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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. GAJANTAN (Netherlands)

later: Mr. OUDOVENKO (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

AGENDA ITEM 86: SPECIAL PROGRAMMES OF ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: REPORTS OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.15

1. Mr. N'GREGAI (Central African Republic) introduced the draft resolution on behalf of its sponsors and expressed the hope that, as in previous years, it would be adopted without a vote in view of the current situation in Chad.

Draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.16

2. Mr. KAZEMBE (Zambia), speaking on behalf of the front-line States, introduced draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.16 concerning special assistance for those States; he said that it had been modelled on resolution 41/199, adopted by the General Assembly in 1986, and he hoped it could be adopted without a vote.

Draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.17

3. Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand) outlined the reasons for the submission of the draft resolution on special assistance for the Maldives and expressed the hope, on behalf of all the sponsors, that it could be adopted quickly and by consensus.

4. The CHAIRMAN announced that Ethiopia had become a sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.17.

Draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.18

5. Mr. HERNANDEZ-ALCERRO (Honduras) said that El Salvador was still suffering in the aftermath of the earthquake of a year ago, despite its efforts and the aid it had received. The country clearly needed additional assistance, and on behalf of all the sponsors he expressed the hope that the draft would provide the international community with an opportunity to show its solidarity with the Salvadorian people.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued) (A/42/3, 137, 138, 178, 227, 232, 272, 288, 289 and Add.1 and 2, 302, 310, 314, 335, 337, 341, 354, 359, 381, 386, 402, 559, 657; A/C.2/42/4; A/C.2/42/L.4 and L.14)

6. Mr. Oudovenko (Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic) took the Chair.

7. Mr. RIPERT (Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation) said that the report of the Secretary-General submitted pursuant to resolution 41/201 (A/42/657) did not offer an exhaustive review of all the disaster-relief machinery in existence, because a number of documents already dealt with that matter, but basically contained an overall assessment of the efficiency of activities and a review of the lessons learnt between 1983 and 1985.

(Mr. Ripert)

8. Among the recommendations made in the report, three deserved special attention. First, the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator should focus on sudden natural disasters and the related preparation and prevention measures. It would therefore be necessary to strengthen the machinery for information, collection, evaluation and dissemination, improve communications with United Nations Headquarters and increase contacts with UNDP and other organizations. In addition, UNDRO should be recognized as the lead agency and benefit from the support and co-operation of all other bodies concerned. Secondly, the Director-General for Development and International Co-operation should be responsible at Headquarters for ensuring that the Secretary-General was kept fully informed of potential and actual disasters so that he could take the appropriate steps. Thirdly, extrabudgetary resources must be mobilized to establish a technical group, drawing on the skills of national and regional authorities, to advise on the use of technical advances to enhance the ability of the United Nations system to deal with disasters and emergencies by, for example, improving monitoring and forecasting methods.

9. In conclusion, he commented that the recommendations did not call for a radical revision of the existing system, indicating that the system was broadly satisfactory.

10. Mr. ABBASI (Pakistan) said that the net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries, which had amounted to \$24 billion in 1986 plus a further \$94 billion in trading losses, could not but aggravate the crisis of growth in the developing countries. His delegation therefore fully supported the recommendations made in resolution 1987/93, adopted by the Economic and Social Council at its second regular session of 1987.

11. Turning next to the question of international economic security, he said that the suspension of the North-South dialogue and other factors had increased the economic insecurity of the developing countries. To resolve the many problems of those countries, it had become imperative to improve the operation of the international financial system; to co-ordinate the industrialized countries' economic policies; to guarantee stable prices for primary commodities; to take down the developed countries' protectionist barriers; to restrict debt-service payments to a reasonable percentage of export income; to convert part of existing debts into grants and increase the proportion of grants in new flows of assistance; to reduce interest rates to below the market level for current debts and set stable, low interest rates for new debts; to increase official development assistance; to ease loan terms; to agree on a new allocation of SDRs and establish a link between that and development financing; and, finally, to establish conditionalities consistent with the economic and political conditions of the countries concerned.

12. Regarding the situation in Africa, his delegation fully supported efforts to mobilize financial and technological resources in order to increase food and agricultural production. Although many African countries had honoured the commitments they had made at the special session of the General Assembly concerned with Africa's economic recovery and development, putting into effect important

(Mr. Abbasi, Pakistan)

reforms such as structural adjustment measures, with positive results, the international community had not; net resource flows to Africa had amounted to no more than \$18 billion in 1986, a decline in real terms from 1985. His delegation therefore called upon the international community, the developed countries especially, to increase their transfers of resources to Africa substantially. His country, for its part, would continue to support African recovery, through a five-year technical assistance programme among other things.

13. Touching next upon population matters, he said that his country was actively pursuing the recommendations adopted at the World Population Conference held in Mexico City in August 1984.

14. Referring, finally, to Economic and Social Council resolutions 1987/12 and 1987/87, he said that his country was deeply concerned at the economic conditions prevailing in Palestine and other Arab territories illegally occupied by Israel, and would support any move to improve economic welfare in that region. His country also insisted on receiving a comprehensive report on Israeli economic practices in Palestine and the other occupied Arab territories.

15. Mr. FAABORG-ANDERSEN (Denmark), speaking on behalf of the European Economic Community, said that the members of the Community broadly agreed with the classification of emergencies into three categories, as the Secretary-General suggested in his report. Those which clearly fell within the purview of any one United Nations entity were, in principle, fairly easy to deal with. The most important thing was to ensure that the entity concerned could respond as effectively as possible and serve as a lead agency when necessary. Inter-agency co-operation could certainly be improved in that connection. The organizations concerned should consider the options in the light of their own experience.

16. The Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator was generally credited with dealing satisfactorily with sudden natural disasters. The Secretary-General stated, however, that on occasion UNDRO found it difficult to co-operate effectively with other organizations in operational relief activities; it would have been useful had he been specific about the nature of those difficulties. The members of the Community supported the Secretary-General's recommendation that UNDRO should focus on sudden natural disasters. Given the limited means at its disposal, it should concentrate on co-ordinating the response of the United Nations system.

17. At the same time, as the Secretary-General's report stated, the Office's capacity to collect, evaluate and disseminate information must be improved through closer collaboration in the field between the parties concerned. It would also be helpful in that regard to second experienced specialists from other organizations to UNDRO. Secondly, co-operation between UNDRO and UNDP must be strengthened. The countries of the European Community welcomed the recommendation regarding the establishment of a joint task force and thought that other factors ought to be considered as well. Specifically, UNDP and UNDRO should co-operate more closely in assisting Governments of countries prone to natural disasters in the preparation of

(Mr. Faaborg-Andersen, Denmark)

prevention programmes, in so far as such programmes had a significant impact on development. Activities pertaining strictly to disaster preparedness, however, should be the exclusive province of UNDRO. Thirdly, greater emphasis should be placed on the role the United Nations Resident Co-ordinator could play in the co-ordination of all disaster-related activities, from early warning to reconstruction. He endorsed the suggestions contained in the consultant's report on that subject.

18. In the case of more complex emergencies, the Secretary-General stated in his report that it was not possible to determine the appropriate response mechanism in advance. The countries members of the European Community believed that it was of the utmost importance that such situations should be identified and a focal point designated as soon as possible so that appropriate action could be taken to prevent their occurrence or limit their effects. That was by far the most significant lesson to be learned from the emergency in Africa. The Secretary-General's report also cited a number of factors that had been central to the success of the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa, namely the fact that action had been taken on behalf of the Secretary-General, that emergency units had been organized in the field and that non-governmental organizations had been closely identified with the United Nations system, which had greatly strengthened public support for them and increased their operational effectiveness.

19. With regard to Headquarters arrangements, it was important to draw on the Secretary-General's authority in mobilizing the international community and promoting a co-ordinated response by the United Nations system. The countries of the European Community were prepared to support the recommendation that the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should keep the Secretary-General fully informed on potential and existing emergencies on the understanding that he would accord priority to that issue and would be provided with the necessary resources. In that connection, the seconding of a representative of UNDRO to the Director-General's Office might prove useful. The countries of the European Community assumed that the liaison and advisory functions would be carried out by the same person.

20. The Secretary-General's report dealt only with improving co-ordination within the United Nations system, but the fact that the need to improve co-ordination with Governments of disaster-stricken countries was of equal importance should not be overlooked, since those Governments were invariably the focal points for all endeavours. It was possible that the strength of the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa had lain in its ability to get United Nations bodies, Governments and non-governmental organizations to work together to attain a common objective.

21. Mr. ELGHOUAYEL (Tunisia) said that, ever since the report of the Group of 18 had been issued, all discussion of UNDRO had been somewhat subjective. In his report, however, the Secretary-General clearly stressed the need to maintain and strengthen UNDRO on the basis of a broad interpretation of its current mandate. He noted, too, that the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa could not provide a

(Mr. Elghouayel, Tunisia)

model, since the situation which had led to its creation had been of an exceptional nature. The experience acquired by OEOA was, of course, very useful, but it could not be reproduced. It should be noted that OEOA had not broken ground when it had set up emergency and unified appeal units in the field. UNDRO had already used a similar mechanism. Furthermore, like OEOA, UNDRO had always acted on behalf of the Secretary-General.

22. In the case of UNDP, the Administrator had already responded directly to recommendation 24 of the Group of 18. UNDP was an agency which financed technical assistance programmes and projects and therefore lacked both the competence and the mandate to take over UNDRO activities. It was conceivable, though, that a portion of the Programme's financial surplus might be used to finance UNDRO projects comprising prevention, planning and follow-up activities related to emergencies and disasters.

23. The recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report provided an acceptable basis for strengthening the capacity of UNDRO, particularly in terms of inter-agency co-ordination within the United Nations system. In any event, the General Assembly should pay particular attention to the views expressed by the most disaster-prone developing countries in decisions concerning the creation of a group of experts and a United Nations decade for the prevention of natural disasters, inter alia.

24. Mr. BEN MOUSSA (Morocco) said that the 81 sponsors of General Assembly resolution 41/201, which had helped rescue the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, had every reason to welcome the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of that resolution. His delegation endorsed all the recommendations contained in it. While acknowledging the relevance of the classification of disasters in paragraph 10 of the report and the allocation of roles which derived from it, his delegation wished to reaffirm the mandate of UNDRO, as set out in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), as a distinct centre responsible for the system-wide co-ordination of assistance in cases of disaster and other similar situations. As the report pointed out, it was generally accepted that the performance of UNDRO could and should be improved.

25. His delegation welcomed the recommendations concerning co-operation between UNDRO, UNDP and other organizations in the system. It supported the use of unified appeals and believed that prevention and preparedness and the monitoring of operations in the field constituted an important element. His delegation also welcomed the proposed establishment of a focal point for co-ordination at United Nations Headquarters under the supervision of the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and the convening of a group of experts to advise the Secretary-General with a view to benefiting from technological advances, thereby improving the responsiveness of the United Nations system to disasters and emergencies.

26. In that connection, his delegation's proposal to proclaim a United Nations decade for the prevention of natural disasters and mitigation of their effects was entirely justified. The contemporary world was more vulnerable than ever to

(Mr. Ben Moussa, Morocco)

cataclysms. The universal character, moral authority and humanitarian right of access of the United Nations constituted advantages that must be exploited in order to generate world co-operation in that area. The proclamation of such a decade would not require the creation of any new bodies or costly machineries. Moreover, it would enjoy the backing of academies and scientific associations throughout the world. In support of that initiative, the Royal Academy of Morocco planned to hold a seminar on the mitigation of geophysical risks in Africa in late 1988. Thus all the infrastructures were in place; for those involved, the decade would act as a vector for their efforts on behalf of the international community, primarily the developing countries. It had rightly been said that history would judge Governments not only on their accomplishments in the areas of health, education and food, but on the extent to which they had sought to protect the environment and counter natural disasters. That proclamation would make the last decade of the twentieth century a decade for mobilization to reduce human suffering.

27. He asked whether natural disasters were the result of an irrevocable fate and whether it was possible to lessen their impact. At the cosmic level, the Earth was surely a most hospitable place, but one in which man-made and natural disasters were proliferating none the less. Disasters occurred regularly; only recently, there had been typhoons in Bangladesh, a volcanic eruption in Colombia, earthquakes in Mexico, Colombia, Chile and Ecuador and persistent drought in Africa, and that was not a complete list. While natural disasters struck everywhere, the heaviest burden fell on the peoples of developing countries, some of whom found their very existence threatened. An international programme that would permit collaboration between scientists, engineers and administrators and would make use of satellites and telecommunications technologies could have a significant impact. The disaster at Armero had killed 23,000 people, whereas the eruption of Mount St. Helens in the United States of America had claimed only 63 lives because the public had been well informed.

28. In order to facilitate the implementation of those global objectives, the interim period after the proclamation of the decade would be used to develop a world programme of action under the aegis of the United Nations. The goals of the programme would be to: (a) work out guiding principles and new strategies in order to apply current know-how, taking into account national cultural and economic differences; (b) encourage scientific and technological research in order to fill the gaps between different branches of knowledge; (c) disseminate information on measures for evaluating, predicting, preventing and mitigating natural disasters; and (d) implement those measures through technical assistance programmes, the transfer of technology, and demonstration, education and training projects.

29. Mr. KAGAMI (Japan) said that the magnitude of the damage caused by natural disasters throughout the world could give rise to a feeling of helplessness. However, effective international co-operation made it possible to reduce losses and damage. Itself a disaster-prone country, Japan had suffered many natural disasters throughout its history. Through experience, Japan had developed technologies and had accumulated know-how which enabled it to cope with natural disasters. Through international co-operation, Japan shared its know-how and technologies with other countries. Thus, it had recently enacted legislation providing for the dispatch of

(Mr. Kagami, Japan)

Japanese disaster-relief teams to disaster-stricken countries. That initiative showed that Japan was keenly interested in strengthening international co-operation in that field.

30. The United Nations system already rendered extensive assistance. In his address to the General Assembly, the Prime Minister of Japan, Mr. Nakasone, had stressed that the United Nations should strengthen its capacity to prevent natural disasters, mitigate their effects more expeditiously and provide rescue services. In his report on the work of the Organization (A/42/1), the Secretary-General had mentioned that the ability to foresee various types of disasters had grown significantly, and had added that there was much merit in proposals which had been made to stimulate international study, planning and preparations on that subject over the next decade under the auspices of the United Nations. In that connection, his delegation noted with interest the proposal to proclaim an international decade for natural hazards reduction.

31. UNDRO had played an active role in co-ordinating the activities of the relevant United Nations organizations. The effectiveness of the Office should be strengthened, in particular in the light of the conclusions of the in-depth study of the United Nations intergovernmental structure and functions in the economic and social fields. Considering the complex nature of natural disasters, there was a need for a comprehensive study of the functions and roles of all the relevant agencies in order to improve the disaster-relief services of the United Nations system.

32. Mr. GHONDA (Zaire) welcomed the constructive spirit which had prevailed during the second regular session of the Economic and Social Council, confirming the tendency to seek the negotiated solutions that were indispensable in a world which was becoming increasingly interdependent and where the repercussions of problems made themselves felt world wide, at times with disconcerting speed, as had been seen in the case of the rapid fall of prices on the New York Stock Exchange. His delegation reaffirmed the importance which it attached to the holding of an international conference on the whole range of problems relating to money and finance. It regretted that there had been no unanimity of views, at the Council's second regular session, on the extremely important issue of the net transfer of resources from the developing to the developed countries.

33. The role of the public sector in the developing countries, where the private sector's room for manoeuvre was limited by the shortage of financial resources, required no further proof. However, that did not absolve the developing countries from exercising control over the management of public enterprises, which, in Zaire, was the role of the Department of State Investments.

34. His delegation welcomed the activities of the World Health Organization (WHO), in particular in the fight against AIDS, which should not, however, detract attention from other illnesses, such as malaria, which in tropical developing countries continued to be deadly. The goal of health for all by the year 2000 required global action on the part of Governments and the entire international community in order to stop all endemic and epidemic diseases, including AIDS, and to improve the quality of life.

35. Miss ADIWOSO (Indonesia) commended the Secretary-General for his concise but detailed report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/201 (A/42/657). Since the establishment of UNDRO, new unforeseen emergency situations had arisen: first, very specific types of disaster situations "which fell clearly within the competence of one of the United Nations organizations or specialized agencies and for which that organization was primarily responsible"; secondly, disasters or emergencies of such magnitude or complexity that they required special arrangements. Her delegation believed that the way in which the United Nations system dealt with those situations should not weaken the role of UNDRO. The current tendency of increasing numbers of agencies of the United Nations system to become involved in emergency assistance activities seemed to have been misperceived as an indication of the diminishing role, and even the decreased usefulness, of UNDRO, to the point where the Group of 18 had recommended that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) should assume the functions of UNDRO. Her delegation remained convinced that UNDRO was useful, and that its relevance was perhaps increasing in the face of the growing rate of disasters and emergencies. Indonesia had had first-hand experience of the benefits of assistance from UNDRO, and it approved the Secretary-General's proposal to retain UNDRO as a separate entity at Geneva.

36. Her delegation had taken note with keen interest of the proposals to improve the Office's performance. In particular, it approved the recommendation that UNDRO should prepare country profiles containing basic information on the characteristics of countries subject to sudden natural disasters. Indonesia did not see any difficulty in the establishment of the proposed joint UNDRO/UNDP task force.

37. Indonesia nevertheless wished to emphasize the need to renew the appeal to Governments for urgent voluntary contributions and to request the Secretary-General and UNDRO to mobilize additional resources to meet the needs arising from disaster and emergency situations.

38. With regard to operations at the field level, it was important to respect the sovereignty of States and their primary role in disaster situations. All emergency operations should be conducted and co-ordinated in accordance with the priorities and needs of the countries concerned. Her delegation was in favour of the Secretary-General's proposal to set up a technical panel to advise him on ways and means of taking advantage of technological advances for improving the capacity of the United Nations system to respond to disaster situations. It also approved the decision to entrust responsibilities to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation, on the understanding that that measure would not overlap with the mandate of UNDRO.

39. Finally, her delegation was ready to give serious consideration to the idea of proclaiming an international decade or an international year devoted to disaster relief assistance.

40. Mr. MULLER (Australia) said that, although the report of the Secretary-General (A/42/657) contained a number of positive elements, it fell somewhat short of the comprehensive assessment called for by the General Assembly in its resolution 41/201. In particular, the report was imprecise and failed to deal adequately with the basic problems of lines of authority and communication within the system.

(Mr. Muller, Australia)

41. While it was indeed difficult to prepare for complex emergency situations, it was important that, once those situations were identified, the system should be able to respond to them. The example of the Office of Emergency Operations in Africa was evidence that that was possible.

42. A number of recommendations contained in the report were rather unclear. While agreeing that UNDRO should concentrate on what it did best - its responding to sudden natural disasters - his delegation did not agree with the recommendation contained in paragraph 21 aimed at increasing the effectiveness of UNDRO in the fields of prevention and preparedness as well as in disaster follow-up. In view of the insufficient resources of UNDRO - made explicit in paragraph 15 of the report - a clearer and narrower definition of the forms of its activity was required. A number of those activities should be entrusted to UNDP, in particular those involving preparation and preparedness; that would not prevent UNDRO from carrying out some of those activities on behalf of UNDP. In that way, UNDRO could concentrate on what it did best. The question could be discussed between UNDRO and UNDP in the joint task force proposed in paragraph 21. His delegation believed that there would be support for that proposal within UNDRO.

43. With regard to the need to improve communication between UNDRO and Headquarters, although his delegation supported the implicit idea of having some kind of "trigger mechanism" at Headquarters to enable the international community and the United Nations system to respond to emergencies, it wanted to know more about how such an arrangement would work and about the proposed links and lines of authority between UNDRO and the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation. It also wished to know how the Secretary-General intended to implement the recommendations contained in the consultant's report, and whether it was proposed that the General Assembly or the Second Committee should receive reports on the subject.

44. The disaster-relief guidelines applied within the system generally needed to be made clearer. The fact that the Secretary-General intended to convene a technical panel to advise him in that respect indicated his awareness of the problem. Although the precise aim of his proposal was not clear, it was quite obvious that further thought needed to be given to ways of improving the response of the United Nations system to disasters and emergencies.

45. Mr. BOECK (Austria) said that his country appreciated the activities of UNDRO and would continue to support its work. The reports that UNDRO produced were extremely helpful, particularly for smaller and medium-sized countries had no representation in the disaster-stricken regions or States, providing them with information upon which to base decisions with regard to the granting of assistance. They could also serve to enlarge the circle of potential donors.

46. Two recent meetings of officials in charge of national emergency relief services had led to the adoption of recommendations concerning practical measures, the most important of which dealt with the enormous potential that the pooling of resources would have, provided that donors were prepared to relinquish some of their independence for the sake of rationalization.

(Mr. Boeck, Austria)

47. Some of the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report were particularly worthy of note, especially those to the effect that UNDRO should focus its activities on sudden natural disasters and preparation measures related thereto, that the procedures for co-operation between UNDRO and UNDP should be improved with regard not only to prevention and preparation, but also to disaster follow-up, that UNDRO should be allowed to benefit more from the expertise available within the United Nations system and that there should be close co-operation between all the United Nations agencies involved and improved communication between UNDRO and Headquarters. Austria welcomed the proposal to provide a focal point at Headquarters, provided that it would not mean any duplication of activity.

48. There did not appear to be any advantage in transferring some of UNDRO activities from Geneva to regional centres located near disaster-prone areas. The available resources would be better devoted to operational activities. Since it was vital for UNDRO to be reinforced, his delegation hoped that the report of the Secretary-General and its follow-up would permit better definition and improvement of UNDRO activities and of the response of the United Nations system to emergencies in general.

49. Mr. PAYTON (New Zealand) regretted that the Committee's biennial work programme for 1987 and 1988 had been disrupted as far as its examination of UNDRO activities was concerned. He would confine himself to brief remarks, in view of the fact that an in-depth discussion would be held at the next session. By that time the Special Commission of the Economic and Social Council would have had the opportunity of giving further consideration to the performance of the United Nations system with regard to disasters and emergencies. His delegation hoped in that connection that the Co-ordinator and his staff would not have to spend too long away from their duties in Geneva, as had happened in 1986.

50. His delegation was still firmly convinced that recommendations 23 and 24 of the Group of 18 should be implemented in full and that the various parts of the United Nations system should be enabled to function as cohesively and effectively as possible in the area of disaster relief.

51. It accepted the Secretary-General's decision to keep the Office as a separate entity located in Geneva, and fully endorsed his recommendation that it should be made more effective, particularly since there was considerable scope for improvement.

52. After a somewhat hesitant start, the United Nations system had responded in a highly convincing way to the crisis of drought and famine in sub-Saharan Africa. Mechanisms had been instituted to ensure a co-ordinated response to such problems, which regrettably occurred all too frequently. The lessons learned from the experience of the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa would not be forgotten. His delegation agreed with the Secretary-General that such complex situations should be handled by bodies other than UNDRO and that the latter should devote all its energies to dealing with natural disasters and helping countries to prepare for them. It accepted, therefore, the recommendations contained in

(Mr. Payton, New Zealand)

section III of the report, in particular the call for closer interaction between UNDRO headquarters and the resident co-ordinators in the field. Since no two disasters were alike, there could be no intervention model and, to the extent that its resources allowed, the Office must ensure that its staff not only were familiar with the particular circumstances of countries affected by disasters or judged to be in high risk areas, but also had first-hand, on-the-spot experience.

53. UNDRO must show the international community and the United Nations system that it warranted the confidence and co-operation it sought. His delegation would follow its activities closely over the coming months and hoped in particular that there would be greater co-operation with the countries of the Pacific region, given that as the cyclone season approached, they would almost certainly be calling on the services of UNDRO.

54. Mr. KRAMER (Canada) congratulated the Secretary-General on his report, although it did not contain the comprehensive overview called for, it did make practical and sensible suggestions, offering a framework for reflection and change.

55. His delegation approved of the distinction drawn between sudden disasters and more complex, long-term phenomena for which ad hoc arrangements were the best approach, as demonstrated by the creation of the Office for Emergency Operations in Africa. It agreed entirely that UNDRO should concentrate on disasters of the first type, helping countries to prepare for them and co-ordinating the international response. It would thus be able to focus its efforts and resources in a manner more consistent with its capacities. It was not, however, sufficient to recognize that need. UNDRO must demonstrate its competence and its effectiveness.

56. While UNDRO must, undoubtedly, lead the way with regard to preparedness, it was not clear what was meant by "prevention", in other words, whether it meant promoting a major development process, which was beyond the scope of UNDRO, or whether it indicated something more technical.

57. With regard to follow-up, his delegation welcomed the proposed consultations with UNDP, which would help to clarify the responsibilities of UNDRO. It also hoped that, over the coming months, the Secretary-General would set out the measures he proposed to take to increase the effectiveness of UNDRO.

58. Canada also favoured greater interaction with the resident co-ordinators, who should receive complete briefings on disaster and emergency issues and endeavour to develop and sustain contacts with Governments, NGOs and other organizations involved. That was a major issue dealt with at the April meeting of officials responsible for national emergency relief services.

59. His delegation welcomed the measures proposed with regard to creating a focal point at Headquarters, but hoped that operational responsibility would not shift from the established arrangements unless exceptional circumstances so required. Furthermore, the proposed technical panel could make an important contribution with regard to the improvement of the system's response capacity. It should be concerned with expertise in the management of programmes and with the technology required to support them.

(Mr. Kramer, Canada)

60. Having contributed for a number of years to the UNDRO Trust Fund, Canada fully supported all measures which would enable UNDRO to fulfil its important role with appropriately tailored objectives.

61. Mr. SIDDIKY (Bangladesh) said that many Member States, particularly developing ones, had suffered unprecedented natural disasters in recent years, and the number of disasters to which the United Nations system had been asked to respond had increased almost fivefold between 1980 and 1987. After drawing the Committee's attention to General Assembly resolution 40/231, entitled "Long-term and effective solution of the problems caused by natural disasters in Bangladesh", he suggested that the time had come to devise a method whereby the contemporary capabilities could be marshalled to forecast and control the human suffering from such calamities.

62. Natural disasters required an emergency response and thus the assistance provided was quite distinct from long-term development assistance. In resolution 41/201, the General Assembly had correctly noted the nature and functions of the Office of the Co-ordinator as distinct from those of the United Nations Development Programme, and it had reaffirmed the mandate of that Office, established by resolution 2816 (XXVI) as the focal point for disaster-relief co-ordination. It was therefore gratifying that the Office had enjoyed the confidence of the Member States and the Secretary-General in the course of the current reforms.

63. Since the paucity of resources had been one of the major constraints on the timely response of the United Nations to disaster situations, it was imperative to place the Office of the Co-ordinator on a sound financial basis. He therefore urged the international community to make immediate efforts to provide both funds and assistance in order to alleviate the financial constraints of UNDRO and he expressed the hope that resolution 41/201 would be implemented fully and expeditiously.

64. Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer, Palestine Liberation Organization) expressed regret that the report on assistance to the Palestinian people (A/42/289) had been prepared, not by a multi-disciplinary mission, but by a single consultant, who had been denied access to the occupied Palestinian territories by the Israeli occupation authorities.

65. The programme of economic and social assistance to the Palestinian people was welcome, even though not all the projects in it were priority ones. It should be viewed as a dynamic framework which was subject to modification and improvement, and efforts should be made to implement it. In that regard, a joint United Nations/Palestine Liberation Organization mission should be organized to mobilize resources for the programme, and particularly for the implementation of the main priority projects, namely those relating to the construction of a seaport, a fishing port and a cement plant, the agro-industries and the production and training centres. The two projects identified by UNCTAD, relating to the establishment of a research centre for project identification and formulation and to statistics, should also be set in motion, it being vital to fill the statistical

(Mr. Abu-Koash, Observer, PLO)

gap in the occupied territories which occurred principally because the Israeli authorities published doctored statistics on the Palestinian economy in order to conceal the deterioration of conditions.

66. It was unfortunate that the Secretary-General's report entitled "Israeli economic practices in the occupied Palestinian and other Arab territories" (A/42/341) covered only the financial practices of the Israeli occupation authorities, even though the General Assembly, in its decision 40/432, had requested the preparation of a report on the financial and trade practices of those authorities. He expressed the hope that the Committee would have before it a comprehensive report at its forty-third session. The current report nevertheless indicated the practices resorted to by the Israeli occupation authorities to prevent the establishment of Palestinian commercial banks and specialized credit institutions, while the Israeli banks operated freely in the occupied Palestinian territories in order to mobilize Palestinian savings for the benefit of the Israeli economy. Moreover, the occupation authorities required Palestinian firms to convert export revenue into Israeli currency, which was constantly depreciating. Moreover, the Palestinians were forced to pay taxes which went directly to the Israeli Treasury and from which they derived no benefit. The Palestinians were forced not only to live under occupation but also to finance that occupation.

67. Neither Israel nor South Africa were members of the regional economic commission because of their infamous policies and practices. In 1986 and 1987, the Economic and Social Council had decided to defer consideration of the draft decision calling for the full membership of Israel in the Economic Commission for Europe, which had been submitted by the United States. The United States should draw the necessary conclusion from the Council's attitude and withdraw the draft decision, which sought to reward Israel for its occupation of the Palestinian and other Arab territories and its repeated acts of aggression against the Arab nation. To admit Israel to full membership of the Economic Commission for Europe would set a precedent that would encourage South Africa to seek membership of a regional economic commission.

68. Infrastructure was an important element of the Palestinian economy which had not yet been studied. Accordingly, a draft resolution calling for the preparation of an in-depth study of the present and future infrastructure needed by the Palestinian people in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967, including Jerusalem, would be submitted. The study should examine in particular the transport system and its adequacy to the needs.

69. Mrs. CHALLENGOR (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that at a time when natural hazards were posing an increasing challenge to the world community, it was vital to protect the social environment and infrastructure, as well as human life, to the extent feasible. Disaster prevention should consist in reducing the vulnerability of human life and property to such hazards. The improvement of methods of construction and means of predicting natural phenomena required research beyond the means of individual countries. Dissemination of knowledge, exchange of information, comparison of views and co-ordination of research and its applications were therefore of major

(Mrs. Challenor, UNESCO)

importance. It was also highly desirable to expand national capacity in that area, to disseminate national experience relating to prevention and to devise increasingly efficacious solutions. To that end, UNESCO had, over the past 25 years, established international and regional centres for training and the exchange and analysis of data concerning destructive phenomena, implemented a regional project on earthquake risk reduction in the Balkans, launched a programme for assessment and mitigation of earthquake risk in the Arab region, established a regional seismological network in South-East Asia, organized the international co-ordination of the Tsunami warning system in the Pacific, established the foundations for an international mobile early warning system for volcanic eruptions, participated in the rehabilitation of educational facilities and the restoration of cultural monument, following disasters and dispatched scientific field missions to countries affected by natural phenomena. All those activities had been undertaken in collaboration with a number of non-governmental organizations and in close co-operation with United Nations bodies and institutions. An evaluation of their impact had revealed that they had fostered the free flow of knowledge concerning risk mitigation across geographical boundaries and that further international co-ordination was essential to meet the legitimate desire for security common to all nations. On the eve of the adoption of its programme for 1988-1989 and the elaboration of the third medium-term plan (1990-1995), the goal of UNESCO was to enhance the self-sufficiency of disaster-prone countries and to increase international co-operation. It therefore fully supported the multilateral approaches aimed at reducing the vulnerability of the social and physical environment, and it was ready to work to that end with Member States, the other agencies of the United Nations system and the intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

70. Mr. SCHUMANN (German Democratic Republic) observed that the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 41/201 (A/42/657) provided an acceptable basis for the future activities of the United Nations organizations and UNDR0, and he welcomed the recommendations in paragraphs 19, 21 and 22. The Committee's discussions having clearly demonstrated that the UNDR0 activities were an integral part of the activities of the economic and social system as a whole, the implementation of those recommendations should be considered in the light of the in-depth study of the activities of the United Nations system in the economic and social fields which was to be undertaken.

71. His delegation fully endorsed resolution 1986/47, by which the Economic and Social Council had reaffirmed the sovereignty of States affected by disasters. It would support the activities undertaken by UNDR0 in pursuance of the mandate laid down in that resolution.

72. Mr. ESSAIFI (United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator) said that the Office of the Co-ordinator would pay due regard to the proposals made in the Committee's debate. He was constantly watching out for key ideas that could be turned into specific proposals. Relationships between the Office of the Co-ordinator and the UNDP resident co-ordinators, which were already excellent, would be further improved.

(Mr. Essaali)

73. As to information and communications, the office was endowed with an extremely modern system which enabled it to reach the most remote regions and with which any United Nations agency which so requested could be linked up.

74. The proposal for the proclamation of a decade to mitigate the effects of disasters deserved attention, particularly in view of the Office's mandate with respect to preparedness and prevention.

AGENDA ITEM 85: EXTERNAL DEBT CRISIS AND DEVELOPMENT: REPORT OF THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (continued)

Draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.20

75. Mr. ANDRADE-DIAZ-DURAN (Guatemala), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/42/L.20 on behalf of the States Members of the United Nations which were members of the Group of 77, expressed the hope that it would be adopted by consensus. The members of the Group of 77 were prepared to negotiate the wording with their normal flexibility and invited the developed countries to respond positively.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.