up in order to bring about normal conditions in the affected regions, and also to mobilize and co-ordinate international assistance activities. Furthermore, the Somali Constitution would be amended in the near future so as to provide for a multi-party system, which would go into effect by the end of 1990. In March 1990 a high-level delegation had toured regions where thousands of displaced people had returned to their homes. The Committee for Resettlement and Rehabilitation, which had been reactivated, would soon visit the affected areas in order to assess the situation and recommend appropriate measures to alleviate human suffering and hardship. The Committee would continue to meet with regional authorities and representatives of local communities. Such



(Mr. Osman, Observer, Somalia)

high-level visits and contacts would help to restore normal conditions in the affected districts, thus contributing to national reconciliation.

The Somali Government was continuing its efforts to find a solution to the conflict in the northern regions of Somalia. On a number of recent occasions it had offered to open a dialogue with members of opposition groups, without setting any prior conditions. Friendly countries, including Egypt, Kuwait, the Yemen Arab Republic and Italy, had acted as intermediaries in the search for a solution to the conflict in the north. Unfortunately, however, the Government's offers had been rejected. The Government would none the less not be discouraged by such initial set-backs, and would continue its efforts to promote national reconciliation. Somalia had already taken steps to deal with the problems mentioned by the Special Co-ordinator regarding the security situation, so that the ongoing assistance provided could be more effective and reach the people concerned.

He wished to express his Government's profound appreciation to the Secretary-General and the Special Co-ordinator for their efforts to mobilize international resources to assist Somalia in coping with the emergency situation, as well as to the Governments and organizations that had already responded positively to Somalia's appeal. He wished to appeal to all States and organizations to contribute generously, on an urgent basis, in order to meet the emergency and rehabilitation needs of the displaced populations in the affected regions of Somalia.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.