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New York

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 25th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. JANKOWITSCH (Austria)

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

AGENDA ITEM 62: UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME (continued) (A/32/3 and Add.1, A/32/25, A/32/137, A/32/156, A/32/159, A/32/189, A/32/228, A/32/257, A/32/260; A/C.2/32/3; A/CONF.74/36)

1. Mr. GORITZA (Romania) said he was pleased to note that UNEP was continuing to make an outstanding contribution to the promotion of extensive international co-operation in the environmental field. As many delegations had pointed out, such co-operation should be a major component of the efforts to establish a new international economic order.
2. His delegation entirely agreed with that view, which meant that UNEP should give particular attention to the needs of developing countries, since environmental problems resulted not only from pollution caused by industrialization but also from poverty and under-development. Obviously, therefore, an effective attack on environmental problems could not be mounted unless the ground was prepared by accelerating economic and social progress and creating sound national economies.
3. In that connexion, it was gratifying to note that many of the 21 goals which UNEP proposed to achieve over the next five years involved the provision of more assistance to developing countries by UNEP and the rest of the United Nations system. High priority should therefore be given to attaining those goals and supplying the necessary resources.
4. One of the goals concerned the education and training of environmental specialists, the importance and urgency of which had been repeatedly stressed. While the actions taken by UNEP in that area were steps in the right direction, they were still inadequate, bearing in mind the real needs of the developing countries. What should be done was to explore new ways of increasing the assistance given to those countries for the training of national specialists in protection of the environment. His delegation therefore attached great importance to the implementation of the plan of action for environmental education and the starting up of the programme activity centre on environmental education and training.
5. Another important UNEP activity had to do with preventing natural disasters and limiting their environmental impact. Romania, which had recently suffered serious flooding and a devastating earthquake, believed that UNEP could make a valuable contribution to the development of research in that sector and to the organization of warning systems. It was therefore prepared to participate actively in UNEP activities in that field, and it supported the provisions of decision 89 (V) of the Governing Council of UNEP and the proposal for an operational world-wide disaster warning system.
6. His delegation attached particular importance to co-operation aimed at promoting the transfer to developing countries of modern non-polluting production technologies. It felt that UNEP should include in its programme more measures designed to achieve that purpose.

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(Mr. Goritza, Romania)

7. Desertification was another problem which affected all countries, directly or indirectly, and which warranted mobilizing the efforts of the entire international community. Romania considered that the Plan of Action adopted by the United Nations Conference on Desertification provided an appropriate frame for effective action in that field, at both the national and the international levels, and therefore supported the implementation of the objectives, principles and recommendations contained in the Plan.

8. Mr. ARMENDARIZ (Mexico) observed that, if international economic development was to proceed in terms of greater equity and justice, its primary aim must be to improve the living conditions of people throughout the world. Consequently, protection of the environment was an essential component of the new international economic order.

9. With reference to the activities of the United Nations Environment Programme, his delegation supported the idea of giving both the Programme and its Executive Director increased responsibilities for alerting States whenever there was reason to believe that a serious environmental risk existed and for proposing solutions. It also believed that some financial arrangement such as a special fund or special account was necessary, so that UNEP would be in a better position to mobilize the financial and human resources of the United Nations system and to obtain additional resources from the developed countries to finance specific projects.

10. His delegation endorsed the programmes which UNEP planned to carry out but wished to emphasize that, apart from the effects of remnants of wars on the environment, the risks which the construction and stockpiling of war material entailed for the living conditions of people throughout the world and for international security should also be the subject of studies.

11. It was essential to strengthen the role of the United Nations in the field of human settlements, and his delegation therefore supported the institutional arrangements proposed in document A/C.2/32/L.4, which would ensure the co-ordination of activities at all levels, with technical and financial co-operation being provided to developing countries through the Commission on Human Settlements (which would absorb the functions of the Committee on Housing, Building and Planning), assisted by a small and effective secretariat.

12. Mexico appreciated the need for national action in that field and had accordingly established a human settlements and public works secretariat, thus giving the State a stronger co-ordinating role under a large-scale national programme, the objectives of which were entirely compatible with those of international programmes.

13. Since quite a large part of its territory consisted of arid areas, Mexico took a very keen interest in regional and interregional activities having to do with combating desertification and with water resources management. It supported the Plan of Action and recommendations adopted by the Conference on Desertification, including institutional arrangements which would enable UNEP to play a leading role, with the support of the regional commissions. Increased technical and financial resources would have to be mobilized in order to ensure that the ambitious plans which had been adopted were implemented.

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14. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) welcomed the results of the United Nations Water Conference and the United Nations Conference on Desertification, which had highlighted two specific aspects of a global problem, namely, how to manage and utilize natural resources more prudently and effectively for the satisfaction of basic needs and the improvement of the quality of life. Expanding world population and the increasing scale of human activities were accelerating the depletion and pollution of finite resources and straining the quality of the environment. Co-operative effort must therefore be brought to bear so that remedial action could be taken, with international action speedily mobilized in support of national efforts. To that end, the General Assembly should take the actions recommended by the Conference on Desertification with respect to international co-operation, to expedite the implementation of the Plan of Action adopted at the Conference.

15. His delegation believed that the United Nations Environment Programme should be responsible for the co-ordination and monitoring of the follow-up action to the Conference on Desertification within the United Nations system. It hoped that appropriate arrangements would be agreed upon for financing the Plan of Action, such as the establishment of a consultative group, and that a positive response in terms of financial assistance would be forthcoming from developed countries and those in a position to contribute.

16. Turning to the results of the fifth session of the Governing Council of UNEP, he welcomed the agreement reached on the 21 goals to be attained by 1982.

17. In view of the obvious relationship between development and environment, environmental objectives should be pursued as aspects of the collective commitment to the amelioration of the human condition. That concern embraced both the eradication of poverty and the satisfaction of basic needs through economic growth as well as the evolution of more ecologically sound development processes. Similarly, greater account must be taken of environmental problems in the preparation of the new international development strategy.

18. His delegation was concerned at the low level of funding of the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, which continued to prevent the Foundation from becoming a significant instrument for the improvement of human settlements. He urged the Committee to endorse the establishment of a target for contributions which would ensure the development of the Foundation's activities.

19. His delegation supported the strengthening of the regional component in the implementation of the Habitat Conference recommendations, especially the recent steps taken to stimulate and develop regional co-operation in the human settlements field.

20. It was a matter of regret that no agreement had yet been reached on post-Habitat institutional arrangements for international co-operation. While realism and pragmatism might not serve all interests, they were the only paths leading to agreement or consensus. At its sixty-third session, the Economic and Social Council had made an almost successful attempt to balance varied positions and concerns, as could be seen from the resolution annexed to document A/C.2/32/L.4. Every effort should therefore be made by the General Assembly at its current session to reconcile the remaining points of disagreement so that international co-operation in the field of human settlements could move forward.

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21. Mr. DONNELLY (United Kingdom) said that, in general, his country was well satisfied with the results of the fifth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme, especially the steps taken towards better documentation and improved provision for examining the UNEP programme in depth in the light of its financial implications. It was to be hoped that that trend would continue and that the recommendations of the informal working group on documentation would be adopted.

22. With regard to the United Nations Conference on Desertification, the United Kingdom believed that urgent action to adopt sound national plans and priorities was needed in order to combat desertification, and it therefore endorsed the over-all aims and objectives of the Plan of Action adopted by the Conference.

23. However, it had some reservations on section VII, which contained recommendations for the implementation of the Plan within the United Nations system. Recommendation 27 of the Plan of Action concluded that UNEP with its Governing Council and the Environment Co-ordination Board, should be responsible for following up and co-ordinating the implementation of the Plan of Action. In the view of his delegation, which would have preferred the follow-up to be co-ordinated by ACC with more direct supervision from the Economic and Social Council, that additional responsibility should not alter UNEP's fundamental approach, which was to stimulate, co-ordinate and monitor action by the agencies of the United Nations system.

24. The proposals in paragraphs 102 and 103 of the Plan of Action concerning support services were somewhat imprecise and should be clarified. In particular, it was not apparent whether the working group on desertification referred to in paragraph 102 (c) (ii) and the group mentioned in paragraph 103 were one and the same. In addition, it was not clear from paragraph 103 whether the staff drawn from the various United Nations agencies to service the UNEP secretariat would remain responsible to those agencies or become responsible to the Executive Director of UNEP, or indeed whose budgetary responsibility they would become.

25. With regard to recommendation 28, which dealt with the financing of the Plan of Action, his delegation was not convinced that the measures proposed were the most effective ones for achieving the objectives of the Plan. The problem of desertification was intimately related to many other problems facing developing countries, for example in the sectors of agriculture, science and technology and human settlements. Indeed, efforts to deal with desertification should form part of wider programmes for development and social progress.

26. It would therefore be undesirable to establish a special fund or account for desertification. The United Kingdom felt that that might distort already agreed development priorities, and it would therefore continue to channel its multilateral aid contributions through existing institutions and machinery where they could be utilized in accordance with the priorities of the recipient countries. Furthermore, it could not be associated with the proposal, in paragraph 104 (d) of the Plan of Action, that development resources should be raised through international taxation.

(Mr. Donnelly, United Kingdom)

27. With regard to institutional arrangements for international co-operation in the field of human settlements, his delegation endorsed the view of the representative of Canada that human settlements could no more be separated from their economic and social framework than man-made environment could be separated from the natural environment. Consequently, it did not consider that the Italian proposal could constitute a basis for agreement. All energies should be directed towards agreeing on a sensible compromise solution.

28. Mr. ZAREMBOVSKY (Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic) said that his country attached great importance to protection of the environment and was working to reduce the adverse effects of technological progress. For instance, the present five-year plan included a set of practical measures designed to ensure the conservation of natural resources, their rational use in the interests of society, and protection of the environment.

29. The Byelorussian SSR also possessed a whole set of laws on such matters as exploitation of the subsoil and of water resources, protection of wildlife and improvement of the environment, together with inspection services to supervise the enforcement of those laws. Lastly, for the period 1976-1980, it had made budgetary provision of nearly 300 million roubles for the development of methods to protect nature and combat pollution.

30. However, in view of the world-wide importance of environmental problems, international co-operation in support of action taken at the national level was necessary. UNEP could play a major role in that connexion, provided that its activities were co-ordinated with those of other agencies in the United Nations system. The conclusion of agreements between UNEP and other United Nations agencies was a useful practice, but such agreements should be approved by the Governing Council of UNEP. UNEP should also be careful not to spread its efforts too thin and to use its resources as rationally as possible by allocating them to projects of interest to the majority of countries, such as the development of non-polluting technologies and methods of combating air and water pollution, the creation of a world-wide biosphere monitoring system, and assessment of the environmental impact of human activities.

31. His country certainly did not consider that implementation of the decisions concerning international environmental co-operation required the establishment of additional bodies or funds. It would be better to use the existing structures, without exceeding the approved appropriations, and to rely more on voluntary contributions. Moreover, the increase in the Fund of UNEP should not automatically entail an increase in national contributions.

32. The Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe laid stress on the importance of protection of the environment and conservation and rational use of natural resources, and on the need for close international co-operation in that regard. It was in that spirit that the USSR had proposed the organization of all-European conferences on the protection of the environment and on transport and energy. The Economic Commission for Europe was at present studying the possibility of organizing an all-European conference on the environment.

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(Mr. Zarembovsky, Byelorussian SSR)

33. The Byelorussian SSR had demonstrated the importance it attached to international environmental co-operation by ratifying the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter.

34. The solution of environmental problems was closely linked to progress in the struggle to prevent threats of war, to end the arms race and to strengthen international détente. That was why international treaties on the complete and general prohibition of nuclear tests were so important. The Byelorussian SSR had been one of the first States to sign the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or Any Other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques.

35. His delegation considered that the Plan of Action adopted at the United Nations Conference on Desertification would be of great help to countries in carrying out activities at the national level. However, the implementation of the projects provided for in the Plan of Action should be financed from voluntary contributions within the existing structure. There could be no question of drawing on the regular budget or establishing new bodies.

36. In his speech to the Intergovernmental Conference on Environmental Education currently being held at Tbilisi, the General-Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and President of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev, had said that the Soviet Union actively supported international action aiming at solving the problem of environment and the rational use of natural resources, since such action was in line with the objectives set forth in the United Nations Charter and approved in the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

37. Mr. RAJAONARIVELO (Madagascar) said that the international community must find solutions to environmental problems in accordance with the principles and objectives of the new international economic order. The UNEP secretariat must be strengthened to enable it to play its co-ordinating role and perform the new tasks which had been assigned to it. In that connexion, regard must be had to maintaining a satisfactory geographical distribution of secretariat staff, subject, of course, to the criteria of competence and technical qualifications.

38. His delegation approved of the Executive Director's proposal that he should report in detail to each session of the Governing Council on a limited number of areas and present for its consideration the areas on which he proposed to report in detail to the next session. It noted with satisfaction the considerable progress achieved with regard to documentation, and felt that the Co-ordination Board's decision that joint programming should inevitably focus on subject areas in which several agencies would participate with UNEP and would help to improve co-ordination. Lastly, it approved of the setting up by UNEP of a clearing-house facility to match requests with offers of technical assistance, although its effectiveness would depend on the political will of donor countries.

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(Mr. Rajaonarivelo, Madagascar)

39. Although the problem of environmental conservation and protection called for international action, the importance of action at the national level must not be overlooked. The Democratic Republic of Madagascar had spared no effort to prevent bush fires and systematically plant and afforest arid and semi-desert land. As a victim of desertification, his country had taken an active interest in the United Nations Conference on Desertification and had welcomed the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. It considered it essential to give priority to measures related to water resources in anti-desertification efforts and to make appropriate institutional arrangements for water management in arid and semi-arid regions.

40. In conclusion, his delegation hoped that UNEP would make a greater effort to limit the destructive effects of natural disasters. One way in which it could play its catalytic role to the full would be by contributing to the preparation of maps showing the location of disaster-prone areas.

41. Mr. WU Hsiao-ta (China) said that protection and improvement of the environment had implications for the economic development and well-being of the peoples of all countries. In some developed countries, the profit-based capitalist economic system led to pollution and degradation of the environment through the discharge of noxious wastes and reckless exploitation of natural resources. On the other hand, environmental problems in developing countries arose mostly as a result of under-development, which in turn had its root cause in the aggression, exploitation and plunder perpetrated by imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and hegemonism. Thus, it was clear that the environmental issue was intimately linked with the international political and economic situation. Its solution must therefore form part of the establishment of a new international economic order. A certain super-Power was taking advantage of the concern over environmental protection to peddle its fallacious propaganda about disarmament and détente, although it was second to none in arms expansion and war preparations. It hoped in that way to lead astray the struggle of the third world to establish a new international economic order.

42. His delegation viewed development and environment as constituting a unified whole. It was true that development was accompanied by problems of pollution, but it also created pre-conditions for enhanced capacity to protect the environment. It would therefore be a mistake to slow down development of the national economy in order to solve environmental problems. The contradiction between environment and development could be resolved if the developing countries gave thought to comprehensive planning and multipurpose utilization of their resources and adopted effective measures to prevent pollution.

43. Many countries, and developing countries in particular, suffered from or were threatened by desertification. The United Nations Conference on Desertification had enabled some progress to be made towards containing further desertification. However, it must be borne in mind that the problem had important social causes. Only when developing countries freed themselves from imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism and hegemonism, became masters of their own natural resources and undertook their own economic development would it be possible to prevent and control

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(Mr. Wu Hsiao-ta, China)

desertification. China's experience showed that national and local conditions must be taken into consideration in the preparation of plans of action to combat desertification, fully tapping the strength and wisdom of the masses and basing the plans essentially on self-reliance. National action should, however, be supported by co-operation and exchange of experience at the international and interregional levels, particularly among developing countries; such co-operation must be conducted on a voluntary basis, with respect for the principle of national sovereignty and in a spirit of consultation on an equal footing.

44. His delegation hoped that UNEP would be guided in its future work by the requirements of the establishment of a new international economic order and would take into consideration the views and wishes of the developing countries, in order to promote co-operation and exchange of experience among nations.

45. Mr. PULI (Ghana) said man had finally come to realize that national and isolated efforts would not suffice to solve environmental problems and that they must be supported by international co-operation under the aegis of the established organs of the international community. Since the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Ghana had made serious efforts at both the national and the international levels to put into effect the objectives of the Conference. His delegation was convinced that UNEP was working along the right lines to promote the protection of the environment. For example, since the Stockholm Conference, 70 Governments had set up bodies to handle environmental legislation or control. However, much remained to be done.

46. His delegation was of the view that environmental quality and development were intimately linked. Development could not confer lasting benefits on any country unless it was accompanied by environmental management. On the other hand, economic development was essential to eliminate the poverty which led to environmental degradation. The formulation of the new international development strategy offered an opportunity to mobilize international co-operation geared to the achievement of balanced world development. UNEP had a role to play in the establishment of a new international economic order in which the twin imperatives of a sound environment and a satisfactory rate of development could be met. The measure of UNEP's success would be the extent to which it had contributed to the satisfaction of basic needs. His delegation welcomed the Governing Council's decision to adopt as the basis for programme development the 21 goals for 1982 listed in the report on the work of its fifth session (A/32/25, para. 31). It also supported the decision that the Governing Council should concentrate every year on selected parts of the programme.

47. In view of the importance of UNEP's activities, particularly to developing countries, his delegation regretted the fact that too few countries had so far pledged or contributed to the Fund of the United Nations Environment Programme. It therefore supported the appeal made by the Executive Director. His delegation was pleased to note that UNEP had initiated co-ordination activities with at least 20 other organizations within the United Nations system dealing with environmental matters.

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(Mr. Puli, Ghana)

48. The international community must apply itself to solving the problems of human settlements, which particularly affected developing countries, so that mankind's basic needs could be fully satisfied. His delegation welcomed the recommendations adopted by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. However, it regretted that it had not been possible to settle the question of institutional arrangements, which was holding up the formulation and implementation of a programme of international co-operation in that field, and hoped that a decision could be taken during the current session. His delegation regretted that only 20 countries had made pledges or contributions to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation, which had a special role to play in mobilizing technical and financial resources, particularly for developing countries. Ghana had a number of institutions dealing with human settlements and would be glad to share its facilities and experience with other countries whose problems were similar.

49. In view of the importance of controlling desertification, his delegation noted with satisfaction the results achieved at the United Nations Conference on Desertification, notwithstanding problems involving financial and institutional arrangements. It hoped that the 28 Conference recommendations for multilateral, regional and bilateral action would be quickly endorsed and would be implemented. It attached particular importance to the creation of a special account and to the study of additional means of financing the implementation of the Plan of Action. Although it recognized the value of action by individual countries in arresting desertification, it considered that international assistance was a necessary supplement.

50. Mr. HURELBAATAR (Mongolia) said it was very important for UNEP to define its objectives clearly. It should take particular care to avoid fragmenting its efforts and duplicating the work of other United Nations bodies. On the contrary, it should work to solve priority problems and strengthen its role as co-ordinator of all the activities of the United Nations system in the field of the environment.

51. It was more important than ever to establish effective arrangements for international co-operation for the protection of the environment, because the arms race and the production of new types of weapons of mass destruction threatened the very existence of humanity and nature. In that connexion, the proposals submitted by the Soviet Union on the strengthening of international security and the deepening and consolidation of international détente were to be welcomed. His delegation also endorsed the decision taken by the Governing Council of UNEP at its fifth session (see A/32/25, decision 102 (V)) concerning the Convention on the Prohibition of Military or any other Hostile Use of Environmental Modification Techniques and hoped that, as was stated in the decision, the greatest possible number of States would soon adhere to that Convention. The formulation of an international programme of co-operation for the protection of the environment demanded above all the creation of a favourable political climate, a fact to which the series of agreements concluded following the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, and covering, inter alia, a programme of co-operation in the field of the environment, testified.

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(Mr. Hurelbaatar, Mongolia)

52. As an Asian country, the Mongolian People's Republic paid tribute to the work of UNEP in the region of Asia and the Pacific. It hoped that the implementation of the Governing Council's decision 90 (V) on the establishment in the region served by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific of a programme activity centre for environmental education and training would produce practical results, and that the Conference of the countries of the ESCAP region on the protection of the environment would make a major contribution to the development of co-operation among all countries.

53. His Government attached great importance to the protection of the environment and the improvement of working conditions, and to improving the living standards and well-being of workers. To that end it had adopted a series of legislative measures on improving working conditions and health care. Moreover, the struggle for the protection of the environment and the rational use of natural resources had become the concern of the entire Mongolian people. In the preceding five years, the Government had increased its control over the use of natural resources, water resources, the atmosphere and the soil, and had taken measures for the conservation of rare animal species. Finally, he expressed the hope that the existing contacts between his Government and UNEP concerning co-operation in the field of the environment would lead to positive results.

54. Mr. SHROFF (New Zealand) stated that the United Nations Environment Programme, in its five years of existence, had demonstrated its ability to live up to the hopes held for it at the time of its birth. It had managed to give effect to its catalytic role not only in the programmatic interagency sense, but above all in its contribution to evolving the concept of eco-development.

55. The Programme was working towards the attainment of the 21 goals approved for 1982, for which an important element would be the health of the Environment Fund. The financing of UNEP was a responsibility for all countries, and accordingly, his delegation warmly endorsed the Executive Director's intention to seek to widen the base of contributions. New Zealand itself, which had contributed to the Fund since its establishment, had recently advised the Executive Director of the basis on which it would provide its contribution from 1978 to 1981.

56. UNEP had also had considerable success at the regional level, for instance, in its plan for the protection of the Mediterranean. His delegation welcomed the fact that the UNEP regional office in Bangkok had been working with the South Pacific Commission and the South Pacific Bureau for Economic Co-operation to develop an environmental management plan for the long-term use of the natural and human resources of the area. The Heads of Government of the countries of the region had recently adopted a Declaration on Environmental Management in which they had recognized that common approaches to development planning and environmental protection would have to be adopted and strong regional co-operation established; they had recommended that further work should be done on the environmental management plan in order to bring it fully into line with the political and economic situation in the region, and that international organizations and interested Governments should be invited to provide financial and other assistance for executing the plan.

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(Mr. Shroff, New Zealand)

57. On the subject of institutional arrangements for the follow-up to the Habitat Conference, he felt that a compromise solution, such as that proposed in document A/C.2/32/L.4, offered the only prospect of a consensus decision, even if, by definition, a compromise could not fully satisfy every delegation.

58. Mr. MADEY (Yugoslavia) said that one of the principal results of the Stockholm Conference had been to make the world realize the magnitude of environmental problems; it had stimulated the adoption of national and international programmes and the establishment of vital co-operation. If Yugoslavia, for example, had made progress in the field of environmental protection, that was undoubtedly due in large measure to the new awareness created at Stockholm. Since then, every session of UNEP had helped to encourage action at all levels, and since UNEP machinery had proved its efficacy, it could be expected to attain the 21 goals it had set for 1982. In that connexion, the recommendation that contributions to the UNEP Fund for the coming four years should be set at \$150 million was a guarantee of success.

59. He attached particular importance to UNEP's regional co-operation activities, of which the Blue Plan for the Mediterranean was the most striking example. He hoped that that work would continue to develop in future.

60. Each of the recent major international conferences had established a framework for action in spheres connected with the environment. The Conference on Desertification, in particular, had adopted measures which would require international and national action, and it was to be hoped that resources for their implementation would be made available without delay. However, while the Water Conference and the Conference on Desertification had set up satisfactory institutional machinery, the same could not be said for the Habitat Conference. The situation gave cause for concern; his delegation hoped that the differences between the various positions would diminish during the current session and that the General Assembly would be able to set up suitable machinery within the framework of UNEP. The solution advocated by the Italian delegation in that context appeared promising.

61. The United Nations Environment Programme, by its activities, had made it possible to define the relationship between development and environment, thereby underlining the prominence to be given to the environment in the preparation of a new development strategy. It was difficult, however, to decide on a form of development which would be applicable to all countries in the world, so that caution would have to be exercised before deciding that the structural changes required by the new international economic order necessarily had to be aimed at satisfying basic needs. UNEP, and indeed the whole United Nations system, should be guided by the various decisions taken by the General Assembly in drawing up a new development strategy.

62. Mr. BERGAQUI (Tunisia) stressed that the protection of the environment and the improvement of the quality of life for all were essential to development and should form part of the over-all approach to establishing the new

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(Mr. Bergaoui, Tunisia)

international economic order. International co-operation was essential in the management of the environment and UNEP had a central role to play in that field. Consequently, he welcomed the progress achieved by UNEP in carrying out its catalytic role and urged the specialized agencies to collaborate more closely with the Programme.

63. Although UNEP's functions were primarily at the world level, his delegation considered that increased attention should be given to national and regional projects with a view to fostering regional co-operation based on joint programmes. He was grateful for the UNEP secretariat's efforts to improve the quality of the data provided to Governments and urged Governments in return to submit more information on their activities. In its managerial role, UNEP should strengthen its capacity to assess the dangers created by interference with the environment and establish an effective warning system.

64. His delegation supported the goals proposed by the Executive Director for the period up to 1982 and considered that it would be necessary to increase the resources of the Fund in order to enable UNEP to carry out those tasks. Among those goals, his delegation was particularly interested in the protection of the marine environment, a matter in which the Programme had achieved substantial success, particularly in the implementation of the Mediterranean Action Plan. It was to be hoped that UNEP would consider preparing further conventions to strengthen the protection of the marine environment, modelled on the Convention on the Protection of the Mediterranean Sea. His Government had offered to serve as host for a centre to provide information and advice to other Mediterranean countries on the conservation of marine and coastal wetland ecosystems.

65. Among UNEP's activities, his delegation attached particular importance to those concerned with the ecosystems of arid and semi-arid lands and welcomed the adoption by the Governing Council of decision 86 (V). His Government had established a university faculty on rangeland management and arid zones, and he thanked the countries and organizations which had provided assistance for carrying out that project. His delegation also noted with satisfaction the emphasis on environmental education and training. His country was prepared to collaborate with other countries in that field.

66. His delegation, recognizing the importance of satisfying basic human needs, welcomed the adoption by UNEP of effective measures to implement the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements. It was gratifying to note that, despite the uncertainty regarding institutional arrangements, the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation had prepared the essential elements of a programme of work consistent with its mandate. Consequently, the Executive Director's proposal to set a minimum target of \$50 million for voluntary contributions to the Foundation for the period 1978-1981 should be fully supported by Governments.

67. His delegation welcomed the adoption of the Plan of Action by the United Nations Conference on Desertification and hoped that it would be steadfastly applied in order to assist countries, particularly the developing countries, in

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(Mr. Bergaoui, Tunisia)

their fight against desertification. In that connexion, it supported the recommendation that UNEP should be given the function of monitoring and co-ordinating the implementation of the Plan of Action and that the regional commissions should be asked to co-ordinate, catalyze and implement regional anti-desertification programmes adopted by the member States concerned. His delegation also endorsed the recommendation to set up a consultative group to assist in co-ordinating any activities undertaken with resources that it had mobilized. It was essential that the General Assembly should comply with the recommendation of the Conference to create a special United Nations account to provide the necessary financial support for implementing the Plan of Action.

68. Mr. van BUUREN (Netherlands) said that he shared the Executive Director's view that it was essential to satisfy basic human needs if continued degradation of the environment was to be prevented. He welcomed the decision that UNEP's activities over the following five years would be carried out within the framework of the decisions adopted by the General Assembly concerning the establishment of a new international economic order and the preparation of the new development strategy. Given the importance of UNEP's co-ordinating role, the Environment Co-ordination Board should be strengthened and co-operation programmes with other bodies and organizations both within and outside the United Nations expanded. He attached special importance to the Earthwatch programme, which should be made operational as soon as possible, and to the question of natural resources shared by two or more States.

69. In view of the wide range of activities awaiting it, UNEP was rightly seeking to consolidate the Environment Fund, and his delegation supported the Executive Director's intention to seek voluntary contributions totalling \$150 million for the period 1978-1981. His Government had already indicated to the Executive Director that its contribution for the biennium 1978-1979 would amount to \$700,000 and that its contribution for the following biennium would be at least at the same level.

70. An order of priority should be established in UNEP's work programme. The question of the material remnants of war, for example, was surely not in the mainstream of UNEP's concerns. Consequently, his delegation would discourage any expansion of activities in that field, such as the convening of intergovernmental meetings.

71. The protection and improvement of the environment could only be assured through a change of attitude throughout society, and UNEP's role of providing information and documentation was consequently particularly important. In particular, his delegation attached great importance to World Environment Day and to close co-operation with non-governmental organizations. The two recent international conferences had contributed to the task of providing information; the Conference on Desertification had created an increased awareness of the need to pay attention not only to the technical and ecological aspects of the problem but also to the social and economic development of the population. It had also demonstrated the need for transnational co-operation and the full participation of the population.

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(Mr. van Buuren, Netherlands)

72. His delegation welcomed the proposed decentralized implementation of the Plan of Action on Desertification and the idea of entrusting responsibility for co-ordinating future activities to UNEP. However, the results of the Conference were not entirely satisfactory with regard to financial arrangements, particularly those relating to the creation of a consultative group or a special account. The better course would be for the proposed consultative group to serve principally as a review, assessment and advisory body.

73. As for implementing the Plan of Action, his delegation advocated strengthening the execution by consortia of national or subregional projects, on the model of the "Club des amis du Sahel", and increased bilateral and multilateral assistance through existing channels; there should also be a review of the priorities of developing countries and multilateral and bilateral sources of assistance in the light of the requirements of the Plan of Action. His delegation also endorsed the proposal that a small group of specialists on international financing of projects and programmes should carry out a study of additional measures and means of financing for the implementation of the Plan of Action.

74. With regard to the institutional arrangements for the follow-up of the Habitat Conference, a compromise solution should be agreed as soon as possible on the basis of the proposal submitted by the delegations of Canada and Sweden at the sixty-third session of the Economic and Social Council.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.