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Held at Headquarters, New York,
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President: Mr. FLORIN (German Democratic Republic)
later: Mr. WIJEWARDANE (Sri Lanka)
(Vice-President)

- Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency [14]
 - (a) Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Agency
 - (b) Draft resolution
- Development and International Economic Co-operation [82] (continued)
 - (e) Environment: note by the Secretary-General

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

AGENDA ITEM 14

REPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ATOMIC ENERGY AGENCY

- (a) NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL TRANSMITTING THE REPORT OF THE AGENCY (A/42/458/Corr.1)
- (b) DRAFT RESOLUTION (A/42/L.6)

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I should like to propose that the list of speakers in the debate on this item be closed today at 5 p.m. If I hear no objection, it will be so decided.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I therefore ask those representatives who wish to speak in the debate to put their names on the list as soon as possible.

I invite the Director General of the International Atomic Energy Agency, Mr. Hans Blix, to present the report of the Agency for 1986.

Mr. BLIX (International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)): It is my privilege to introduce the General Assembly's annual discussion of the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Before the Assembly is the report of the Agency for 1986. It was a year marked by the Chernobyl accident but also by an unprecedented level of intergovernmental co-operation within the framework of the IAEA. The confidence in the Agency and the traditions of good co-operation which have developed over the Agency's now 30 years of existence proved to be great assets when there was a need for decisive and prompt actions last year. The members found it natural to make use of the IAEA for a comprehensive post-accident review, for the elaboration and adoption of two new conventions on early notification and emergency assistance in the event of nuclear accidents and for the adoption of a number of international measures in the field of nuclear power safety.

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

One hundred and thirteen States are now IAEA members and among them are all those States which have or are constructing nuclear power stations. The programmes for nuclear power safety and radiological protection have become one of the major activities of the Agency. Technical co-operation, which started with a volume of \$US 250,000 in 1958, now amounts to about \$US 40 million and has been increasing by 12 per cent a year in the last few years. Safeguards now cover 95 per cent of all nuclear material in non-nuclear-weapon States, and all five nuclear-weapon States have voluntarily invited the Agency to perform safeguards inspections at all or many of their peaceful nuclear installations. This first international on-site inspection and verification system in the world has now been in operation for 26 years and some 200 inspectors are carrying out more than 2,000 inspections a year in 58 countries. While the Agency has not been without controversies and crises, it goes strengthened into its fourth decade, above all because the members consider it a vitally important instrument, and they use it.

Since its establishment in Vienna 30 years ago the IAEA has enjoyed continuous assistance and understanding from our host Government and from the city of Vienna. For their unfailing hospitality and unsparing efforts to meet our needs, I should like to express the Agency's sincere gratitude to the Austrian Government and to the people of Austria.

On this thirtieth anniversary of the IAEA it seems natural to look back for a moment and ask what the founding members wanted to achieve through the organization and what actually is being achieved by it. The basic rationale for the organization, as reflected in its statute, is the idea that the atom can and must be mobilized for the benefit of man, that a transfer of nuclear technology, equipment and fissionable material can be effected with guarantees that no military use will be made of them, and that high safety requirements can and must be fulfilled.

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

The statute of any international organization is but the framework within which the members co-operate. Some provisions of the Agency's statute, for example those allowing the organization to be the owner and operator of nuclear installations or the custodian of fissionable material, have not been used to date, while other provisions, for example those concerning nuclear safety, have been the constitutional basis of dynamically expanding programmes and activities.

Today, just as 30 years ago, there are sceptics who are of the view that any transfer of nuclear technology or of fissionable material entails unacceptable risks of military use, that is to say, of proliferation. It is with some satisfaction that we can note, in the face of such scepticism, that no nuclear installations or fissionable materials transferred subject to IAEA safeguards have been found to have been diverted to military purposes. It can also be said with certainty that, if the avenue of continued nuclear secrecy and non-transfer of nuclear technology had been chosen 30 years ago, the world might have witnessed many independent, indigenous nuclear programmes without guarantees against the risk of proliferation.

I propose now to examine in greater detail the Agency's work in the three main areas: promotion of the use of nuclear energy, notably nuclear power; safety; and safeguards. Lastly, I shall discuss some administrative and financial problems facing international organizations, including the IAEA, today.

The economically most significant use of nuclear energy is for the production of electricity by power reactors. Today there are over 400 such reactors in operation producing some 16 per cent of the world's electricity. There is no doubt that this important industry has helped to reduce dependence on oil imports and the pressure on the world's oil resources. It has also significantly helped to reduce emissions of sulphur, nitrogen oxides and carbon dioxide into the world's atmosphere.

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

The IAEA promotes the use of nuclear power above all by organizing a broad exchange of experience through conferences and courses, symposiums, workshops, publications, scholarships and services. We have just finished a major conference on nuclear power performance and safety in which some 500 participants from all over the world shared information, notably to enable the best performers to tell their colleagues how they attain high reliability and good economic performance in nuclear power plants.

I should also mention that the IAEA today runs 10 world-wide information systems. For example, through the Power Reactor Information System participants can obtain basic data about all the world's nuclear power reactors and data about their performance. Through the International Nuclear Information System a computerized international nuclear library reference and abstract service has been created in which some 90,000 new items are included each year. A nuclear scientist or engineer in any corner of the world can draw on this service at any time to obtain relevant and recent information.

The Agency has also become the world's largest publisher in the field of nuclear science and technology, with more than 200 volumes published each year.

Last in this list of examples of promotional activities I should mention that the Agency is responsible for the administration of the International Centre for Theoretical Physics, in Trieste, where some 3,500 scientists come each year for seminars, courses and research.

The IAEA does not engage in promoting nuclear power by public relations. It has a very modest public information programme. It is inevitable, however, that in Agency forums there is discussion of the importance and relevance of nuclear power for the supply of energy in member countries. In the early days of the

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

organization this question was not controversial. There was an almost unlimited optimism about the blessings of nuclear power.

Today, a few member Governments have taken decisions not to use nuclear power, or to phase it out, while others are deferring decisions about the acquisition of more plants, and others still have not yet reached clear conclusions.

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

However, the majority of member Governments of the IAEA favour an expanded use of nuclear power. France, which already gets 70 per cent of its electricity from nuclear power, is continuing its ambitious programme; Japan, which like France lacks indigenous sources of oil, coal and gas, is similarly turning increasingly to nuclear power and foresees an increase from 25,800 megawatts of nuclear capacity today to at least 53,000 megawatts in the year 2000. While no new orders for nuclear power plants have been placed for a long time in the United States, its programme of over 100 reactors in operation remains the largest in the world and the recent official United States report "Energy Security" supports the nuclear power option. The same is true of an energy report by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and several policy statements in the Soviet Union underline the Soviet Government's determination to pursue the nuclear power option, while strengthening safety.

Several new orders for nuclear power plants have been placed since the Chernobyl accident - for example, in Japan and the Republic of Korea - and in the United Kingdom a new programme of nuclear power construction has been set in motion by the Government after a very long public inquiry into all conceivable aspects of the construction of a new plant at Sizewell.

Many developing countries, especially those that have few or no fossil or hydro resources, are interested in the nuclear power option, but relatively few have embarked upon it. India has developed a large indigenous capacity and is planning a considerable expansion. China is at present engaged in a determined but rather modest nuclear power programme, but its main thrust for expanded electricity production lies in the use of coal. Yet other developing countries are hesitating, above all because of the heavy initial investments. A senior expert group which met within the IAEA during the past year affirmed the vital need for added electricity production in developing countries and pointed also to the importance

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

of overcoming constraints regarding trained manpower and technical and organizational infrastructure. The group urged the IAEA to assist any interested member State in evaluating the nuclear power option within its overall energy and development planning. It also advocated increased emphasis on regional co-operation in energy and nuclear power planning studies. It is clear that in some parts of the world increased regional co-operation in the production and distribution of electricity could be very beneficial.

The positive attitude of the majority of the IAEA's member States to nuclear power is based on several considerations: economics, plant reliability, energy independence and protection of the environment. The Governments of some Eastern European countries, such as Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic and Poland, which recognize that grave environmental problems are arising from their extensive reliance on fossil fuel, are increasingly seeing the absence of effluents and the small and manageable quantities of wastes as a tremendous advantage of nuclear power.

While the attitude of most Governments to nuclear power development remains positive, it is perfectly clear that the Chernobyl accident resulted in reduced public acceptance. The cooler attitude of a few Governments to nuclear power is presumably also a reflection of the public reaction. It was perhaps inevitable, too, that the World Commission on Environment and Development, meeting and discussing energy in the immediate aftermath of the Chernobyl accident, focused on what it considered to be problems connected with nuclear power without saying one good word about its advantages. In an environmental discussion of different sources of electricity one would have expected not only the Commission's correct comment that every source of energy has its own health and environmental costs, benefits and risks but also the relevant information that the nuclear generation of electricity, producing no sulphur dioxide, no nitrogen oxide and no carbon dioxide,

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

contributes neither to acid rain nor to the so-called greenhouse effect and that nuclear wastes are small in quantity and therefore possible to isolate with a high degree of safety.

As an illustration I might mention that in France, as our recent General Conference was told, the large nuclear power programme has helped to reduce emissions of sulphur and nitrogen oxides from power plants by 50 per cent since 1980. Similar figures can be given for several other countries. I submit that such figures are worth studying in a world that is rightly in agony over the environmental destruction and danger brought about by the burning of fossil fuels on a gigantic scale.

While the Chernobyl accident reduced public support for nuclear power in many countries, it prompted significant action among utilities and Governments to prevent accidents involving radioactive releases from occurring in the future and to mitigate the consequences of any accident. Within the IAEA a substantial supplementary programme of nuclear safety has been evolving since the Chernobyl accident. Let me report briefly on the main developments in this field during the past year.

For quite some time the question has been asked whether a new generation of nuclear power plants could be developed with a greater degree of inherent safety than the currently most common types. The answer to that question is that no technology is for ever and that new designs of power reactors are indeed being worked on and tested. This work should be encouraged and the IAEA has set up a group in which Government experts exchange ideas and experience from their respective programmes in this field. However, we must realistically recognize that some 60 per cent to 70 per cent of the nuclear power reactors which will operate in the year 2000 are already in operation. This leads to the conclusion that a

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

strengthening of the safety of nuclear power must necessarily focus on operational safety and improvements in these reactors. This is also the emphasis given in the Agency's current programme.

I should mention at this point that the achievement of electricity production by fusion reactors, while still several decades away, is being actively promoted through a new project under IAEA auspices. The United States, the Soviet Union, the European Community and Japan are launching a co-operative scheme - the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) - which, under the Agency's umbrella, will develop a conceptual design for a fusion reactor. It is very gratifying that this effort to explore one way of meeting mankind's future energy needs is being undertaken jointly by major groups. It is also gratifying that they have chosen to do so within the framework of the IAEA.

After the Chernobyl accident there were calls for a system of binding international safety standards for nuclear power. In the Agency's nuclear safety standards there already exists a comprehensive set of standards which are accepted by all but are not mandatory. Those standards are now being updated and it is likely that many Governments will explicitly indicate that they accept and respect them, even if their own national standards are even more detailed.

Among the actions undertaken in the IAEA after Chernobyl was the elaboration and adoption of the Convention on Early Notification of a Nuclear Accident and on another on emergency assistance in the event of future nuclear accidents. Those Conventions have since entered into force and steps have been taken to make them operative. The Soviet Union notified the Agency of an accident involving a nuclear submarine in the north Atlantic last autumn and Brazil has recently asked for and received emergency assistance after the theft of a radiation source had led to several persons being contaminated with caesium.

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

A shortcoming which was sorely felt after the Chernobyl accident was the absence of any international agreement on the radiation levels at which the consumption or importing of different kinds of food should be banned because of radioactive contamination. The widely differing standards applied by different Governments - often leading to the unwarranted rejection of foodstuffs - did not increase the public's confidence in the authorities. The ultimate decisions on intervention levels undoubtedly lie with Governments. However, a methodology for defining such levels has been worked out within the IAEA and we are now assisting our sister organizations the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), and the Codex Alimentarius Commission in their further work.

Among the agency programmes for promoting operational safety, hardly any has enjoyed such quick and spectacular acceptance and expansion as its programme of Operational Safety Review Teams (OSART). Under this programme, an international team of some 12 experts - often managers of nuclear-power plants - is sent by the IAEA on invitation by a member Government to a nuclear-power plant to examine its operational safety. It stays for a period of some three weeks and thereafter submits a report. The high competence of the experts whom the agency has been able to secure for these missions has resulted in much appreciation for their comments and reports. Requests for OSART missions have come from East and West and North and South. Recently, we concluded the first mission to a plant in the United States and we have been asked to send missions next year to the Soviet Union, Japan, the United Kingdom and several other member States.

At this point I should report that very recently an international meeting took place in Paris among utilities producing electricity by means of nuclear power. They decided to set up an international organization to promote safety, especially by exchanging operating experience. We at the intergovernmental level have reason

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to welcome this initiative taken at the non-governmental level. The prime responsibility for nuclear safety always lies with the operator, and nothing should be done at the governmental level or the international level to dilute that responsibility.

While operational safety has been and remains in focus, Governments also co-operate with the agency on questions of the safe handling of spent fuel and the disposal of waste. The view has long prevailed among experts that no scientific or technical breakthroughs are needed in this field. However, it is clear that that view is not yet generally accepted by the public, nor indeed by the Commission on Environment and Development. Perhaps only the actual establishment of repositories will influence the public. This is also where current developments are taking us.

Many non-power applications of nuclear energy are of vital use to society, and a large part of the IAEA's technical co-operation with developing countries consists of the transfer of technology and knowledge concerned with the use of nuclear energy in medicine, agriculture and industry. During several years of zero growth or near-zero growth in the Agency's regular budget, the technical assistance and co-operation programme, funded by voluntary contributions has constituted a main element of expansion in our activities. In absolute terms, the sums involved are not overwhelming, and greater resources could be put to good use. A great deal has already been achieved, however, and I am happy to say that our developing member States generally feel that they are genuinely and significantly benefiting from their membership. Testimony to that effect was offered at the United Nations Conference for the Promotion of International Co-operation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, held in Geneva last spring.

I should also add that radiation protection has increasingly become an important element in the Agency's technical assistance programmes, either as a

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separate item or as an adjunct to assistance in other areas. While the exceptional consequences of the Chernobyl accident increased the awareness of the need for a capacity to monitor the environment and food, there has often not been an equal awareness of the need for regulation and supervision of the daily use of radiation in medicine and industry, and accidents have occurred. The many Radiation Protection Advisory Teams which the Agency has sent to member States since 1984 have shown that there are many countries where the basic radiation protection infrastructure is not in place. The Agency is ready to assist such countries, at their request, to train manpower and establish regulatory rules and structures.

The IAEA's safeguards fulfil the vital function of creating confidence that non-proliferation pledges are being respected. In doing so, they are helping to allay some of the concern that exists that an expanded use of nuclear power and transfer of nuclear technology might increase the risk of horizontal proliferation - that is to say, the spread of nuclear weapons to more countries. The safeguards function of the Agency has expanded considerably over the years, as more States have adhered to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and the Tlatelolco Treaty and more nuclear installations and material have been submitted to safeguards. Four additional States became parties to the NPT in 1986, and Spain's adherence should be finalized before the end of the year. Safeguards are today a pre-condition for nuclear trade. By the end of 1986 there were worldwide no fewer than 485 facilities containing safeguarded nuclear material and 414 other locations containing small amounts of safeguarded material in non-nuclear-weapon States. In addition, nine facilities were under safeguards in nuclear-weapon States.

I should also mention that agreement has been reached in principle on the contents of a safeguards agreement pursuant to the offer by China to place some of

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

its civilian nuclear installations under Agency safeguards. When this agreement enters into force, all five nuclear-weapon States will have submitted all or some of their peaceful nuclear activities to safeguards.

That is the bright side of the picture. We must also take note, however, of the criticism by many countries that the efforts in the field of nuclear disarmament promised in the NPT have not so far resulted in much agreement. There is no doubt that if the present negotiations result in significant reductions in nuclear-weapons arsenals and - equally important - a complete test ban, that would reinforce the political support for the NPT and the safeguards which verify that it is respected. An important question would then arise: how to verify the non-military storage or the peaceful use of the considerable quantities of enriched uranium and plutonium which would result. The IAEA is not called upon to participate in disarmament activities, but it has well-established experience in safeguarding nuclear material for peaceful purposes, including such material in nuclear-weapon States. Regrettably, the zero-growth policies which have been pursued in recent years have not allowed the Agency to perform more than token safeguards operations in the nuclear-weapon States, despite the recommendation of the Third NPT Review Conference that the voluntary offers of these States be more fully used by the Agency.

I should also report, under the heading of safeguards, that although Agency discussions with South Africa regarding the voluntary submission of its semi-commercial enrichment plant to safeguards have not advanced this year, an announcement was recently made by the South African President of the intention of his Government to begin discussions leading to the signing of the Non-Proliferation Treaty. Needless to say, the Agency is ready to discuss immediately the details of

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

a standard NPT-safeguards agreement with the Government of South Africa. Such an agreement - if concluded - would undoubtedly help to allay fears in Africa about the dangers of a South African nuclear capability.

During the celebration of the IAEA's thirtieth anniversary, this year, many expressions of support and much praise came from heads of State and Government of member States. Unfortunately, an organization cannot live on praise alone. It needs a budget that matches the tasks it is asked to undertake; it needs payment of membership fees; and it needs working and employment conditions that attract and retain a very competent staff. Regrettably, I must tell the Assembly that we have been experiencing problems in all these regards.

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

The IAEA has been, and is, fortunate in having highly skilled technical and scientific staff. Some 60 per cent of the professional staff have fixed-term contracts for five or six years and only some 40 per cent remain on a long-term basis. In this way both renewal and stability are achieved. Moreover, we must be competitive with the private market in all States in order to attract new staff and to retain our long-term staff. The way in which the United Nations common system has worked in the last few years has hurt us. I shall give only two examples. Our professional staff have their major expenses in Austrian schillings and are paid in Austrian schillings, whereas their salaries are calculated in United States dollars. For a long period the system has been unable to neutralize the effects of currency fluctuations and staff members have actually seen their take-home salaries reduced over the years.

Even more dramatic inequities have arisen in the calculation of pensions. They have been reduced in a manner that the staff consider a violation of an acquired right. Moreover, the fluctuations in the dollar-schilling exchange rate have been allowed to have a major impact on the schilling volume of pensions. In a period of a falling United States dollar, going into retirement a year later, or even a month later, can mean a reduced pension in schillings. Between two staff members who have both served for 20 years in the same grade, one retiring later can receive up to 25 per cent less pension than the one retiring earlier. Such inequities are not good for staff morale.

The Assembly again has before it some proposals by the International Civil Service Commission and the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board regarding the conditions of service of international civil servants. I welcome the recommendation that at least there should be three years' rest in the review of pension benefits. I also hope that the Assembly will find it possible to agree to the recommendations to increase contributions to the Pension Fund in order to

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

improve its actuarial status, and to establish a floor for the exchange rate in order to stop the downward trend in the take-home pension which pensioners are also experiencing because of exchange rate fluctuations.

I can well understand that discussions in New York mainly visualize conditions in New York. However, if the common system is to be viable more consideration must be given to the conditions of service of the large number of staff serving in Vienna and Geneva and other stations away from New York.

My last point relates to the IAEA budget and the payment of membership dues. It is understandable that Governments which are worrying about seriously unbalanced budgets and/or shortages of foreign currency have been restrictive in their attitudes to the budgets of international organizations. In the IAEA we have tried successfully for a number of years to carry out an expanding programme with zero or near-zero budget growth. However, given the Agency's duty to safeguard a continuously increasing number of nuclear facilities and growing quantities of nuclear material and to administer growing technical co-operation funds, the zero-growth policy risks undermining the quality, and even the implementation, of our programme. If members wish more work to be done, either some currently performed activities must be dropped or some budget growth must be accepted.

Last year, special voluntary contributions enabled us to carry out many non-programmed meetings and activities following the Chernobyl accident, and for the current year and 1988 minor budgetary increases have been accepted so as to accommodate the supplementary nuclear safety programme. While this has enabled the IAEA to work in high gear during the current year, regrettably and paradoxically, the risk of a cash crisis owing to the late payment of some membership dues forced us recently to step on the brakes. Travel, meetings and purchases that could possibly be deferred were deferred. Inevitably, such action has negative

(Mr. Blix, IAEA)

consequences for programme implementation. Some activities that member States had put into the programme for this year will not take place at all, or will be delayed.

What is now needed in the IAEA is that the healthy expenditure discipline that was impressed on the organization during years of zero or near-zero budget growth be matched by a comparable payment discipline on the part of member States.

Although the financial regulations approved by member States require the payment of assessed contributions at the beginning of the year, many Governments have routinely paid much later, indeed often at the end of the year.

Special circumstances, such as a rising dollar-schilling exchange rate in past years, delayed the crisis until it hit us this fall. It goes without saying, however, that no organization can function and utilize its resources evenly and economically over the year if a major part of the contributions arrive only at the end of the year. If this continues to be the case, then, as Dr. Mahler, Director-General of the World Health Organization has said, we do not have budgets in real terms but in unreal terms. This means a poor utilization of the staff and other resources, and a blow to the programme of co-operation which Governments have agreed upon, and it cannot but be contrary to members' own interests. The sooner member States commit themselves to respecting the existing financial rules, or else agree on new rules that will provide their organizations with resources throughout the year, the better for the interests which members pursue through these organizations.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): I call on the representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to introduce draft resolution A/42/L.6.

Count YORK von WARTENBURG (Federal Republic of Germany): On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the establishment of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), it is a special pleasure for me to open the debate on the Agency's report by thanking the Director General, Mr. Blix, for the statement he has just made in introducing the report, and commending the organization for its successful work. Its political and technical competence has found general recognition. The outstanding reputation which the Agency enjoys throughout the world is based on its success. I should like to express our appreciation to the Director General, Mr. Blix, and his colleagues, who through their high qualifications and strong personal commitment have contributed greatly to the Agency's effective work.

The Agency has succeeded, over a period of 30 years, in striking the sometimes difficult balance between promoting and checking nuclear power, which are the Agency's two primary tasks and at the same time the most important elements of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons. A good example of the effectiveness of the Agency is the role it played in creating, as a consequence of the Chernobyl disaster, the basic conditions for improving nuclear safety at the international level.

The Federal Republic of Germany is one of the founding members of the IAEA. We have been actively involved in the Agency's activities and have supported them ever since.*

*Mr. Wijewardane (Sri Lanka), Vice-President, took the Chair.

(Count York von Wartenburg,
Federal Republic of Germany)

The events at Chernobyl again prompted a debate on the nuclear energy policy issue. In such debates my Government has always advocated the continued utilization of nuclear power with the highest possible safety standards being applied. In this context, it has stressed the following considerations. The use of nuclear energy protects the non-renewable reserves of fossil sources of energy and if our country or other countries gave up nuclear power competition for fossil energy sources would be strongly increased. Such a development would have an adverse effect, in particular on many developing countries. Furthermore, wider use of fossil fuels would entail a drastic increase in environmental pollution.

The Agency did an excellent job in 1986, in particular in the field of nuclear safety. Following the extremely prompt elaboration of the early notification and assistance Conventions, one can note with satisfaction that the Conventions have been signed by more than 60 nations and have already entered into force. In this context, my Government hopes that a satisfactory solution to the problem of international nuclear liability can be found as soon as possible.

My Government appreciates the Agency's activities in the field of nuclear safety because they strengthen the confidence of the population that the highest possible safety standards are being, or will be, applied to nuclear power everywhere on the basis of the responsibility of each Government and in the framework of understanding and co-operation between countries.

It should be noted that in 1986 the Agency again arrived at the conclusion that there is no evidence of any diversion or misuse of nuclear material under safeguards. In our view, it is of great importance that meanwhile all nuclear-weapon States have placed all or some of their facilities under IAEA safeguards within the framework of voluntary-offer agreements, or have indicated their intention to do so. This is an essential contribution to enhancement of the

(Count York von Wartenburg,
Federal Republic of Germany)

credibility of the safeguards system. Therefore, we call upon the nuclear-weapon States to include within this framework more installations of advanced technology than hitherto in order to increase the value of such voluntary offers.

All interested countries should have access to the technologies for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. In providing technical assistance the Agency offers an important service to interested countries. My delegation is happy to note that further progress has been achieved in this field.

My country is, however, deeply concerned to find that during this year's anniversary the Agency's successful work might be in jeopardy as a result of the dramatically increased backlog in contributions to the budget. In view of the situation, my Government urges all Member States to use their best efforts to ensure that the Agency can continue to function effectively in the years to come. In this context, we consider the principle of universality to be the prerequisite for the proper functioning and effectiveness of the IAEA as a world-wide organization.

In my capacity as representative of the country holding the chairmanship of the Agency's Board of Governors, and also on behalf of Hungary and Iraq, the other members of the bureau, I have the honour to introduce the draft resolution A/42/L.6 "Report of the International Atomic Energy Agency". The draft resolution is the result of informal consultations among interested member States in both Vienna and New York.

The draft resolution follows, to a large extent, the format and text of earlier resolutions adopted by the General Assembly under this item, with some additions in both the preambular and operative parts reflecting recent IAEA nuclear safety activities.

(Count York von Wartenburg,
Federal Republic of Germany)

In operative paragraphs 1 and 2 the General Assembly would take note of the report of the Agency and affirm its confidence in the role of the Agency in the application of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

In paragraph 3, the draft resolution

"Urges all States to strive for effective and harmonious international co-operation in carrying out the work of the International Atomic Energy Agency, pursuant to its statute, in promoting the use of nuclear energy and the application of the necessary measures to strengthen further the safety of nuclear installations and to minimize risks to health; in strengthening technical assistance and co-operation for developing countries; and in ensuring the effectiveness and efficiency of the Agency's safeguards system".

Paragraph 4 requests the Secretary-General to transmit to the Director General of the Agency the records of the forty-second session of the General Assembly relating to the Agency's activities.

We hope, and are confident that, in keeping with our previous tradition and in view of the importance of the subject-matter, the General Assembly will adopt the draft resolution without a vote.

The PRESIDENT: Consideration of this item will continue tomorrow morning.

AGENDA ITEM 82 (continued)

DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION

(e) ENVIRONMENT: NOTE BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL (A/42/427)

Mr. MURIN (Czechoslovakia) (interpretation from Russian): I wish first to join previous speakers who have highlighted the contribution of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the personal contribution of Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, who so convincingly and eloquently introduced the Commission's report this morning. I welcome from this

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

rostrum the fact that the General Assembly and the public of the entire world are now able, on the basis and from the standpoint of the Commission's conclusions, to look at the ecological problems of the world not in isolation but in relationship with the questions of war and peace, disarmament and development, and the need to eradicate backwardness and poverty and ensure dignified, wholesome and secure living conditions for the ever increasing population of our planet.

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

We share the view that each of the global problems confronting mankind and awaiting solution is a source of instability and danger for all States of the world and is, at the same time, a factor that impedes the stable economic and social development of States.

Protection of the environment on an international scale, together with the top priority; the maintenance of peace and prevention of the threat of nuclear war, is a basic prerequisite for the further existence and development of civilization. The production and accumulation of weapons of mass destruction, the devastating exploitation of natural resources, high-waste industrial production, the gigantic and irrational development of urbanization and transport, soil erosion and desertification - these and many other side-effects of civilization result in great damage to the environment, directly threatening the future of mankind.

Thus, ecological factors affect international relations and the life of States and are a serious element, that jeopardizes their security and stability. Therefore, it is incumbent on the international community to establish a concept of joint international action in the ecological field to minimize the negative aspects of these factors and, in turn, make the environment and its quality a significant positive factor influencing all other spheres of international life. It is necessary to ensure the ever more active and open participation of all States in the search for the most effective forms of this co-operation, with full respect for the specific conditions, approaches, needs and interests of all members of the international community. We believe that the work of the Commission is a good example in this area.

Due consideration should be given to the ideas expressed in this respect this morning by the Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Soviet Union,

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

Mr. Petrovsky, and the Netherlands Minister for Development and Co-operation, Mr. Bukman.

We also believe that it is the basic prerequisite for the solution of the problem of the environment that international ecological security with guaranteed respect for the right of each country to sound ecological development be ensured. In other words, the prerequisite is the establishment of a system for jointly resolving ecological problems of an international character in the interest of bringing the activities of States that affect the environment into harmony with the recognized principles of the ecologically sound development of all other members of the international community.

In addition to its dependence on an overall solution of the problem of the environment, international ecological security is inseparably linked to general international security. We greatly appreciate the fact that, in essence, the same conclusion was drawn by the World Commission on Environment and Development, whose report states:

"The time has come to break out of past patterns. Attempts to maintain social and ecological stability through old approaches to development and environmental protection will increase instability. Security must be sought through change." (A/42/427, p. 37)

And it further emphasizes that:

"The whole notion of security as traditionally understood ... must be expanded to include the growing impacts of environmental stress - locally, nationally, regionally, and globally." (p. 34)

We feel that all this increasingly highlights the need for deeper consideration and development of the concept of international ecological security through the combined efforts of all States within the framework of the competent body of our Organization. We believe that this is directly linked with the

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

development of a comprehensive system of international security, with follow-up activities on the basis of the present report of the World Commission and the report of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on environmental prospects to the year 2000 and beyond, which we would also like to commend here.

The achievement of international ecological security requires the elaboration, adoption and gradual implementation of certain binding principles and norms of behaviour of States and of international co-operation concerning the security of States in the ecological sphere.

In this context, too, we should like to commend the Commission's report, which goes into the principles of all-round, mutually advantageous co-operation among States on a basis of equality and encourages the building and strengthening of mutual confidence as well as the solution of the urgent problems of the present time, whether of development or of the preservation of the environment on earth. The report of the Commission is without doubt a major contribution to the better understanding of the urgent need for a comprehensive, non-confrontational approach to the solution of the problem of the environment on the basis of universal international co-operation. Implementation of the conclusions and recommendations in the report could therefore contribute significantly to the establishment of international peace and comprehensive security.

We also agree with the Commission's suggestion that a process of preparing a declaration and subsequently a convention on environmental protection and sustainable development be initiated in the United Nations. Together with this, it is necessary to begin, within the same United Nations body, working out a global strategy for environmental protection and the rational utilization of natural resources which would cover the entire range of existing and foreseeable environmental problems and map out a concrete plan of action to resolve them.

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

In addressing in greater detail the question of international ecological security today, I did not in any way intend - as can be seen - to digress from a review of the significant results of the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Rather, I was pondering on the variety of ideas contained in and the thoughts aroused by those results.

(Mr. Murin, Czechoslovakia)

We commend the comprehensive approach the Commission has taken to these problems as well as the business-like, if alarming, tenor of its report.

We are convinced that a broad international dialogue will give a clearer picture of the kind of fruitful co-operation that will be so necessary in the future. If common sense prevails over national selfishness it will be possible to judge optimistically the prospects for the environment that is shared by all States on Earth without distinction.

Mr. SOMOGYI (Hungary): The inclusion of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development in the agenda of this forty-second session of the General Assembly is of great significance and testifies to the endeavour of the United Nations to play a more active role, in accordance with the spirit of its Charter, in coping with the global problems challenging mankind. This is an added reason why we welcome the consideration of the report entitled "Our Common Future" and express our great appreciation in this forum also to Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway, who so efficiently chaired the World Commission, and to all those who have made creative contributions to the preparation of the report.

The complex approach adopted in the report to sustainable and harmonious development, the environment and economic growth, and the comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing the human environment, constitutes an integral part of the process in which common answers are being sought to the global problems of mankind as a whole. That was the joint conclusion of the East European Regional Meeting on the report, held in Budapest from 11 to 13 May this year with the participation of heads of government organs concerned with environmental protection and experts in economic planning and foreign affairs from Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Romania, the Soviet Union and my country, Hungary, as

(Mr. Somogyi, Hungary)

well as representatives of the secretariat of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance and observers from the People's Republic of China, Cuba, Mongolia and Viet Nam. The participants in the meeting agreed that the report of the World Commission had made the most comprehensive analysis yet of global environmental problems and their relationship to social and economic development, and they endorsed its major conclusions. They expressed the view that on the basis of shared responsibility for the solution of global problems the report offered a programme of action for all countries for the last quarter of this century.

The report of the World Commission is the result of several years of joint work and collective efforts, to which contributions were made by experts from different continents and political personalities from various countries with different social systems. The commissioners were of one mind about the urgent need for answers to global problems to map out the courses of joint action. Together with different approaches to some aspects, the realistic presentation of the actual situation and the open formulation of questions point to the quest for joint action, which is also indicated by the fact that the report was adopted by consensus.

In our view, the report has the great merit of dealing with the protection of the human environment by giving a synthesis of the short-term and long-term questions of social and physical existence, nature, peace and security, by emphasizing the fundamental forms of human action rather than taking the usual approach of classification by particular areas. It is encouraging to note that the basic concept of the document has postulated sustainable and harmonious development, expressing the common aspiration of us all to work, with the necessary political will and through concerted actions, for social and economic progress along lines that will rule out the destruction of the human environment, the

(Mr. Somogyi, Hungary)

deprivation of future generations of a healthy environment and of the basic pre-conditions for human existence.

We, for our part, firmly believe that protection of the environment constitutes an integral part of the comprehensive system of international peace and security, as initiated by socialist countries last year. Hence we hold the view that effective co-ordination of actions in this field as well as wide co-operation in all aspects of economic and other spheres are of decisive importance to the future of mankind. Therefore the concept of sustainable development is closely related to these goals and serves to promote their attainment. Consequently we deem the substance of the report and the implementation of its recommendations to be a political question and feel it necessary to have it treated as such.

A special value of the report lies in encouraging Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, all policy-makers and executives to develop a new way of thinking and to recognize the need for dealing with the preservation of the human environment, not in isolation from the main social and economic processes but in the phase of foreseeing and shaping them. We support the idea that the international organizations, the United Nations and its specialized agencies, should devote greater attention to the interrelationships of development and the environment. We attach particular importance to establishing early warning systems for the forecasting of hazards caused by environmental, natural and man-made disasters as well as of climatic factors and technological progress. We agree with the proposals to enhance the role of the United Nations Environment Programme in the co-ordination of environmental co-operation, the preparation of conventions, the collection of data, scientific research and counselling services.

(Mr. Somogyi, Hungary)

The Hungarian delegation associates itself with the call for Governments and international organizations to take into account as fully as possible the recommendations of the World Commission's report, entitled "Our Common Future", and to promote their implementation at national, regional and global levels.

Mr. LI Luye (China) (interpretation from Chinese): First of all, on behalf of the Chinese Government, I wish to pay my tribute to the World Commission on Environment and Development and to Prime Minister Brundtland personally as well as to other members of the Commission.

After three years of hard work and extensive and in-depth study on the question of environment and development facing the world today, the World Commission on Environment and Development has come up with this extremely positive and stimulating report, "Our Common Future". Here I would like to express our heartfelt thanks for their commendable efforts.

(Mr. Li Luye, China)

The international community's understanding of the question of the environment has continued to deepen. Over the past several decades, with rapid economic, scientific and technological development, many problems have cropped up, such as desertification, climate abnormalities, species extinction, exhaustion of natural resources, excessive population growth and serious environmental pollution. All this sounds an alarm to us that our globe, on which human life and development depend, is experiencing a dramatic change.

As the environment and development are closely interrelated, any predatory and destructive act committed against mother nature will constitute an impediment and a threat to man's own survival and development. Mistakes made today in major policy decisions in this regard will lead to irreparable disasters tomorrow. Man should no longer take nature for granted, but strive to find a way to ensure harmonious, stable and sustainable development.

The World Commission on Environment and Development makes it very clear that the concept of sustainable development must be made the guiding principle and that the environment and economic and social development must be looked upon as an integral whole. It also stresses the point that the environment question can be resolved only in the context of sustainable economic and social development. We highly appreciate this far-sighted strategic thinking which is, in our view, a positive approach to the environment question and should be made a fundamental principle in our efforts to reconcile the immediate interest with the long-term interest, the interest of the part with the interest of the whole, and to harmonize the objectives of economic development and the need for environmental protection. We hope that the concept of sustainable development will receive still closer attention from the international community and serve as a guiding principle for all countries in their joint efforts to manage the environment and resources of this planet. We also hope that concerted action will be taken in this regard.

(Mr. Li Luye, China)

China is a developing country with a population of 1 billion and is currently engaging in large-scale economic development, which naturally has put our environment under tremendous pressure. In addition, because of the huge population, China's per capita level of natural resources is far below the world average. This reality leaves us with no alternative but to pursue policies of rational exploitation and utilization of natural resources and protection of the environment in our modernization drive.

An important lesson that we have learned from our experience over the past few decades is that economic construction and environmental protection must proceed simultaneously and harmoniously. This has also become the general guideline for our work in environmental protection. We have changed the previous practice of putting undue emphasis on economic growth. While attaching importance to economic returns, we also pay attention to environmental implications; and, while trying to meet the needs of the present generation, we also take care not to impair the capability of future generations to meet their needs.

To achieve that objective, we in China are adopting a number of policies and measures and carrying out our plan in a systematic manner. One crucial element underlying these policies and measures is the stress on prevention, that is, adopting preventive measures against environmental hazards in the process of economic development rather than rushing to take remedial measures after the harm is done. The "pollution first and solution afterwards" experience of many countries in the past must not be repeated, because it would entail even higher costs. Such specific measures as multi-sectoral planning, rational industrial deployment and readjustment of industrial line-ups, and the adoption of preventive steps before a construction project gets under way are some of the important links in our policies in this regard. These measures are also consistent with the concept of sustainable development contained in the Commission's report.

(Mr. Li Luye, China)

We in China are still faced with the arduous task of protecting and improving our environment, and the attainment of the aforementioned objectives requires that we continue to make prolonged and persistent efforts. We are ready to strengthen our co-operation in this area with other countries and international organizations so that our respective experiences may benefit one another.

As the world population has already reached 5 billion, efforts must be made, this being such a small planet, to preserve enough natural resources and create a good living environment for a future world, possibly with a larger population. In the preservation of nature humanity shares a common destiny; thus protection of our environment is a cause for everyone on earth. Every country, developed or developing, should be aware of its ineluctable responsibility. The developing countries, while trying to develop their economies, should make active efforts to seek ways and means of tackling their environmental problem in the light of their specific conditions. However, as poverty and existing unjust international economic relations constitute serious obstacles to the developing countries' efforts to improve their environment, the developed countries have a responsibility to help the economic development of the developing countries and strengthen their ability to protect and improve their environment through practical and effective measures in areas of financial flows, trade, debt and technology. This will not only help to galvanize international economic development, but also facilitate world-wide efforts to ensure environmental protection.

International multilateral co-operation is also indispensable for a solution to the environmental problem and the realization of sustainable development in the world. The catalytic and co-ordinating role of the relevant agencies of the United Nations should be further strengthened. In the meantime, international financial institutions should also show concern about and give priority to the environmental question by increasing their assistance to environmental projects in developing

(Mr. Li Luye, China)

countries. We are of the view that, while it is necessary for the multilateral financial institutions to consider the environmental factor when providing project loans to developing countries, making this factor an additional condition would be equivalent to giving up eating for fear of choking and would result only in hurting their economic development and, in turn, their efforts in connection with environmental protection.

Mankind and nature are evolving incessantly and will never come to a standstill. In today's world of constant change and progress, there is no reason whatsoever to be pessimistic. We are confident that as society moves forward and science and technology advance man will surely find an effective solution to the environmental question and create a better, more suitable environment for the human race.

Mr. ABDOUN (Sudan): We pay tribute to the World Commission on Environment and Development. We thank the members of the Commission and its Chairman, Mrs. Brundtland, for the valuable work they have presented to us today.

A distinguished scholar from the Sudan was honoured to serve as Vice-Chairman of the Commission and to contribute effectively to its deliberations.

My delegation read with interest the report and would like to make the following brief remarks. In calling for action the Committee has drawn, in a clear and objective style, a gloomy picture of our world heading towards catastrophe unless there is active follow-up on the report by all nations, big and small, developed and developing.

I quote from the report:

"... major, unintended changes are occurring in the atmosphere, in soils, in water, among plants and animals, and in the relationships among all of these. The rate of change is outstripping the ability of scientific disciplines and our current capabilities to assess...". (A/42/427, p. 333)

The advice given by the Commission calls for the General Assembly to transform the report into a United Nations programme of action on sustainable development, and for special follow-up conferences to be initiated at the regional level.

The Commission further suggests the convening of an international conference, within an appropriate period after presentation of the report to the General Assembly.

It is proposed that that international conference review progress made, and promote follow-up arrangements that will be needed over time to set bench-marks and maintain human progress, within guidelines based on human needs and natural laws.

The Commission was aware of the existence of extensive institutional capacity at the global level for international support for environmental restoration,

(Mr. Abdoun, Sudan)

protection and improvement, and help towards sustainable development. None the less, the Commission believes that these institutions tend to be:

"... independent, fragmented, and working to relatively narrow mandates with closed decision processes" (A/42/427, p. 305).

In such circumstances, when considering this report the General Assembly may consider various ways and appropriate means of exploiting to the utmost the existing extensive institutional capacities, rather than looking into the creation of new organs that may overlap or become repetitive.

It is our general belief that today there exist more than enough administrative set-ups within the United Nations, and outside it. They need only be augmented with adequate programmes, budgets and authority, to adjust and cope with environmental concerns.

We therefore support the proposal for the establishment of a high-level centre of leadership for the United Nations system as a whole, with the capacity to assess, advise, assist and report on progress made through inter-agency co-operation and co-ordination for sustainable development - that is, a United Nations board for sustainable development under the chairmanship of the Secretary-General.

We endorse the Commission's recommendation for the establishment of a high-level office in each development assistance agency, fund or bank, with adequate authority and resources to ensure their application of the letter and spirit of the declaration of environmental policies and procedures relating to economic development, endorsed in 1980.

The World Bank, as the report rightly mentions, has already taken a significant lead in reorienting its lending programmes to a much higher sensitivity to environmental concerns, and to support for sustainable development.

(Mr. Abdoun, Sudan)

The United Nations may call upon all international, multilateral, regional, bilateral and other development organizations and agencies, as well as all financial institutions involved in official development assistance, to follow the example of the World Bank.

My country has of late reached an agreement with the International Monetary Fund (IMF), regarding Sudan-IMF debts. The agreement was acceptable to both sides, and we hope that the Sudanese economy benefits from this IMF agreement.

In this context, we would refer to the report, in which, referring to the IMF, the Commission confirms that:

"... there is deep concern in many countries that the conditions that accompany its lending are undermining sustainable development."

(A/42/427, p.329).

We sincerely hope that the IMF shall take due note of this remark, which is made in good faith by a highly distinguished World Commission.

Many countries of the third world are finding it difficult to cope with the terms and conditions set up by the IMF for sustained assistance. Many countries consider that those terms reflect a lack of appreciation of the agonies of the developing nations.

Finally, we share the anxiety expressed in the report about the meagre and diminishing financial resources available to such important bodies as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), and the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO).

A call by the General Assembly may be made to all Member Governments to increase and intensify their participation and their level of representation in these important organs.

(Mr. Abdoun, Sudan)

In order to ensure representation at the ministerial level in these important organs, as suggested in the report, it might be advisable that the travel expenses of ministers from least developing countries be met by the organizations concerned, whenever that is possible.

Lastly, we endorse the report and we hope that it will very soon be transferred into a comprehensive programme of action.

Mr. COLMENARES FINOL (Venezuela) (interpretation from Spanish): It is an auspicious event for us to be gathered here to discuss the report "Our Common Future", prepared by the World Committee on the Environment and Development, which was so ably chaired by Ms. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the Prime Minister of Norway, to whom I wish to convey the appreciation of our country.

"Our Common Future" not only presents the subject of the environment through an integrated approach but is also a warning and a hope for developing policies which will reconcile the growth of peoples with environmental values and undoubtedly relieve the poverty which afflicts a good part of the developing world.

As our President, Mr. Jaime Lusinchi, recently pointed out in this same forum, Venezuela has carefully studied the document we are here to consider and has been able to ascertain that in general terms it concurs with our concern as regards reconciling development processes with maintaining an ecological balance and environmental quality. That is the basic principle of Venezuelan policy on the environment.

At this special meeting of the General Assembly we should like to stress some of the problems mentioned in this document which we believe should be considered very closely.

Venezuela, like many other countries, has made an enormous effort to transform itself during the last 30 years. However, during the first years of this effort scant attention was paid to the environmental impact of civil works and the problems which would arise from the combined occurrence of a spiralling population growth and equally rapid urbanization.

Those facts, together with the thoughts we were led to by the Stockholm Conference, caused a strong reaction among the leadership of our country that prompted the adoption by Congress in 1976 of the Organic Law on the Environment,

(Mr. Colmenares Finol,
Venezuela)

which was followed by the enactment of another important law, the Organic Law of the Central Administration, whereby the Ministry of the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources was created, one of the first with this high rank in the international community. The purpose of this Ministry is to reconcile development processes and social progress with maintaining the quality of the environment and conservation of our renewable natural resources.

Our 10-year experience in endeavouring to organize efficient management of the environment and conservationist use of natural resources - in a country that is undergoing full and very rapid development - has enabled us to realize that there are hidden problems which were not felt by countries which started to manage the environment at a more advanced stage in their development.

The first problem we came up against was a lack of awareness in all the social strata of our people of the importance of the environment. Their eagerness for quick development and their ardent desire to proceed urgently with the building of the infrastructure needed to modernize our country prevented most of our people from realizing the dangers presented by the absence of a plan to preserve the quality of the environment and our renewable resources.

We then had to undertake an intense endeavour to educate our people about the environment, to raise their consciousness in that regard, and to inform them of the crucial need for all the people to co-operate in preserving the environment, as well as to make managers and leaders assume the great responsibility they have towards future generations when they design or agree to a kind of development for our country which involves a very high environmental cost without providing for the necessary investments and technical means to lessen it.

(Mr. Colmenares Finol,
Venezuela)

We must also emphasize that management of the environment has to be shared. State paternalism will not work. On the contrary, action taken by the people is decisive and in this respect democracy is the most suitable vehicle to achieve it. That has been our experience. In this respect there is much that the United Nations can do, through its technical and co-operation organs, to disseminate education on the environment and to encourage citizens to participate; it should do so among all members of the international community. That should lead also to a clear awareness that environmental problems are global in nature and that their solution cannot be confined to separate areas.

We must remember that under any circumstances all Member States must dispose of their dangerous industrial waste without condemning others to receive and live with the garbage and environmental damage generated by a privileged minority. Venezuela has not been spared in this regard: we received a cargo of industrial toxic waste which we were obliged to reject for elementary reasons of sovereignty. Because of that occurrence, the Government of Venezuela recently enacted laws forbidding such undesirable practices.

We must arrive at control in monitoring international agreements to prevent the recurrence of events such as that I have just mentioned. Beyond such agreements, it is imperative to introduce ethical principles in international relations, the effectiveness of which will avoid any attempt to make third parties the victims of the disposal of polluting products.

Another problem is the difficulty the developing countries face in finding the vast human, technological and material resources needed to achieve adequate knowledge of the physical and environmental characteristics of their territories.

(Mr. Colmenares Finol,
Venezuela)

That knowledge is the only tool that can enable them to have an effective policy for the efficient management of their environment. If to that requirement we add the urgency of the investments needed to accelerate economic development so as to guarantee the well-being of our peoples, the difficulties our countries must face when deciding on priorities will be readily understood. Fortunately, Venezuela long ago undertook a moderate but sustained and quite efficient endeavour to come to know its territory and its resources. This enabled the Ministry for the Environment and Renewable Natural Resources, together with the United Nations Development Programme, to embark on an effort with unprecedented results, identifying the Venezuelan environmental systems. This is an achievement which we venture to present as an example for nations having conditions similar to those of Venezuela.

As a result of this task, a national plan for the organization of our territory has been drawn up. We believe it to be wise and realistic, based on the principle that each region must grow in relation to its resources but taking ecological restrictions very much into account.

(Mr. Colmenares Finol,
Venezuela)

In this field, international co-operation should encourage the attainment of more knowledge about a territory and its resources, and the Assembly should advocate programmes to obtain and manage data that will make it possible for countries to develop their environment and their territory.

"Our Common Future" has a great deal to do with the future of international watersheds. The negligent attitude of some countries with high basins has caused very serious ecological damage to the lower waters. This is a clear example of how much farther we still have to go to achieve a general awareness that we indeed have a common destiny.

Venezuela occupies both high and low parts of international watersheds. Accordingly, we believe that we have the moral authority, the right and also the obligation to request the Assembly to decide to recommend that a conference should be held, at the proper time, to promote binding international agreements on the conservation of watersheds.

Reflection about forests is also needed. They are the reservoir of the most important genetic capital of the planet and the best regulator of erosion processes and water conservation. Their proper management should be a priority concern of Member States. Forest exploitation on the basis of miners' criteria should be eradicated, since each generation should bequeath to the next the same natural heritage that it found, and if possible an improved one.

The transfer of technology is much in the minds of the world leadership. For some Member States, know-how has become a source of income that exceeds by far the earnings of those who produce raw materials. This circumstance has brought about a real international division of labour between technology producers and the producers of raw materials.

(Mr. Colmenares Finol,
Venezuela)

It is fitting to point out here that if the view persists that highly contaminating technologies should be used in the so-called third world, the ecological balance of the planet will be in great jeopardy, since these technologies are affecting the very areas that still maintain a high level of genetic capital and large amounts of renewable natural resources.

Excessively polluting technologies should not be transferred; they should be eradicated. In the medium term, to keep them is a suicidal act. Technological research should concentrate on replacing them with less harmful procedures. In this problem, responsibility for preserving "Our Common Future" lies squarely with the technically and scientifically most advanced countries.

Finally, there is a problem which, in almost the whole world, threatens to prevent the realization of efforts needed for ecological conservation. The debtor and developing countries occupy the largest area of the world's territory. Pressed as they are to pay their debts, and faced with the growing poverty of most of their inhabitants, what investments can we expect those countries to allocate to preserving the environment and renewable natural resources? If pressure for strict compliance with debt payments continues, our creditors may succeed in recovering their loans but they run the risk of bequeathing to their children a barren planet, where the means to survive will be unbearable for most of mankind. The consequences of such an outcome are as terrifying as they are predictable.

I end my statement by expressing the hope that the extraordinary and valuable effort "Our Common Future" will not be just another document, but that its recommendations will become our joint commitment to preserving our future.

Mr. KIKUCHI (Japan): On behalf of the Government of Japan, I should like at the outset to express my great respect for all the work done by Her Excellency Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Chairperson of the Commission on Environment and

(Mr. Kikuchi, Japan)

Development and Prime Minister of Norway, and by the other Commissioners and the Secretariat.

Since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held 15 years ago in Stockholm, there has been steady progress worldwide in our efforts to protect the environment. Advances have been made not only in formulating national environmental policies, but also in concluding treaties relating to the environment and global environmental monitoring. At the same time, we are all sadly aware that the environment continues to deteriorate.

In discussing global environmental problems, which affect the entire human race, we should keep in mind that these problems do stem from the problem of development. However, we must pass on to future generations a healthy, unimpaired environment; and yet we must at the same time sustain growth and development consonant with the needs of an ever-increasing world population.

At this critical juncture we are delighted to note that the World Commission on Environment and Development successfully concluded last February its energetic deliberations of nearly three years by issuing the Tokyo Declaration at its last meeting in Tokyo and then publishing its report two months later in London. The Commission was established at the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly, in 1983, pursuant to the proposal of the Government of Japan at the eleventh session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) the previous year. From the start, Japan manifested its interest in this issue - an interest that was given further concrete form in its contribution of \$US 1.75 million to the Commission.

We believe that the idea of sustainable development, the central theme that runs through the report, will be adopted as the basic guideline for development

(Mr. Kikuchi, Japan)

everywhere, now that it is universally recognized that the constant striving of society toward development takes place only within a closed eco-system of global natural resources and environment. There is now a global consensus that protection of the environment and development can move forward in tandem and should be sustained through measures consonant with the common basic objectives of the international community.

Although there are some points in this report, such as those relating to energy and whaling, which pose some difficulties for my Government, we consider the following recommendations very appropriate and meaningful, and we strongly support them.

(Mr. Kikuchi, Japan)

First, environmental protection and sustainable development should be regarded as a common task shared by all Governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and private citizens. Second, environmental considerations should be integrated with development and economic policies. Third, the United Nations should play an important role in supporting the developing countries for the purpose of facilitating their transition to sustainable development. Fourth, in view of the increased interdependence among nations in the field of environment protection, it is essential to strengthen international co-operation in this field. Fifth, sustainable development should occupy an important place in policies and programmes of multilateral financial institutions on development. Sixth, activities of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should be strengthened in order to achieve the goal of sustainable development. Seventh, co-operation at the regional level should be strengthened.

The report of the World Commission on Environment and Development has now been transmitted to the General Assembly, together with two draft resolutions, for its consideration and adoption. We believe that the United Nations and other international organizations concerned should study the report seriously and determine what follow-up action should be taken. We believe that the United Nations should play an important role in this area and, in particular, that it should take the necessary steps to strengthen UNEP.

Japan has made great efforts at the international level to achieve the conservation of the environment, with multilateral co-operation through such forums as UNEP and the Environment Committee of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

(Mr. Kikuchi, Japan)

Regarding protection of the ozone layer, we welcome the adoption of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in September this year. We believe that it marks a fresh start for international co-operation on this global environmental problem. Japan, having actively participated in drafting this accord and having signed it, is now making the necessary arrangements for its early approval by our Parliament and thus its earliest possible ratification.

As for the problem of tropical forests, we recognize the enormous impact on the environment of their disappearance, not only in tropical areas but all over the world. With a view to ensuring sustainable utilization of tropical forests while conserving the earth's resources, Japan will make every effort to promote international co-operation, bilaterally and multilaterally, through such organizations as the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO).

In recent years Japan has also actively extended technical assistance to developing countries in the field of environmental protection, in response to the rapidly increasing number of requests emanating from their growing concern about environmental problems. We have, furthermore, undertaken a study in order to ensure that environmental issues be considered in conjunction with planning and implementing development assistance.

In the process of its rapid economic development, Japan has also experienced serious environmental problems. The Japanese Government and the private sector have consequently come to co-operate closely in protecting its environment. We stand ready to share our knowledge and experience with the rest of the world.

This February, at the closing ceremony of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Prime Minister Nakasone told the world the following:

(Mr. Kikuchi, Japan)

"Japan intends to perform its role more positively than ever, making full use of its technology and experience, with a view to conserving the global environment, which is the common heritage of the international community and of our posterity."

The global environment does not belong only to the people of today; it belongs to coming generations. Let us pool our wisdom and resources to create a sound and productive global environment so that we may all be blessed with a bright future on this earth.

Mr. BADAWI (Egypt): We wish at the outset to extend our warmest congratulations to Mrs. Brundtland, Prime Minister of Norway and Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, together with the other members of the Commission, on presenting us with such a valuable, highly interesting and eminently balanced report. We wish also to express our deepest appreciation of Mrs. Brundtland's address to the Assembly this morning.

We should like also to thank the Secretary-General for his statement this morning and particularly for his clear views and personal commitment to acting as a high-level centre of leadership for the United Nations system in promoting sustainable development, as proposed in the report, which we fully support and encourage.

"Our Common Future" is a sincere and faithful call for strengthened international co-operation and global partnership; a call for the revival and promotion of multilateralism. It is a commendable contribution to the interdependence of nations based on the mutual benefit and mutual interests which bind us all together.

The report is at the same time a message of warning and urgency which indicates that changes in perceptions and policies ought to take place now to

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

prevent further environmental degradation. The environment should be an integrated element in the development plans and policies of both developing and developed countries to prevent air pollution and acidification, to protect the ozone layer and avoid wasteful use of resources and to combat desertification and soil erosion, as well as other threatening environmental problems.

Environment degradation is a common concern. Its wide implications and devastating effects, which transcend any national borders, have made environment protection a necessity that no one can escape. The time has passed when protecting the environment was regarded as a luxury that only the rich could afford.

Further, the series of industrial accidents that have hit developing and developed countries alike in the last few years, which have killed more than 3,000 people and affected millions more, make it incumbent upon the international community as a whole to protect and safeguard our generation, as well as future ones, from the human and environmental effects of such and similar tragedies.

Thus, environmental protection is also a common responsibility. Moreover, the increasing awareness of the importance of preserving the ecosystem is at the basis of the emerging new resolve to give the environment the priority it warrants.

In the opening chapter of its report the Commission underlines the close linkage between problems of ecology and economy and the fact that they should be dealt with within an integrated approach on a global scale. Further, it places the environmental problématique in the context of the world economic situation, with particular emphasis on the deteriorating situation of the developing countries.

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

We fully share and support this view. There should not be optimism regarding development if the cost is to be environmental depletion. As such, development can only be perceived as short-lived and partial. Development cannot subsist on a deteriorating environmental resource base - as the report rightly indicates.

A framework for the integration of environment policies and development strategies may nevertheless be found in the concept of sustainable development. To implement such a global objective, far-reaching efforts must be made to solve the problems of world poverty, international inequality, the mounting debt burden, deteriorating terms of trade, and development in general.

It is needless to stress at this juncture that debt servicing is a serious obstacle to sustainable development. A fairer sharing of responsibility between debtors and creditors, which would involve debt relief measures, longer-term rescheduling and conversion of softer terms is necessary.

Real commodity prices are at their lowest level in half a century. There is an urgent need for the better functioning of commodity markets and for a search for lasting solutions to commodity problems, which would help to sustain development in developing countries and to halt over-exploitation of the environment and the deepening of the cycle of poverty in those countries.

It is very true that the world's most threatening environmental problems are rooted in widespread poverty and the inequitable distribution of resources among peoples and regions. Yet it is equally true that the bulk of the depletion of non-renewable resources and deforestation in the developing world, as well as the pressure on the oceans and the fouling of the atmosphere, have been caused by the spectacular industrial growth of the developed countries.

It is futile, from our point of view, to deal with environmental problems without using the broader perspective that encompasses all of the factors I have mentioned.

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

We are also glad that in chapter III of the report, which deals with the role of the international economy, the Commission acknowledges that developing countries cannot fight poverty and environmental degradation by themselves, and that particular responsibility falls to the multilateral financial institutions. Hence, the urgent call for more capital, especially through enlargement of the resources of the World Bank and the International Development Association and increased aid flows.

Whereas that position is stated quite emphatically in the report, our delegation cannot avoid voicing its concern about the increasing tendency to translate environmental issues into a new form of conditionality, which might be more harmful than helpful to preservation of the environment.

The report is not only an evaluation of the present situation; even more, it is a look into the future - "Our Common Future" - a look full of hope and aspiration for the present and future generations.

Convinced that the survival of the planet requires a profound reorientation of human attitudes and ways to mobilize financial resources for environmental revival, the Commission has outlined in its report a comprehensive plan of action for urgent consideration by the General Assembly at its forty-second session.

We are convinced - like those who have preceded us - that such a valuable report should be given the necessary in-depth consideration and follow-up action. The very concept of sustainable development can only be pursued and implemented effectively if matched by the necessary political will of all concerned.

Progress made by the international community towards sustainable development should be reviewed periodically by the existing competent mechanisms and should be monitored and co-ordinated by the General Assembly. Such a view is adequately

(Mr. Badawi, Egypt)

reflected in the draft resolution presented to the General Assembly by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme and ought to be considered in the light of our extensive debate today.

Environment should not be regarded as a confrontational issue. On the contrary, it should be a means for rapprochement and strengthened multilateral co-operation - maybe a new lease on life for multilateralism.

As development is everyone's right, environment conservation becomes everyone's responsibility on a fair and equitable basis.

Mr. LAUREL (Philippines): The problem of environmental protection has grown to global dimensions. The drought in Africa put 35 million people at risk, killing over 1 million of them in 1983 to 1984. A leak from a pesticide factory in Bophal, India, killed more than 2,000 people and blinded and injured over 200,000 more. The Chernobyl nuclear reactor explosion sent nuclear fall-out across Europe. Scores of people died of various diseases traceable to polluted drinking water and the lethal effects of agricultural chemicals, mercury and solvents. The accident at Three Mile Island further underscores the potential for disaster arising even from the peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The list could go on and on. What is clearly established is the fact that unless the international community invests years of purposeful effort to restore the ecological equilibrium, the planet Earth may very soon become inhospitable to human existence.*

In their race for economic development, countries have a tendency to overlook the negative effects of technological advancements on the environment. This pattern has to be reversed by according more emphasis on environmental protection within the overall perspective of economic growth.

*The President returned to the Chair.

(Mr. Laurel, Philippines)

In her foreword to the Commission's report entitled "Our Common Future", otherwise popularly known as the Brundtland report, which was released on 27 April 1987, the Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, Chairman of the World Commission on Environment and Development, said:

"What is needed now is a new era of economic growth - growth that is forceful and at the same time socially and environmentally sustainable."

(A/42/427, p. 14)

The Brundtland report challenges Governments to pursue a kind of development which takes into full account environmental protection as an inseparable component of economic growth. It also challenges the relevant agencies of the United Nations system to reorient their policies and programmes in accordance with this new philosophy of development.

My delegation could not agree more on the need for an appropriate response to these challenges.

It is encouraging to note that through the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) the United Nations system had the vision in the early 1980s to embark on a project that has resulted in a report known as "Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond". Like the Brundtland report, it concludes that the solutions to serious environmental problems, whether global, regional or national, depend to a very large extent on the full integration of environmental considerations in the development process.

(Mr. Laurel, Philippines)

My delegation also notes the other supportive undertakings of UNEP, such as the preparation of a set of goals and principles of environmental assessment, the Protocol to the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the guidelines on the exchange of information on chemicals in international trade, and its continuing support for the 1977 Nairobi Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

My delegation welcomes the signing in Canada in September this year of the Protocol on chlorofluorocarbons to the 1985 Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer as a significant measure for the protection of human health and the environment.

In large measure, therefore, the United Nations system has lived up to expectations. It is up to us to decide whether the United Nations system should increase even more its role in combating the global environmental threats to mankind. My delegation believes that it should do so, provided that such action will not unduly compromise its other, equally important activities. It should be evident that the international community should be more generous in providing additional resources to match the increase in the operational and financial responsibilities of the United Nations system in the area of environmental protection.

Countries are called upon by the two reports to pursue a plan of action for development that requires appropriate attention to the question of the environment.

The recent reorganization in my country of the Department of Natural Resources into the Department of Natural Resources and Environment is an appropriate response to this call. One of the principal bureaux of this reorganized Department is the

(Mr. Laurel, Philippines)

Environmental Management Bureau, with which all other agencies and instrumentalities of the Government work in tandem to ensure that environmental considerations are given critical importance in the activities of the Government. Recently, through the combined efforts of this Bureau and the Philippine Institute of Volcanology of the Department of Science and Technology, a seminar sponsored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) was held in Manila to discuss the environmental effects of chemical spills, fishkills, floods, earthquakes and volcanic gases.

The decision of the Philippine Government to bring the concern for natural resources and the environment under one department will ensure consideration of environmental protection in its proper perspective. In forest utilization, for instance, where the denuding of the land could wreak havoc on the ecological balance, the new guidelines require appropriate safeguards to protect the environment.

The Brundtland report rightfully recommends that countries pursue economic and social progress under the new concept of sustainable development, namely, that it should meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. Under this new concept, the concern for environmental considerations becomes an overriding measure of growth. While we generally accept this proposition, we believe that stress should be put on the needs of the present, as far as the developing countries are concerned. Millions of people in developing countries live below the poverty line and die at an early age because of poverty and disease. In many instances their foremost concern is whether they have something to eat when the day breaks.

Environmental considerations, in their elaborate or sophisticated forms, could, therefore, aggravate present miseries. It is in this light that, while the proposals and recommendations of the Brundtland report, and the environmental

(Mr. Laurel, Philippines)

perspective to the year 2000 and beyond are generally acceptable, we should all be wary of developments which link the access to bilateral and multilateral resources to the requirement that recipient countries undertake specific environmental measures. The internal debt crisis is still very much with us, and the developing countries have yet to gain decent levels of growth to be able adequately to provide the basic needs of their people.

There are only winners when the alarming level of environmental destruction is arrested and reversed. On behalf of my Government, I should like to commend the excellent work done by the Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Brundtland, and the other members of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Their contribution should bring the international community closer to the objective of making our planet safer to inhabit.

None the less, it is clear to all of us why and how such phenomena as acid precipitation, global warming and ozone depletion have come about. Some of us may have to bear a heavier burden than others in undertaking the corrective measures required.

The problem of the environment is not only a national concern, but also a universal one, and the solution can emanate only from concerted international action. The Philippines is committed to supporting joint efforts at combating environmental degradation and pollution.

Mr. WIJEWARDANE (Sri Lanka): My delegation considers the present debate extremely opportune at a time when momentum for development is gathering strength. The World Commission on Environment and Development has, through its well-thought-out and documented report, placed before the international community notice that all is not well with developmental strategies.

(Mr. Wijewardane, Sri Lanka)

Mrs. Gro Harlem Bruntland and her bureau have our unqualified gratitude for putting planet earth and its occupants on alert. We also have good reason to thank the Secretary-General for his initiative and foresight in getting together this group of eminent persons, who have contributed to making this report priority reading for the international community.

The report has drawn attention to the fundamental truth that finite resources are limited, subject to waste and not renewable. There has been an assumption in our thinking that human beings stood apart from the biosphere, with its intricate make-up of land, water, and greenery. Mankind's detachment from its place in the biosphere is inimical to its future. The Bruntland report serves timely warning that we must take action now to arrest environmental decay, poverty and hardship in a world subject to ever increasing pollution and a decreasing environmental resource base. The report is timely since it demonstrates that sustainable development is possible only if positive steps are taken not only to sustain the environmental resource base but also to develop renewable life-sustaining resources. This is the prescription for both the progress and survival of humanity. Let us consider the report and its specifics.

(Mr. Wijewardane, Sri Lanka)

The report is not a gloomy prophecy of a new Malthusian era. We must not lose heart, for we gather that all is not lost. The demographic pattern as we see it in the statistical record is favourable. Infant mortality is rapidly declining in countries where populations are expanding fast. Life expectation is on the increase and, thanks to international and national effort, learning and literacy are increasing. On the other hand, we see the distress and suffering of those who have no food to eat, no homes to shelter them, no schools to attend.

The report goes on to warn us of the physical consequences of hastily conceived development strategies. Overtaxed and overcropped lands revert to desert; this process is hastened by unseasonal drought caused by massive destruction of rain forests. The competition for land results in overcropping and overtaxing its topsoil, leading to desertification and drought and causing massive human migrations across national boundaries. Such migrations bring untold misery, suffering and disease to both migrants and host countries. Short-term development programmes have resulted in the burning of forests, which, with the burning of fossil fuels, is tending to warm up the earth, melting the Polar ice cap, raising ocean levels and inundating lowlands, with consequential imbalance in the ecology. Increasing industrialization, particularly after 1950, has polluted the biosphere with noxious sulphur fumes, bringing slow death and destruction to marine life, lakes, rivers and forests far from the industrial scene. Chemicals used indiscriminately pollute streams and rivers and the ground water below. Pollution is reaching the ozone layer, tearing apart its protective screen and sending the sun's cancer-causing rays into the biosphere.

The increasing pressure on the ecology drives humans desperately from their homes in the rural areas into cities in search of food, shelter and employment. The pressure on the limited urban infrastructure is resulting in disease, epidemics, hunger and malnutrition. This so-called development has resulted in a

(Mr. Wijewardane, Sri Lanka)

major ecological imbalance. In this unequal struggle the developing nations find themselves unable to meet the basic needs of their citizens. They are faced with depressed commodity prices; they are compelled to export more in real terms to meet financial commitments exacerbated by adverse exchange rates; confronting their export drives are high tariff walls in commodity-importing industrialized countries. These countries, following their own agricultural policies, use subsidies to protect their farmers. Mountains of grain and herds of farm stock are sheltered behind these barriers. Their products are unloaded on developing countries whose farmers have neither fiscal safeguards nor price incentives to shield them. Drought and desertification have already robbed their lands of fertility, and these are being pressed further into use to service debt obligations.

In this unequal struggle impoverished citizens become refugees who have to be fed in refugee camps with the produce of farmers of developed lands. They have no more incentives to go back to farming. A future rich in poverty is the lot of a once-content rural community. These strains and stresses on security have to be handled by national Governments. The hand of one is on the throat of the other, resulting in international unrest. The consequence is more armaments being manufactured in the developed world to be sold to nations under ecological and population pressures. Governments have to ensure their security by more and more purchases of armaments. The manufacture of these pre-empt resources urgently needed for peaceful purposes. Their non-availability results in growing widespread poverty.

We have to cope with the reality of a burgeoning population in the developing world. At present 5 billion, the earth's population is projected to be anywhere between 8 billion and 14 billion in the next century. Ninety per cent of that increase would be in the developing world. Industrialized production is

(Mr. Wijewardane, Sri Lanka)

increasing globally. The increase is estimated at fifty-fold over the past century, four fifths of it after 1950, and it has brought a profound impact on the biosphere as the investment in houses, farms, transport and industries grows daily. Technology has kept pace with singular determination in achieving short-term profitability from this situation. Technology has assisted in the consumption of finite resources and has hastened the polluting effect on the ecology.

The Commission teaches us that for the future, given the fact that resources are finite, we must turn urgently to developing strategies to arrest this wasteful denigration of our ecology, including populations. We must not only repair the damage by reforestation, reclaiming land from the deserts, rebuilding urban environment, restoring natural habitats and rehabilitating wild lands. We must think and act positively in the context of an ecology that does not recognize national boundaries and natural frontiers. We must think and act so that development and the need to preserve the ecology are in tandem. Avoiding sectoral thinking, those responsible for products within their mandates must take firm notice of the consequential effects of their actions.

Those responsible for industry must be made aware of the effects of industrial development on the total biosphere. Those responsible for agricultural development must take into account the results of their actions in the long term. They must avoid actions which contribute to desertification by overcropping and over-grazing. They must plant against the onroads of the desert. Those planning the water régimes must not only look at the short-term needs of those they serve. They must see the consequences of industrial effluence in relation to aquatic and marine life. There is urgent need to reckon with the effects of chemical impurities and noxious discharges from sewers on the health and happiness of

(Mr. Wijewardane, Sri Lanka)

populations both nationally and regionally. There must now be a balance in action, if only to serve the people of the earth into the distant future. Steps must be taken to balance development against damage to the ecology. Programmes for sustaining populations in an environment that could support them have to be initiated. Nationally, regionally and internationally, the challenges must be accepted. The basic needs of humanity for energy, food, shelter, health care and learning have to be met within the finite resources available. Technologies have to be developed towards those ends. The lessons of the study made by the World Commission on Environment and Development have to be examined democratically in relation to needs by the people most affected, and their plans related to development strategies.

The reality of "one Earth" must be recognized politically as the world goes into the twenty-first century with prospects for improving the lot of humanity rather than widening the gap between the North and the South, so that stresses and tensions are reduced to levels that are sustainable in the context of maintaining harmony in the relations of "one world".

We are grateful to the authors of the report for bringing to our attention the damage that is being caused to our ecology, including human populations, as a result of instant economic development unrelated to concern for environmental issues. The Brundtland Commission has examined environmental and developmental issues and has formulated realistic proposals that can be achieved nationally, regionally and internationally. These can be achieved only through the co-ordinated actions of individuals, organizations, institutes and Governments. Let us hope that the world will learn that unbridled development strategies are even now heaping upon Planet Earth major ecological imbalances.

Mr. PEJIC (Yugoslavia): It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity, on behalf of my country and in particular the President of the Presidency of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, Mr. Lazar Mojsov, to extend our sincere appreciation to the Prime Minister of Norway and Chairperson of the World Commission on Environment and Development, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, for her exceptional personal contribution to and involvement in the assessment of the breadth and depth of the problem of environment as an integral part of the development of mankind. Her years of commitment to this problem, which affects man's life in more ways than one, and her vision - as a political leader from a region that has given the world so much in terms of ideas, personalities and action, qualify her uniquely for the role entrusted to her by the international community.

At the same time I should like to thank other members of the Commission as well for their prominent role in the elaboration of the exceptional report, entitled "Our Common Future", which provides a basis for wide-ranging activities, both national and international, to enable people to build a future that is more prosperous, more just and more secure.

Yugoslavia, which is itself facing serious environmental problems, has always supported and will continue to support resolute international action aimed at resolving these problems, which are increasingly threatening the world, and sometimes its very survival. Much has been done since the Stockholm Conference, where international activity on environment was inaugurated. However, rapid developments in the world, particularly the application of new technologies, have created new problems, along with the need for broader international action in this field. I believe that the ideas and suggestions in the report of the World Commission will give a strong impetus to the resolution of problems of environment that have already assumed worrying proportions.

(Mr. Pejic, Yugoslavia)

Quality of life varies dramatically in different parts of the world and reflects the pattern of the world's development. This confirms our belief that efforts to protect the environment must go hand in hand with efforts to bring about development. The revival of growth and development is therefore a pre-condition of arresting the deterioration of the human environment. As we see it, growth and development should be fashioned to meet the needs and requirements of the world today. At the same time, however, they must not be allowed to threaten the prospects of future generations. Each of us must shoulder his proper share of the burden, for, although no one can hope to evade judgement, the future will surely be harsher on those who had more and could have done better.

The level of development of developing countries and the difficulties they are experiencing are factors limiting their development and, by the same token, their objective capacity to protect and promote protection of the environment. We therefore fully subscribe to the statement in the report that

"Growth in many developing countries is being stifled by depressed commodity prices, protectionism, intolerable debt burdens, and declining flows of development finance. If living standards are to grow so as to alleviate poverty, these trends must be reversed." (A/42/427, p. 33)

Accordingly, developing countries need help, much help, to ensure the stable growth which in turn will enable them to respond to their environmental needs.

As we all know, environment depends on development. Recognizing that fact, it is necessary to strengthen international co-operation and proceed with efforts to speed up the process of resolving acute international economic problems, particularly those of developing countries. I am convinced that the action we agree to take at the current session of the General Assembly will lead to that end.

Mr. VARGAS SUAREZ (Colombia) (interpretation from Spanish): My delegation wishes to pay a special tribute to all the members of the important World Commission on Environment and Development, and in particular to its Chairman, the Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, and its Secretary-General, Mr. Jim MacNeill of Canada.

General Assembly resolution 38/161 posed a great challenge to the special Commission under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland: that of making available a report on environment and the global problématique to the year 2000. The Commission completed its work by presenting the report now before the Assembly, which sets forth specific strategies in various areas of the environment: economic, social, urban, technological, political, administrative, human and legal.

The international community has suffered a series of disasters which seem to be natural but which result largely from the actions of man: lack of foresight, poverty, overpopulation, intensive exploitation of resources, and industrialization that employs poisons and chemicals that endanger the health of peoples. In one way or another, both developing and developed countries have suffered from the effects of the misuse of natural resources. I need mention only desertification, famine, the loss of agricultural land, the risks to the ozone layer that protects the earth, environmental pollution, the extinction of plant and animal species, which impoverishes our planet's diversity, the slums of our large cities, which result from underdevelopment and poverty, and a fall in the quality of life resulting from man's break with his natural environment.

The iniquity of absolute poverty poisons the social environment of those who suffer from it; it therefore also poisons the social environment of the world in general. Such inhuman poverty is both the cause and the effect of the irrational use of our planet's resources. Protection of the social, political and natural

(Mr. Vargas Suarez, Colombia)

environment is an imperative of our time. The world has embarked on economic development to eliminate the abnormal social contamination of the poverty of the great masses of the deprived in both hemispheres. But that long-awaited, much desired economic development must avoid stop-gap measures and must involve a positive and respectful relationship with nature.

But although - as in the case of the similar concepts of solidarity and social justice - the key decisions are in the hands of national and local Governments, industrialists, farmers and inhabitants of settlements, there are today important factors concerning the use of natural resources and protection of the environment that transcend fragile national borders and encompass vast regions of the globe and the entire planet. These factors therefore demand a redefinition of traditional national sovereignty through new concepts of solidarity and shared sovereignty.

The challenge facing mankind is to establish a creative coalition with nature as an effective alternative to its instinct to collide with it. The delicate and fragile means of environmental balance cannot support abuse and pressure without harmful consequences. The aggressive misuse of the world's life-support systems - in the great cities, in the oceans, in the fields, in industry, in the forests and in the river basins - destroys us and degrades our soils, threatening the integrity of human life itself. Irrational greed for the resources that we avidly consume will leave us with nothing to consume. We do not wish to be prophets of the apocalypse or to cry panic. We wish to create awareness and arouse the international community to solidarity and action.

(Mr. Vargas Suarez, Colombia)

The unbridled growth of the population is a source of concern. Five billion people, 70 per cent of them in developing countries, live in today's world. Such a population overflow results from families having more children than they wish.

In my country, the notable rapid decline in the rate of Colombian population growth has had a positive influence on society's prospects for the next few years. Similarly, we should stress the Colombian urban structure, which fosters balanced regional development and a high quality of life. Only 13 per cent of our population is centred in Bogota, our capital city. There are 33 cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants, distributed throughout our territory.

Reduced illiteracy and infant mortality and growing numbers of students registered for higher education are some of the indicators pointing to our country's sustained positive progress.

The participation in the work of the Commission of an eminent Colombian - Margarita Marino de Botero, former Director of the National Institute for Renewable Resources and the Environment - guarantees that the message contained in this important report will receive wide dissemination in our country and will encourage the ecological policies of future Governments.

Colombia is one of the world's oldest democracies; its Government is aware of its present and future responsibilities and has made a commitment to its people: a commitment to change; a commitment to build a new Colombia.

By laying the foundations for a participatory democracy and giving citizens an ever more active role in civic affairs so that they may be the true protagonists in their own future, my Government has undertaken the most ambitious and radical strategy of decentralization. It has strengthened municipal democracy, administratively and financially, and has carried out a process of national reconstruction with the fundamental purpose of establishing a régime of social

(Mr. Vargas Suarez, Colombia)

economy. That development strategy aims at creating machinery that will enable groups, communities and regions that until now have been separated from production, consumption and the benefits of development in general to be a part of national life and to join in plans and programmes in the Government's fight against absolute poverty and for increased employment and the rehabilitation, normalization and reconciliation of all Colombians.

We are concerned by the possibility that this report - which contains highly valuable suggestions and policies - could be filed in the archives, to be opened only to cull quotations for future statements by leaders. That has been the sad fate of other international commissions, such as those of Willy Brandt and Olof Palme, which dealt respectively with North-South relations and with disarmament and development.

To prevent this, my delegation intends - as suggested earlier by the representative of Norway - to join other countries in calling for the declaration of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development as a United Nations plan of action for sustainable development. We welcome the presentation of a report that will in the near future permit a more intelligent relationship between the development necessary for today and for tomorrow and the rational management of the systems that support life on Earth.

There must be positive, timely and effective global action for environmental integrity. The present disorganized international order must turn from selfishness and nationalistic or ideological dualism to new and creative structures of international co-operation and justice. International conferences tend to skirt such commitment; they tend to stand in the shadow of a guilty conscience. What is at stake is the human life on earth.

Ms. RUIZ CERUTTI (Argentina) (interpretation from Spanish): The introduction by the Prime Minister of Norway, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland, of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, "Our Common Future", should have a great impact on the future international consideration of environmental questions. As other speakers have stated, her presence here is most timely, and necessary to highlight the importance of the environment for the international community.

The year 1983 saw the launching of the idea of a special commission to devise a global programme for change on the environment; it was greeted with high, almost too ambitious, hopes. At the opening meeting of the World Commission on Environment and Development, in October 1984, it was proposed, in keeping with the body's mandate, that the Commission re-examine critical questions of environment and development, formulate innovative, concrete and realistic approaches, strengthen international co-operation in these areas, and assess and propose new ways of co-operation to eliminate existing modalities and influence policies and events with a view to changing them appropriately.

The report of the World Commission shows that it attained those objectives. "Our Common Future" is a fundamentally important step forward, rooted in the 1972 Stockholm meeting.

It should be no surprise that the environment is a recurring topic. Today our planet faces serious danger as a result of ever higher temperatures and the gradual depletion of its ozone layer over a vast area, endangering even a part of the continental territory of my country. This new focus on the environment is only natural because the planet is undergoing progressive desertification, ecological disasters are increasing in magnitude, and the growing danger of nuclear winter looms over us as a result of the arms race.

(Ms. Ruiz Cerutti, Argentina)

Our Governments too have recognized this in their environmental strategies by giving higher priority to the rational management of their environmental resources in their development programmes.

On a planet that, owing to technological advances, is getting smaller every day, problems of the environment are perhaps the clearest evidence of the need to return to multilateralism. One of the main virtues of the report is its emphasis on the need for multilateral co-operation jointly to face problems that, faced individually, can only grow until they become critical; the report proposes the objective of achieving a harmonious relationship between the preservation of the environment and a strategy for sustainable development.

"Our Common Future" contains much that will enrich our debate in this forum and in the international community as a whole. Priority attention should focus on: the foreign debt crisis which affects the developing countries and its harmful impact on the environment; sustained political, economic and social development; and the relationship between trade, environment and development, on the one hand, and the negative effects of the subsidizing practices of developed countries for international markets and the development of our countries, on the other.

My delegation has several comments to make on the question of Antarctica as it appears in the report, particularly on its inclusion in the chapter on common global space and certain aspects of the evolution of the Antarctic Treaty.

(Ms. Ruiz Cerutti, Argentina)

However, we do not wish at this stage to go beyond the purpose of our statement, since the question will be examined in depth during future work in the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly.

However, this meeting is the right place to pay a well-deserved tribute to the members of the Commission, and especially its Chairman, Mrs. Brundtland, for having reawakened world awareness of the interdependence of environmental matters.

The Argentine Republic considers that this question deserves international support. The democratic Government of my country has given its fullest attention to environmental matters even though, like the rest of Latin America, it faces a profound economic and social crisis that affects our environment. This has warranted re-evaluation of the environmental and political strategies we must promote in our countries. Thus, my Government is committed to defining and implementing a realistic environmental policy, since it is aware of the close relationship between environmental problems and the development process. The outcome with regard to these problems is closely linked to the decisions that will be taken to resolve the present crisis.

Should indiscriminate attacks on our ever smaller world persist, our environmental prospects will be uncertain, or even, according to some predictions, gloomy. Historical time has suddenly become shorter; mankind has broken through more frontiers during this century than in all of its past history. As we advance relentlessly, "Our Common Future" will light our way on our speedy course towards the future.

The PRESIDENT (interpretation from Russian): In today's debate on the introduction by Mrs. Brundtland of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development we have heard important statements reflecting the concern of the international community over one of the most important global problems: the protection of the human environment in the context of continued

(The President)

development and economic growth. Those statements, along with the profound analysis offered in the reports of the World Commission on Environment and Development and the Intergovernmental Committee of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) deserve our highest appreciation and our close attention.

What matters today is indeed "our common future" and our "environmental perspective to the year 2000 and beyond". The disturbed interaction of nature and society, of which there are many causes, indicates the limits of the burden our planet can bear. Today's debate has also reminded us that we have to see these problems in a wider perspective: that men will either live together peacefully or perish together.

Nuclear war would be the ultimate ecological catastrophe, the end of all development. That is why it was stressed that environment and development and disarmament and development must be considered interrelated tasks. The United Nations is the place to deal with this. The objectives have been recognized and the international community is now called upon to act. In an interdependent world global problems require global solutions. The interrelationship of environment and development in a peaceful and secure world requires further study and joint action. In many statements it has been rightly stressed that overcoming poverty and illiteracy is another requirement for progress in this field.

An example has been set by the International Conference on the Relationship between Disarmament and Development and the documents it adopted. The question is where to find the resources for tackling the problems of environment and development. Increased international co-operation in those fields, combined with a global educational effort, as proposed by the Secretary-General, are the next practical steps that should be taken.

(The President)

The United Nations system provides a unique forum for this effort. In particular, the United Nations Environment Programme should be commended for the projects and priorities it has defined. I am convinced that our Organization will meet these challenges in the interest of our common peaceful future.

The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of the introduction of the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development. Sub-item 82 (e) will now be considered in the Second Committee, as decided by the Assembly at its 3rd plenary meeting.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.