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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 39th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 26 July 1999, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. WIBISONO (Indonesia)  
(Vice-President)

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In the absence of Mr. Fulci (Italy), Mr. Wibisono (Indonesia),  
Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

TRIBUTE TO THE MEMORY OF HIS MAJESTY HASSAN II, KING OF MOROCCO

At the invitation of the President, the members of the Council observed  
a minute of silence.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (agenda item 13) (continued)

- (a) SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (continued) (E/1999/29-E/CN.17/1999/20)
- (b) SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued)  
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- (i) POPULATION AND DEVELOPMENT (E/1999/25-E/CN.9/1999/8)
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(E/1999/32-E/C.14/1999/2)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take action on the various  
draft proposals and recommendations contained in the reports of its functional  
commissions and the other reports under consideration.

Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its seventh session  
(E/1999/29-E/CN.17/1999/20)

The PRESIDENT said that Chapter I, section A, of that report  
contained two draft resolutions. He invited the Council to turn to draft  
resolution I, entitled "Expansion of the United Nations guidelines on consumer  
protection to include sustainable consumption". He took it that the Council  
wished to adopt that draft resolution.

Draft resolution I was adopted.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to turn to draft resolution II, entitled "Preparations for the ninth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development on the issue of energy". He understood that further consultations were taking place on the draft resolution and suggested that action upon it should be postponed.

It was so decided.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to turn to section B of the report, which contained a draft decision entitled "Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its seventh session and provisional agenda for the eighth session of the Commission". He took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft decision.

The draft decision was adopted.

Report of the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on its fourth session (E/1999/31-E/CN.16/1999/9)

The PRESIDENT said that it was his understanding that the Secretariat was still working on a statement on the programme budget implications of the draft resolution contained in that report. He suggested, therefore, that action on the recommendations contained in the report should be postponed to a later stage.

It was so decided.

Report of the Statistical Commission on its thirtieth session (E/1999/24-E/CN.9/1999/29)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to turn to Chapter I, section A, of the report which contained a draft resolution entitled "Functioning of the Statistical Commission". He took it that the Council wished to adopt that resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted.

Mr. KÄÄRIÄINEN (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, and the countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that the Union welcomed the adoption of the resolution on the functioning of the Statistical Commission, in which it was decided that the Statistical Commission should meet annually beginning in the year 2000. The Commission was the highest worldwide statistical expert body. It

developed international statistical standards and methods, considered methodological issues, coordinated and integrated international statistical programmes and supported technical and cooperation activities in statistical and organizational matters. It also provided a platform for discussion, especially for the developing countries.

The world was changing rapidly in various areas and, for that reason, statistical data became obsolete very quickly. The Union thus requested the Statistical Commission to take up the challenge of finding ways to adapt international statistics more rapidly to new developments. In addition, the Union believed that United Nations conferences, summits, and the agreed conclusions of the Council and its resolutions should be evaluated by statisticians on a more regular basis. The Union was convinced that annual meetings of the Statistical Commission would improve the chance of meeting the new requirements for more continuous statistical assessment.

The PRESIDENT said that section B of the report contained a draft decision entitled "Report of the Statistical Commission on its thirtieth session and provisional agenda and documentation for the thirty-first session of the Statistical Commission". He took it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision.

The draft decision was adopted.

The PRESIDENT said that, on the basis of informal consultations, he had himself submitted a draft resolution entitled "Eighth United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names" (E/1999/L.28). It had no programme budget implications. He took it that the Council wished to adopt the draft resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted.

Mr. de BARROS (Secretary of the Economic and Social Council) said, on behalf of the Director of the Statistical Division, that the Secretariat wished to thank the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea for bringing to its attention a very important issue and working with the Secretariat to help resolve it. It also thanked other delegations, in particular the delegation of Japan, for their help in that connection. The Secretariat regretted that it had been necessary to issue a corrigendum (E/CONF.91/3/Corr.1) and agreed with the delegation of the Republic of Korea that the situation should not be repeated.

The Secretariat had reviewed the reporting processes used in the past and, after consultation with delegations and with the President and Editor-in-Chief of the Conference, it had been decided to make the following change. Future reports would not attempt to reflect the interventions that had taken place during the Conference but would follow the guidance provided by the Economic and Social Council and reflect the decisions taken. That should ensure both a short report and one that was cleared by all the members of the Conference.

Mr. CHOI Seok-Young (Republic of Korea) said that he would confine his remarks on the Seventh United Nations Conference on the Standardization of Geographical Names to issues relating to the reporting of the Conference.

The results of the Conference had been placed on the agenda of the 1998 Substantive Session of the Council. However, since the official report of the Conference had not been published and circulated until the end of March 1999, the Council's debate had been held without the report. He noted that conference reports ought to be published and submitted to substantive sessions of the Council in time to allow delegations to study their contents.

He further invited the Council's attention to the fact that some parts of the report, namely paragraphs 96-104, had not been reviewed or adopted by the time the Conference closed in January 1998. In short, the report had been published without following the official adoption procedure, even though there had been ample time to do so in the year that had elapsed since the closure of the Conference. The part in question dealt with the concluding session of the plenary and the potential text of a draft resolution on the standardization of names of maritime features beyond any sovereignty. Those parts of the report had been found to be factually incorrect and inconsistent with the actual proceedings of the Conference.

His delegation had drawn the Secretariat's attention to those procedural and substantive problems and had requested that proper steps be taken to rectify the situation. Thanks to the immediate intervention of the Secretariat, a corrigendum to the report had recently been published and circulated. He expressed his appreciation to the Secretariat, and in particular to the Director of the Statistical Division, for their efforts. He would, however, like to point out another problem in regard to the reporting

of the Conference. As published in March 1999, the report appeared to be incomplete. His delegation had received volume I only and there was no indication of the contents of volume II or any other parts.

He hoped that those issues relating to the reporting of the Conference would be carefully reviewed at the forthcoming Eighth Conference, to be held in Germany in the year 2002, and, if possible, at the substantive session of the Council in the year 2000 under the agenda item of cartography. He requested that his statement and the response of the Secretariat be reflected in the summary record of the meeting.

The PRESIDENT invited the members of the Council to comment on sub-item (e).

Mr. RACHIDI (Morocco) said that man should not be seen merely as destroyer, but as the creator of planned environments whose beauty could far exceed that of natural landscapes. Technological progress and industrialization had, admittedly, accelerated the degradation of nature, but environmental protection should be viewed in its broader sense, as encompassing the protection of the material as well as the natural environment. Pressure on material resources in the twentieth century had certainly caused damage which, in certain instances, were a cause for concern.

The international community had negotiated more than 150 instruments for environmental protection; the question was to determine how international commitments might be met and to devise effective national and international control mechanisms. Major problems persisted in some developing countries, such as the degradation of water resources as a result of unfavourable climatic conditions, deforestation, soil erosion, desertification, or the increase in pollution which impacted negatively on people's living conditions. At the national level, attempts to improve the environmental situation were complicated by the multitude of actors involved, by weak law enforcement, a lack of incentives and insufficient awareness-raising and coordination activities.

There was a need for an integrated global strategy for environmental protection which would involve a wide range of players and be accorded priority in national socio-economic development programmes. To that end, international cooperation was vital, as was the strengthening of national capacity. Several years after the United Nations Conference on Environment

and Development (UNCED), little progress had been achieved, and the international community had yet to transfer the pledged technical and financial assistance. A further matter of concern was the use of environmental pretexts as a cover for protectionist trade policies against developing countries.

The PRESIDENT invited the members of the Council to comment on sub-item (f).

Mr. I.A. CHOWDHURY (Observer for Bangladesh) said that thanks to the determination and commitment of women themselves - and of some dedicated men - the last two decades had witnessed remarkable changes in perception regarding the gender issue. Yet total emancipation and equality for women remained a distant reality, owing largely to collective societal attitudes.

He stressed the importance of female education and the opportunity for income generation as the keys to development. Experience in his country indicated that, on both counts, the focus would have to be as much on non-formal as on formal arrangements, as the initiatives by the Grameen Bank and other schemes showed. Poverty and lack of adequate productive employment posed the biggest challenge to the empowerment of women. Their traditional roles were, however, changing fast. Women were entering the money economy as the sole or joint income earners in a household. Their involvement in agriculture was also on the rise, but was limited to manual labour. In the urban sectors, women's activities were concentrated in low-paid informal activities. The garment industry, for example, was as much female-led as it was expert-led.

Women's access to ways of overcoming gender-specific constraints to paid employment and a better quality of life had remained limited. Since a large proportion of women lived below the poverty line, they did not receive the necessary health and education facilities. Their potential also remained unexplored for national development purposes. Women's empowerment at the grass-roots level in Bangladesh was being revolutionized, however, through employment facilitated by non-formal access to credit and resources. Not only were women more involved in the money economy thereby but their independence and self-respect were greatly enhanced.

The feminization of poverty had assumed a sharper focus. Women tended to bear the brunt of the adverse impact of structural adjustment policies and



globalization. If the burden of economic change was borne disproportionately by women, however, economic development was unlikely to be sustainable. Greater access to the market economy was not necessarily a positive development for the women themselves. They were often doubly burdened, with their paid work and with the responsibility for housework and childcare. The increase in the number of women in the labour force was not necessarily matched therefore by an improvement in the quality of employment. Women must have more access to education and training and to productive resources, such as credit, technology and marketing techniques.

Empowerment of women was a critical element of the development agenda in his country. Specific gender concerns had been incorporated into the national development plans, with comprehensive policies and programmes for the advancement of women clearly spelt out. Measures had also been taken to sensitize development planners to gender issues. The main focus was to make women active agents of development, not simply beneficiaries. An encouraging start had been made.

Ms. CASSAM (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO continued to reinforce preventive action to combat violence and discrimination against women and to limit the effects of female prostitution through activities and projects with local non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In eastern and central Europe and central Asia, it was collaborating with the Open Society Institute/SOROS, which had established a most active and effective network called "Stop trafficking". With the same organization and with international partners and local NGOs, UNESCO was establishing a subregional women's centre at Budapest, which would both provide educational training for women and work on real day-to-day problems, such as domestic and other types of violence, prostitution and other issues.

UNESCO's Islamabad office had been involved in activities relating to trafficking in women. The Constitution of Pakistan specifically mentioned the obligation of the State to prevent prostitution. UNESCO had held a regional conference on trafficking in women and children in collaboration with NGOs, the Government and other United Nations agencies in Karachi.

As the Council had heard earlier, nearly half of all new adult infections with HIV/AIDS affected women, who were more vulnerable than men to

HIV infection biologically, socially and economically. Moreover, the AIDS pandemic affected the education of girls in a more indirect way by requiring them to stay away from school to take care of sick parents or orphaned relatives. UNESCO's Section for Preventive Education had the role of promoting school-based education, believing that that was one the most successful means of containing the pandemic. Ministries of education were helped to formulate national plans of action to integrate preventive education in the school curriculum. Regional seminars for decision makers had been organized in Colombia, Kyrgyzstan and Thailand. Teachers, and their organizations, were crucial partners in UNESCO action in the field of preventive education. Teachers from Colombia, China and Thailand had participated in conferences and regional workshops on preventing HIV/AIDS.

As part of a broader programme for addressing the gender dimension of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, UNESCO - in collaboration with other agencies - had organized an African regional workshop on preventive education at Abidjan, with the participation of grass-roots women's organizations from 17 African countries. The organization had also held workshops in highly male dominant societies where women had traditionally had little control over family-planning issues.

Also with regard to the advancement of women, UNESCO - in collaboration with the Grameen Bank and women weavers in Bangladesh - had piloted a highly successful project to promote microenterprise and traditional skills. The organization had also organized a programme in Paris for indigenous and rural women from Latin America and a micro-finance project for refugee women in Bosnia, as part of a larger programme to provide education for women and girls displaced by armed conflicts.

In recent weeks, UNESCO had also been involved in holding a "Women Organize for Peace and Non-Violence in Africa" conference in Zanzibar, Tanzania. The resulting document, a "Women's Agenda for a Culture of Peace in Africa", contained proposals for concrete activities at the local, national and regional levels.

Mr. PERERA (Sri Lanka), having stressed Sri Lanka's commitment to increased participation of women in economic, social and political decision-making, and to the implementation of the relevant international instruments to which it was a party, said that his country had made

significant progress in achieving the three key objectives: equality, development and peace. Women played a pivotal role in the nation's economic development. They comprised 80 per cent of the migrant workers who were the country's highest foreign exchange earners. Women also constituted the majority of workers in the two other key sectors, namely the textile and tea industries. There was no scarcity of reports, instruments and resolutions dealing with the advancement of women; it was high time, however, that they be put into practice.

Mrs. WILLIAMS (World Health Organization (WHO)) described the WHO efforts to mainstream a gender perspective into its activities. Recognizing the needs of both men and women was vital to the development and implementation of equitable and effective health strategies. The creation of opportunities for equal participation and partnerships of women and men in policy development was a fundamental principle of the organization's new Global Health Policy for the twenty-first century.

WHO recognized the need to understand the impact of the interaction between biological sex differences and societal attitudes to gender on the health status of women. For example, biology was largely responsible for aggravating the consequences of malaria for women, but gender also coloured the experience of women at risk. For example, women's lower status could dictate who did not sleep under the limited number of insecticide-impregnated bed nets available to a poor family.

Similarly, the social standing of women often exacerbated their biological vulnerability to sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. Social acceptance of male promiscuity and women's inability to protect themselves from unsafe sex were examples of gendered risk factors. In the area of health services, it was important to understand how health workers responded to male and female clients. Research showed that women were made to wait longer than men in clinics, that they were often provided with less information and that they tended to take more responsibility for ensuring their partner's compliance.

It was important, also, to study how national development policies affected the health and well-being of men and women. The basis for such a gender approach was the collection and appropriate analysis of data disaggregated by sex.

In May 1999, the WHO Cabinet had approved plans for mainstreaming gender into the organization's activities. In a recent letter to WHO and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) country representatives, the Director-General of WHO had stressed that improving the reproductive health status of women must start by rectifying gender inequality, which began in infancy in terms of issues such as nutrition and education. An inter-cluster (department) working group on mainstreaming gender had been established, as well as a "gender focal point" mandated to ensure that all programmes were gender sensitive.

WHO programmes at all levels would routinely provide a breakdown by sex and age of health indicators and identify interventions for reducing gender inequalities. Finally, WHO wished to renew its commitment to strengthening partnerships, inter alia with the Member States and the organizations of the United Nations system, with a view to making gender equality a reality in the coming millennium.

Ms. PONCINI (International Federation of Business and Professional Women), speaking as Vice-President of the NGO Committee on the Status of Women, said that an important feature of development in the context of globalization was that it was as much women-led as export-led, representing a huge stride in women's participation in the money economy. While that meant enhanced status at the household level, it was the opposite in income terms, owing to the continuing burden of unpaid and undervalued housework, exacerbated by diminishing social protection - especially in developing and transition economies - which was a crucial factor in perpetuating gender inequality and the impoverishment of women. The challenge to identify and assess obstacles to women's economic rights and empowerment should be tackled with a rights-based approach by the United Nations, the financial institutions and the third sector, including NGOs, in an integrated manner.

To be truly gender-sensitive, the male-based conceptual model of the right to work and to an adequate standard of living, as defined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, should be altered to incorporate women's patterns of paid work in the formal and informal sectors as well as in the home. The economic value of the unpaid and undervalued work of silent partners in family-owned enterprises, home-based work and sub-contracted labour should then be quantified and qualified.

At the national level, legislative barriers deprived women of the chance of economic empowerment, stunting their progress beyond small-scale entrepreneurship. Governments should give them the right to higher education, the key to power and decision-making which also called for an enabling environment in which they could pursue studies in areas where they were under-represented.

More emphasis should be placed on affirmative action to eliminate low wages and break down the glass walls and glass ceilings erected by biased employment practices that exploited women's vulnerability due to their reproductive role. Implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and its follow-up would be one way of reversing such practices and enforcing labour laws, including the right to organize and to collective bargaining.

Mental attitudes and ignorance being a critical factor of inequality, women and men must realize that women's rights were embodied in existing international instruments. Micro-enterprise, often seen as the key to sustainable development, was dominated by women entrepreneurs, who created jobs as well as boosting household income. Since the number of women entrepreneurs had grown considerably and they were fundamental to the global economy, they must be taken seriously in the establishment of new economic models and the international financial architecture. The international community must give women more access to national and global trade and add a gender perspective to policies so as to empower women and guarantee them equal opportunities in all sectors of the economy.

Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (E/1999/43)

The PRESIDENT suggested that the Council defer action on the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/1999/43).

It was so decided.

International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction

Mr. BOULLE (Director, Secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction), introducing the two reports of the Secretary-General on the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (A/54/132-E/1999/80 and Add.1 and A/54/136-E/1999/89), said that the problem addressed by the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction (IDNDR), namely, the growing vulnerability of societies to natural hazards, would not

disappear with the end of the Decade. It had been learned during the 1990s that the consequences of a natural disaster could easily span the globe. An extreme natural event could cause a setback in the social and economic development of an entire nation or region, which could have negative ramifications on a worldwide level, not to mention a far-reaching impact on environmental quality. Disasters caused serious damage to the social and economic infrastructures of developing countries, thus hampering their sustainable development processes. That had been clearly shown at many sessions of the Programme Forum.

Thanks to the activities undertaken during the Decade, the worldwide understanding of, and commitment to disaster reduction had increased dramatically. It had been realized that natural hazards need not inevitably become natural disasters. The nations of the world could work together to understand and manage them, thus reducing the chance of their becoming major events with devastating consequences.

For the past several decades, losses caused by natural disasters had been steadily increasing. To reduce such losses, a truly global, interdisciplinary approach to the problem was needed. The need for an interdisciplinary and multisectoral approach to disaster reduction had been clearly acknowledged and emphasized during the Programme Forum, particularly in the sub-segment organized by WMO and UNESCO on scientific and technical issues.

At the regional level, several countries might need to establish a common approach in order to address shared risks, such as their particular sensitivity to seismic activity or environmental damage and concerns. Recent regional IDNDR meetings, in Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries and the South Pacific, had emphasized that need. At the same time, concrete action was needed at the local level, to increase awareness and sensitize communities to the need to assess risks properly and put in place effective preventive measures. That was clearly exemplified in the success stories presented to the Programme Forum by countries such as Bangladesh, Australia, Japan, Mali and Mexico.

At the beginning of the Decade, it had been apparent that the response of most communities to the threat of disaster was to focus on preparedness. While that was better than having no strategy at all, it was at best reactive.

Better than minimizing damage was avoiding it all together. If the world was to move in that direction, however, long-term, proactive disaster prevention strategies were needed. IDNDR had been instrumental during the 1990s in advocating the establishment of such strategies. Its Scientific and Technical Committee had focused on overall programme priorities. National committees had been formed around the world to take up the challenge at their respective local levels. At the global level, there had been a synergetic collaboration among a wide range of players. The IDNDR Secretariat had coordinated those activities through a series of thematic and regional conferences, with the help of annual intensive awareness-building and communication programmes.

As the Decade came to a close, the United Nations should capitalize on its proven institutional success at the international level. Ultimate success would depend on being able to make disaster reduction a public value. A community of interests, based on collaborative endeavours and new organizational relationships was emerging, which must be shepherded safely into the next century. As emphasized in the risk and reduction strategy for the twenty-first century, adopted at the Programme Forum, priority must be given to establishing hazard-resilient communities everywhere in the world.

The Secretary-General's second report (A/54/136-E/1999/89) concerned institutional arrangements for disaster reduction once the Decade was over. A draft resolution on that issue was to be put forward by a number of delegations. In essence, the report proposed a simple, efficient and cost-effective approach to disaster reduction that would support functional and substantive needs. It was important to know what should be done before setting up arrangements to do it. That was precisely what had been achieved in the Programme Forum with the adoption of the Geneva Mandate for Disaster Reduction.

Mr. KÄÄRIÄINEN (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the associated countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and the countries members of the European Economic Area, Iceland and Liechtenstein, said that, as the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction drew to a close, the lessons learned from it included the need for strong national policies to prevent natural hazards from turning into economic and social disasters. Natural disasters threatened every dimension of

sustainable development. By the year 2025, 80 per cent of the world's population would be living in developing countries and up to 60 per cent of those people would be highly vulnerable to floods, severe storms and earthquakes. According to the Secretary-General's report, overall losses from some 700 natural disasters in 1998 were estimated at US\$ 93 billion. That figure showed that natural disasters had a strong economic dimension, and that measures to mitigate their effects or prevent their negative impact constituted a cost-effective contribution to sustainable development.

The Union shared the view of the Secretary-General and the Scientific and Technical Committee that disaster prevention and preparedness needed to be an integral part of government policy and integrated into development planning. It also shared the view that early warning was a key element in disaster reduction.

The Union welcomed the enhanced regional and subregional approach and the shift from emergency preparedness to an increased focus on reducing risks and vulnerability. The work of the Scientific and Technical Committee was a valuable contribution to that significant shift in policy.

The Union also supported the Secretary-General's view that, taking into account the significantly increased incidence and intensity of natural disasters, the mandate of the whole United Nations system for dealing with disaster reduction must evolve. It was gratifying to note that the members of the IDNDR Inter-Agency Steering Committee had already found some new directions for their planning in connection with natural disasters. The momentum gained during the Decade should be fostered.

The Council had been given the task of deciding on future arrangements to ensure that the Decade's achievements were built upon. The Union strongly believed that the multisectoral and multidisciplinary nature of natural hazards should be kept in mind. The future arrangement, therefore, should show good intersectoral coordination, taking into account the scientific, technological and educational aspects, and should be universal in nature.

The Union's vision of the future arrangements was much in line with that of the Secretary-General. The multisectoral platform for concerted policy development and inter-agency coordination must be maintained, by means of the proposed Inter-Agency Task Force, with membership from inside and outside the United Nations system. It also agreed that the work of the Task Force needed



to be supported by a small and effective inter-agency secretariat with the same mandate as the existing one and funded by extrabudgetary funds. It supported the Secretary-General's proposal that the future secretariat should remain linked to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) under the auspices of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. The membership of the secretariat should be drawn from the international community of disaster reduction experts, seconded by competent United Nations organizations, Governments and NGOs.

Mrs. BURZI (Observer for Switzerland) said that the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction had made it possible to measure the impact of natural disasters in terms of suffering and human lives, as well as the considerable cost of measures to deal with disasters and emergencies. It had also served to signal the need for Governments to take preventive steps.

The national and international focus of the Decade had strengthened the perception of growing interdependence among phenomena of different kinds (economic, ecological and climatic) that transcended national frontiers and even continents.

Switzerland's part in that evolution had been to set up its own national committee, which had enabled it to make progress not only in prevention but also in offering steady financial and scientific support for the Decade from the outset. Nevertheless, in the last six months alone, Switzerland had experienced devastating avalanches and flooding. That was an example of the progress that still needed to be made to reduce the impact of natural disasters, even in a small country like Switzerland. At the international level, the final Forum of the Decade, held from 5 to 9 July at Geneva, had assembled the conclusions of the regional and thematic conferences, evaluating the progress made in prevention and in identifying risks. It had also made it possible to formulate guidelines for future natural disaster reduction.

At the close of the Decade, her delegation welcomed the Secretary-General's proposals for the continuation of preventive activities. The mandate given to the Decade in 1989 was still valid and an effective coordinating mechanism should be established within the United Nations system. Her delegation firmly believed that the existence of effective coordination mechanisms encouraged and facilitated the prevention of natural disasters and

diminished their effects. It therefore supported the appeal to Governments to do all that they could to strengthen disaster reduction methods. As far as the strategies and means necessary for pursuing those aims was concerned, her delegation supported the recommendation in the Secretary-General's report that an inter-agency secretariat should be established, financed by voluntary contributions. It also supported the proposal that the inter-agency secretariat should be responsible for establishing general policy and coordinating the disaster prevention activities of the United Nations system, as well as serving as the secretariat of the special inter-agency team for disaster prevention. The secretariat should be located at Geneva, where many of the operational agencies covering the fields directly affected in cases of disaster were already concentrated.

For all those reasons, her delegation strongly supported the proposal that the secretariat should be part of OCHA and under the responsibility of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. With a view to coherence and the rational use of the human and financial resources involved, her delegation was also in favour of the suggestion that a trust fund should be set up, fed by extrabudgetary resources to finance the secretariat's activities.

In conclusion, her delegation hoped that defining the mandate of the special team would be the subject of detailed consultations with a view to reinforcing the international coordination needed for the prevention of natural disasters and the reduction of their impact. Based on the most recent work of the Forum, a plan should be drawn up for the special team and the secretariat, including specific objectives and a time scale, with a view to avoiding any duplication, particularly with structures working at the operational level.

Mr. Al-DOURI (Observer for Iraq) said that the cause of underdeveloped countries was a central plank of the Council's activities. That was why it should work to extend the provisions of Article 55 of the Charter of the United Nations to ensure that developing countries enjoyed the right not only to self-determination but also to the use of their own resources. When economic sanctions were imposed arbitrarily, the economic repercussions could be disastrous. In the case of Iraq, the ban imposed by Security Council resolution 661 (1990) on the use of the revenue from the sale

of oil had led to a loss of some US\$ 200 billion, largely in the agricultural and industrial sectors. Over 31,000 factories had had to close owing to the lack of spare parts and commodities.

The continued aggression by the United States of America and the United Kingdom had had a disastrous effect on the country's infrastructure. Massive social problems had been caused, with millions of unemployed and skills gone to waste. Indeed, many had paid the ultimate price: 2 million people, including women and children, had lost their lives and the supply of food and medicines was badly hampered.

Since April 1996, it had not been possible to sell the country's oil and obtain food. The natural environment had been severely affected, with the contamination of drinking water from the use of such substances as uranium, and the use of power plants had been curtailed. The actions of the aggressor countries, preventing the import of anything that might alleviate the situation, ran counter to international humanitarian law. The international community should intervene immediately to have the sanctions lifted.

Mr. GALLEGOS CHIRIBOGA (Observer for Ecuador) said that the achievements during the Decade had been impressive ones. The growing vulnerability of developing countries to natural disasters demonstrated, however, the need for an effective disaster-reduction system in the future. The United Nations should continue to play an active role, since international cooperation would continue to be essential. There should be a multisectoral and inter-agency system by which natural disasters could be prevented, reduced or mitigated and a mechanism to ensure sustained and sustainable development, especially in the developing countries. He therefore supported the draft resolution that was to be submitted by the Group of 77 and China.

Mr. MASUKU (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that FAO engaged in both technical and humanitarian assistance with regard to natural disasters. It endeavoured to prevent and contain damage caused by such phenomena as climate change, El Niño and forest fires. It also participated in coordinated efforts within the United Nations system to respond to natural disasters once they had occurred. Consequently, it took a keen interest in the future arrangements for follow-up to the Decade.

FAO fully agreed that disaster reduction formed an integral part of sustainable development policies and felt that future arrangements should reflect that view. A number of mechanisms already existed for coordinating activities relating to disaster reduction. The Inter-Agency Task Force proposed in the Secretary-General's report (A/54/136-E/1999/89) would function most effectively if it were responsible for all the substantive issues, through a system of task managers from agencies with specific competences. The Secretariat would thus deal only with the logistics of meetings and information sharing; it would not have any independent functions of a policy or coordinating nature. That approach would reduce duplication and overlap with existing coordination mechanisms and draw on the expertise of the most competent organizations within the United Nations system.

The Secretary-General's proposal had not, however, been discussed with some key agencies and programmes of the United Nations system, as had been decided by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). Before the proposal went to the General Assembly, therefore, FAO would like an opportunity for inter-agency consultation regarding the mandate and function of the Task Force and of the secretariat and regarding the location of the secretariat, bearing in mind the strong developmental aspects of disaster reduction.

Mr. NAZARIAN (Observer for Armenia) said that his Government supported a successor arrangement to the Decade, the practical achievements of which had been clearly demonstrated in many regions of the world, including his country's own region. The reorientation of priorities within national Governments from disaster response to preventive strategies was the result of a successful campaign by the Decade to provide States with guidance, tools and the necessary knowledge to build a future safe from natural disasters. Much, however, remained to be done. In order to maintain the momentum, member States should support the creation of an Inter-Agency Task Force bringing together experts in disaster management, humanitarian assistance, development, environmental protection, social rehabilitation, education, natural sciences and health. The Task Force might serve as the main forum for disaster reduction at all levels and define strategies and policy in the field.

The Secretary-General's report (A/54/136-E/1999/89) also proposed the establishment of an inter-agency secretariat under the responsibility of the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. His Government supported

that proposal. The successor arrangements to the Decade should also ensure the continuation of strategies at the regional and subregional level. As host to the regional conference for CIS and Central and Eastern European countries in September 1998, his Government was acutely aware of the importance of fostering regional initiatives in the field of disaster reduction. Indeed, largely thanks to the Decade, the countries of the Caucasus region were taking steps towards a practical framework for subregional cooperation in the field of disaster reduction, a positive process that was expanding into other fields and paving the way for improved social and political ties between them.

Ms. AMAHA (Observer for Ethiopia) said that the social and economic impact of natural disasters was on the rise. Following the end of the Decade, therefore, it was imperative to strengthen the ability of the United Nations system to support disaster reduction efforts in the years to come. The achievements of the Decade - especially the momentum generated in the development of public policy - should be maintained. In that connection, her delegation associated itself with the recommendations contained in paragraph 16 of the Secretary-General's report (A/54/137-E/1999/89). Regional cooperation was of vital importance. African Governments were more than ever determined to ensure the integration of disaster reduction in their policies, as had been asserted in the Nairobi Declaration on Natural Disaster Reduction in May 1999, which had also stressed the need to ensure the continuity of disaster reduction in Africa; for the realization of that objective the setting up of appropriate regional institutional mechanisms was of paramount importance.

Ms. CASSAM (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that UNESCO had been engaged since 1960 in the assessment and mitigation of risks arising from natural hazards of geographical origin. It also contributed to the study of hazards of hydrometeorological origin. Its purposes were to promote a better scientific understanding of the distribution in time and place of natural hazards and of their intensity, to set up reliable observatory and early warning networks and systems, to encourage the establishment of rational land-use plans, to promote the adoption of suitable building designs, to contribute to the protection of educational buildings and cultural monuments, to strengthen environmental

protection for the prevention of natural disasters, to enhance public awareness through information and education and to conduct post-disaster investigation. UNESCO had promoted, within and outside the Organization, an interdisciplinary approach to natural disasters. It was working towards a new culture of prevention to be disseminated to the populations in areas prone to disasters.

Mr. NEGOUSSE (Observer for the Organization of African Unity (OAU)) welcomed the efforts undertaken on behalf of Africa in the context of the Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction, such as the promotion of a culture of disaster prevention and the emphasis on the link between sustainable development and natural disasters which required an integrated approach at all levels. The OAU, which had been involved in all such activities, considered that cooperation should be further enhanced. The international community should accord particular attention to Africa in view of the vulnerability of its populations. A regional centre for the management of natural disaster crises should be established in Africa in order to ensure that the continent was not marginalized with respect to disaster mitigation efforts.

Mrs. MIRBAHA (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, during the period 1990-1997, there had been over 40,000 deaths in her country as a result of natural disasters, mainly earthquakes. A national mechanism for coordinating disaster mitigation and awareness-raising activities, which had been established at the start of the Decade, was to be continued. Regional mechanisms, which took account of local needs, should also be strengthened. It was vital that a focal point be established within the United Nations to further the post-Decade activities. Above all, it was crucial that there should be a transfer of existing scientific and technical knowledge on disaster mitigation to the developing countries.

Ms. CALLANGAN (Observer for the Philippines) said her delegation agreed that there was a need to strengthen the international mechanism for cooperation on disaster reduction. The existing inter-agency secretariat should be preserved as a main forum for international disaster reduction efforts.

Mrs. BELLO de KEMPER (Observer for the Dominican Republic) said that her country, which was periodically victim to cyclones, typhoons and torrential rains, had followed the International Decade for Disaster Reduction

with keen interest. The importance of the incorporation into national development plans of public awareness-raising activities was illustrated by the case of Santo Domingo, which had been destroyed by a typhoon some 70 years previously. The harm done to the population would have been far less had people not emerged from their houses in the eye of the storm, only to be surprised by the next wave. Her delegation was in favour of the maintenance of a focal point on disaster reduction after the closure of the Decade, as well as of the establishment of a world fund for disaster-mitigation activities to complement national efforts.

Mr. POSAYANOND (Observer for Thailand) said he agreed that there was a need to maintain an effective international cooperative framework within the United Nations system to coordinate disaster reduction and risk management at the regional, subregional and country levels.

Disaster prevention was an integral part of sustainable development and should be promoted to reduce local communities' vulnerability. Management capabilities should be enhanced by the inclusion of a wider range of disciplines and the strengthening of regional and subregional cooperation.

In that connection, he mentioned the establishment, in 1986, at the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) in Bangkok, of an important regional mechanism, the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center (ADPC), which had become a foundation in its own right in 1999. His delegation strongly recommended its work, which involved advocacy, training, information dissemination, capacity-development and policy-formulation assistance to the countries of the region for disaster prevention and mitigation.

Report of the Commission on Population and Development on its thirty-second session (E/1999/25-E/CN.9/1999/8)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to turn to the draft resolution contained in Chapter I, section A, of the report. He took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to turn to the draft decision contained in Chapter I, section B, of the report. He took it that the Council wished to adopt that draft resolution.

The draft resolution was adopted.

Report of the Secretary-General on the ninth meeting of the Ad Hoc Group of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters (E/1999/84)

Mr. KÄÄRIÄINEN (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia, said that the Union would like to defer discussion of the topic until a later date. The report examined, *inter alia*, the process of revising the 1980 United Nations Model Double Taxation Convention between Developed and Developing Countries by the Ad Hoc Group of Experts. The Union believed that the revised version of the Model Convention would benefit both sets of countries. Since the new draft compiled by the Secretariat on the basis of the experts' comments remained for their further comments until 15 August 1999, it had not yet been finally approved, despite the statement in the Secretary-General's report (E/1999/84, para. 40) that it had been adopted by acclamation. The Union was most concerned that such errors could occur and requested the Secretariat to issue a corrigendum to the report on that point.

It further suggested that the Council should request the Secretariat to send the members of the Group of Experts all the comments it received on the latest draft, with details of the Secretariat's proposals for addressing them. The indication, at the end of paragraph 40, that the revised Convention would be published shortly was premature; the Union stressed that its publication should be conditional upon the Group of Experts' full agreement on the final version of the text.

Mr. KAMAMARU (Japan) said that he fully endorsed the views expressed by the observer for Finland. The report had been submitted late, and his delegation stressed the need for the more timely publication and greater accuracy of documentation. He hoped to receive the Secretariat's assurances of improvements in that regard.

The PRESIDENT said that the Secretariat would take due note of the comments by the observer for Finland and the representative of Japan. He took it that the Council wished to postpone consideration of the report of the Secretary-General (E/1999/84).

It was so decided.



Report of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development on its first session (E/1999/32-E/C.14/1999/2)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider the report of the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources for Development (E/1999/32-E/C.14/1999/2) which contained three draft resolutions and two draft decisions requiring action by the Council. Since negotiations were under way on that report, he suggested that action on the recommendations be deferred.

It was so decided.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (agenda item 9) (A/54/119; A/54/134-E/1999/85; E/1999/69)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to begin its consideration of item 9, on which a draft resolution was to be issued very shortly (E/1999/L.34).

Mr. DONIGI (Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with Regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples), having thanked the Council for its continued support of the decolonization process, said that, as the custodian of article 55 of the United Nations Charter, the Council had an important role to play with regard to the inhabitants of non-self-governing territories. Self-determination, far from being a mere procedural matter, was inseparable from development, both being designed to eliminate economic and political dependency. There was no such thing as economic independence. What was required was the establishment of a mutual dependency position based on equality and agreed rules. Political independence did not depend on mutual dependency. It came with political conditions that made a previously dependent territory capable of being understood as an independent nation under international law. Currently, small States could seek independence through membership of the United Nations, which guaranteed that independence. The advent of geopolitical institutions to which some States had ceded some control over their affairs had blurred the old international law on nationhood.

Self-determination in the new context referred to the right to determine one's relations with other States and to establish laws and rules of governance, subject to overriding international obligations. The rights

available to the "peoples" of the Member States of the United Nations under article 55 of the Charter also applied to non-self-governing territories, since the latter enjoyed a special status under the United Nations system through their unilateral inclusion in the United Nations list by the administering Powers. The first preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 46/70 succinctly but comprehensively described the conditions facing non-self-governing territories.

At the opening meeting of the most recent session of the Special Committee, the Secretary-General had said that the decolonization movement had brought about one of the singular transformations of the twentieth century, and had urged the entire United Nations system and the international financial institutions to redouble their efforts to see the process through to its conclusion.

There were constant reminders of the unfinished business of decolonization: the United Nations was currently arranging a popular consultation in East Timor according to a recent agreement signed under the Secretary-General's auspices. The Special Committee was following events closely as New Caledonia moved to implement the Nouméa Accord on its way to a status referendum in 15 to 20 years' time, in which connection he commended the constructive attitude of the administering Power. It was also carefully studying the situation in the territories administered by the United Kingdom in the light of its Government's White Paper on modernizing the relationship with its territories.

The Special Committee was proud of its accomplishments, many of which were relevant to the current discussion. They had included adoption of a resolution on implementation of the Declaration on decolonization by the United Nations specialized agencies and international institutions which urged the specialized agencies that had not yet done so to provide assistance to the non-self-governing territories. The Committee had also called for closer cooperation between the Council and itself in assisting those territories. At the Committee's annual regional seminar held in St. Lucia in May 1999 to discuss the particular needs of small-island non-self-governing territories, participants had expressed their support for such Council/Committee cooperation. A UNDP representative had stressed the importance of conducting analyses on governance, economic management and increasing resource

mobilization to help those countries, whose vulnerability persisted even as their graduated status precluded them from receiving aid and official development assistance (ODA) continued to decline.

As the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonization came to a close, the Committee was not only reviewing its own activities under its mandate but also examining United Nations action beyond the Decade. The review centred on strengthening cooperation with the administering Powers, and an informal dialogue with all of them had begun to bear fruit. Their cooperation was crucial to the implementation of the Declaration, as indicated in General Assembly and Council resolutions.

The promising events of 1999 augured well for the implementation of the Declaration, but also called for a redoubling of combined United Nations efforts to give the territories the necessary support to pursue their socio-economic development and determine freely their political status.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN (agenda item 11) (A/54/152-E/1999/92)

The PRESIDENT informed the Council that a draft resolution on that agenda item was about to be issued (E/1999/32).

Ms. AL-BASSAM (Chief, New York Office for Regional Commissions), introducing the note by the Secretary-General (A/54/152-E/1999/92), said that, in addressing the various elements contained in the resolutions on which a report had been requested, it was as important to bear in mind the overall perspective of other relevant United Nations resolutions as it was to note that, since 1967, each report of the Secretary-General had provided authoritative accounts and analyses of the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation. Council resolution 1998/32 and the report under consideration both showed that the negative impact of the occupation on the land and people had been all-pervasive and all-encompassing, to the point of assaulting human dignity.

She listed various areas in which the situation had deteriorated badly, including the continued upsurge in settlement expansion; denial of the right of Palestinian holders of East Jerusalem identity documents to live in occupied East Jerusalem; the deprivation of more than half a million

Palestinians of regular sources of water; the reduction in the number of Palestinian workers in Israel; a reduced share of private investment in gross domestic product (GDP); and the Israeli occupation's macroeconomic impact on the occupied territory, where the continued ambiguity of the legal and political situation inhibited investment and growth.

Recent improvements following Israel's General Election had been generally welcomed, as had been the prospect of peace. However, until peace proved to be enduring and was based on the fundamental principles enshrined in the Charter, the situation would continue to be troubling for the region and the world. The Council's deliberations on the subject could thus be a timely contribution reflecting the international community's collective views on some of the complex issues surrounding the process.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.