



GOVERNING COUNCIL

Twenty-seventh session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 688th MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 11 June 1980, at 11.30 a.m.

President: Mr. POPESCU (Romania)

CONTENTS

Programme planning and preparation for the third programming cycle (continued)

(b) Programme planning (continued)

- (i) Examination of the experience with country programming
- (ii) Review of present practices and proposals for enhancing the collective involvement of the developing countries in the determination of priorities for intercountry programmes and in the identification and initiation of regional projects and activities
- (iii) Criteria for UNDP's response to natural disasters
- (iv) Assistance to Nicaragua

This record is subject to correction.

Participants wishing to make corrections should submit them in writing to the Official Records Editing Section, room E.6108, Palais des Nations, Geneva, within one week of receiving the record in their working language.

Corrections to the records of the meetings of the Governing Council at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

The meeting was called to order at 11.40 a.m.

PROGRAMME PLANNING AND PREPARATION FOR THE THIRD PROGRAMMING CYCLE (agenda item 5)  
(continued)

(b) PROGRAMME PLANNING (continued)

- (i) EXAMINATION OF THE EXPERIENCE WITH COUNTRY PROGRAMMING (DP/454 and Corr.1 and 2)
- (ii) REVIEW OF PRESENT PRACTICES AND PROPOSALS FOR ENHANCING THE COLLECTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF THE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES IN THE DETERMINATION OF PRIORITIES FOR INTERCOUNTRY PROGRAMMES AND IN THE IDENTIFICATION AND INITIATION OF REGIONAL PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES (DP/435)
- (iii) CRITERIA FOR UNDP'S RESPONSE TO NATURAL DISASTERS (DP/432)
- (iv) ASSISTANCE TO NICARAGUA

1. Mrs. PHAN THI MINH (Observer for Viet Nam) wished first of all, on behalf of her Government, to thank UNDP for so promptly coming to the assistance of Viet Nam even before that country had become a Member of the United Nations and for the dynamism which had characterized the initial activities of UNDP on Vietnamese territory.

2. The staff of UNDP, in particular the resident representative and the Administrator, who had visited the country in May 1979, had provided the Vietnamese authorities with valuable advice on how to make the most efficient use of the financial resources allocated to them under the country IPF and given them precise information about the rights and obligations of Viet Nam as a recipient country. Moreover, it had been upon the Administrator's initiative that a mission consisting of one member from the Plan Commission, one member from the National Committee on Science and Technology and one member from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Viet Nam had recently visited India and Sri Lanka to study with Indian and Sri Lankan officials and with the resident representatives the way in which co-operation between UNDP and local authorities was implemented in practice.

3. In drawing up the second cycle programme for Viet Nam and, more particularly, in setting priorities and formulating projects, UNDP had fully respected that country's national sovereignty and taken account of its special characteristics and difficulties, particularly the fact that it lacked equipment but had relatively skilled manpower.

4. To ensure that programme's success, the Vietnamese authorities had co-operated closely with UNDP and the executing agencies and had on several occasions reviewed the projects included in the programme, deleting some and replacing them by others deemed more important.

5. In that connexion, she wished to express sincere thanks to the resident representative at Hanoi and his staff, who were supervising the execution of the second cycle programme with exemplary devotion and actively helping the country's authorities to prepare a broader programme for the third cycle.

6. In the framework of the third programming cycle, the Vietnamese authorities hoped that UNDP would help them to participate more actively in regional and subregional projects and to secure the co-operation of the developing countries, especially those which had recently acquired experience in the development field and also those whose situation was rather similar to that of Viet Nam. She suggested that the UNDP Office at Hanoi should employ larger numbers of local staff, since that would facilitate co-operation between UNDP and the national services responsible for development.

7. Her delegation noted with satisfaction that UNDP had begun to help the young State of Zimbabwe, that it had continued to finance activities in favour of national liberation movements recognized by OAU, that it had provided assistance to Kampuchea to facilitate its economic recovery and that it was going to increase its assistance to Nicaragua. Nevertheless, with regard to the projects implemented in Afghanistan, she hoped that in the event of an incident, UNDP would consult the Afghan Government before taking any decision.

8. She was pleased to note that the criteria for the distribution of IPFs were the subject of a frank and open debate in the Governing Council, and she was convinced that the decision to be taken in the matter would respect the principles of equity and non-discrimination.

9. Mr. MORSE (Administrator) said that he wished to submit some specific proposals in response to suggestions made concerning programme planning. He was pleased to note that many governments valued country programming highly and were generally satisfied with its content and quality; he expressed appreciation, in particular for the comment by the representative of Mexico that document DP/454 showed that much progress had been made in the matter. The persistent problem, referred to by a number of representatives, was the apparent contradiction between, on the one hand, the sovereign right of governments to determine their own development priorities as well as the use of UNDP's resources in support of those priorities and, on the other, the Administrator's duty to ensure that UNDP programmes were cost efficient and of a high quality, while at the same time taking full account of the Council's expressed priorities for global action. In his opinion, the solution to the problem lay at the country level, in the constructive and continuous dialogue between the government and the resident representative. It was a question of reconciling national short-term or medium-term development objectives with international long-term strategies and policies. In order that adequate consideration should be given to global priorities, with due respect of the sovereign rights of the governments of recipient countries, he would see to it that resident representatives invited governments to envisage the inclusion in the country programme of projects that reflected national, regional and global priorities. For example, the Council had stressed the need to pay increased attention to investment-oriented activities. With regard to that point, he would instruct resident representatives to bring to the attention of governments the key role which the Council wished UNDP to play in that area in order to keep the question in the forefront of discussions concerning the preparation of country programmes.

10. He was pleased to note that the members of the Council had reaffirmed the importance of the central planning and co-ordinating role which resident representatives would have to play to ensure the most effective and efficient utilization by governments of inputs from UNDP and the United Nations system. That

role would become increasingly important in the context of continuous programming, which all the members of the Council had endorsed. Many delegations had suggested that such co-ordination should be enlarged to include inputs financed by other sources of external assistance, but of course that could be achieved only if the governments concerned so wished.

11. With regard to the need for sustained sectoral support at the country level, he recognized that it was a vital ingredient of continuous programming. Effective country programme reviews could be carried out only if the executing agencies participated meaningfully in the continuous programming process, which had not always been the case in the past. He would endeavour, in co-operation with his colleagues in the other organizations, to promote the creation at the country level of effective and dedicated teams, capable of advising governments usefully on how to achieve the maximum utilization of the United Nations system's potential for meeting their development needs. The concept of continuous programming, which stressed objectives rather than inputs, had been fully supported by the Council. In that regard, the positive results which had been achieved in Bangladesh through the use of that type of programming augured well for the future. Nevertheless, as some representatives had pointed out, country programming continued to pose serious problems: negative attitudes, non-compliance with established procedures, the cumbersome nature of some UNDP administrative procedures, use of resources for low priority projects, absence of linkages between country and intercountry programmes, and inadequate co-ordination of country programmes. The representative of Sweden had observed that the study should have placed greater emphasis on the role of governments in programme implementation, in accordance with the new dimensions policy. In that connexion, during the past year, UNDP had constantly encouraged governments to execute a greater number of projects and to use national staff; a report on the question would be submitted to the Council at its 1981 session. As to the other problems which he had just mentioned, he said it was precisely because he was determined to deal with them directly in the course of the third cycle that he had requested his staff to make a completely honest assessment of experience to date so that both the good and the bad features of the country programming process could be identified. Corrective measures were already under consideration and would be applied as soon as possible. He noted that, those problems notwithstanding, nearly all delegations had fully supported the recommendations contained in section VI of document DP/454, thus demonstrating confidence that UNDP would be able to correct those shortcomings and develop country programming as the cornerstone for third cycle activities.

12. The representative of Canada had pointed out that several country programmes considered at the current session covered periods which would be completed shortly and that some activities had been presented retroactively. That situation was due to the transition from the second cycle to the third and reflected the desire of many governments to harmonize the period of the country programme with the third UNDP development cycle. Such transitional programmes could be expected to disappear as countries began to prepare programmes covering the whole of the third cycle. Lastly, he agreed with the representative of Belgium that round table discussions bringing together multilateral and bilateral donors would be a useful means of supplementing continuous programming, and he hoped that that form of programme support would increase substantially in the future.

13. The United Kingdom proposal that the Council should use the periodic country programming reviews to monitor the contents and effectiveness of country programmes merited serious consideration. Such reviews might facilitate the Council's task when, in the context of continuous programming, it came to approve programmes which would present concrete project proposals only for the initial years of the programme and be defined in the later years only in terms of specific areas of activity. The Council would thus be better informed than in the past about the implementation of the UNDP programme as a whole and would be kept regularly informed of the rate of implementation of country programmes. He would therefore look into the possibility of submitting the reviews as a type of assessment, which would permit Council members to oversee the implementation of the programme as a whole without having to consider the individual country programmes in detail. He would submit a proposal to the agency partners during the inter-agency consultations to be held the following week.

14. Before concluding his remarks on that aspect of programme implementation, he wished to thank delegations which had complimented UNDP on progress in evaluation, feedback and project design. He concurred with the representative of Poland that the feedback phase should become an integral part of the implementation process and that there should be continuous monitoring throughout all phases of the programme, including the very important follow-up period. Project evaluation making it possible to analyse the impact of a project at the national level - as mentioned by the United States representative - was playing an increasingly important role. He would like to see that type of activity financed as much as possible from project budgets in the future, as was the case for analyses of investment-oriented projects being carried out as part of the FAO co-operative programme.

15. Referring to the Netherlands proposal that a special working group should be convened early in 1981 to consider further the question of investment follow-up, he thought that it was an excellent idea since the secretariat was fully aware of the dramatic decline in UNDP-supported pre-investment projects since the consensus. A number of initiatives, including Sir Robert Jackson's study, had been taken at his direction, and he would welcome new suggestions from Council members.

16. He informed the Council that he had sent a letter to the executive heads of agencies, proposing the extension of the mandate of the Inter-agency Task Force through October 1982, and that on the whole their views had been extremely positive. The Inter-agency Task Force had been established in November 1977 in order to seek a better articulation of policies within the United Nations system and to assist in translating them into more effective common action. It had been involved in all phases of the examination of country programming, especially in the elaboration of questionnaires for agencies, regional bureaux and resident representatives, and in field missions to 18 countries. In that way UNDP and the Task Force had been able to obtain the views of governments and to make such recommendations as would strengthen the total effort for the third country programming cycle. It was to be hoped that the cordial relationship which had been established between the Task Force and UNDP staff would continue to bear fruit and would make possible the elaboration of new guidelines for country programming, especially with regard to continuous programming and periodic country reviews. As the Council's decisions would have to be implemented over a period of several years, the consultative process should continue and he hoped that the Governing Council would endorse his proposal for extending the mandate of the Inter-agency Task Force through October 1982.

17. So far as intercountry programming was concerned, he was happy that Council members had approved the machinery proposed in document DP/435 to enhance the collective involvement of the countries of each region in the setting of intercountry programming priorities and in the identification and initiation of regional projects and activities. However, the Netherlands representative had suggested increased involvement of the regional commissions and had accordingly suggested that paragraph 9 (e) should state that the planned meeting of government representatives should be organized under the joint auspices of UNDP and the regional commissions. He (Mr. Morse) pointed out that the report in document DP/435 was the outcome not only of Governing Council decision 79/10 but also of General Assembly resolution 34/206, of which he cited paragraph 5. The proposals contained in document DP/435 originated not only from UNDP but also from the executive secretaries of the regional commissions, the latter having approved them in their meeting in Santiago in February. The wording proposed by the Netherlands representative had in fact been considered as a possible option with the executive secretaries but had not been found entirely satisfactory, particularly since the regional commissions would have to assume the financial commitments, as the Netherlands representative himself had pointed out. However, he assured the Netherlands representative that the governmental meetings referred to in paragraph 9 (e) would be convened in close co-operation, consultation and collaboration with the executive secretaries. Assistant administrators and directors of the UNDP regional offices had already consulted with the executive secretaries of the regional commissions concerned about implementing the consultative process proposed in paragraph 9, and the methods agreed upon would be described in their statements on agenda item 6.

18. The delegations which had commented on the criteria for UNDP's response to natural disasters (DP/432) had expressed the view that UNDP should continue to assist countries which were the victims of disasters and that the Council should provide UNDP with the financial and other necessary means for the purpose. He particularly shared the opinion that resident representatives had a special role to play in the co-ordination of all forms of external assistance if the stricken country so requested. The United States representative had stressed the need for clear guidelines, and the representatives of Japan and the United Kingdom had suggested that the maximum amount which might be made available for any one disaster should be specified. The amount of \$1 million per disaster referred to in DP/432, paragraph 12, was based on UNDP's fifteen years of experience. However, to avoid the risk mentioned by the representative of Canada, i.e. of drawing too much on the Programme Reserve, he (Mr. Morse) proposed a limit of \$2 million per year per country. Like the representative of Japan, he considered that the limits should be applied with flexibility. Moreover, in the absence of other indications, the secretariat would assume that it was the Council's wish that UNDP assistance should be restricted to natural disasters, as the representatives of the Netherlands and the United Kingdom had suggested.

19. On the question of aid to Nicaragua (agenda item 5 (b) (iv)), he said that at its special session in February the Council had authorized that country to borrow up to \$3 million from its IPF for the third cycle and that, in accordance with the General Assembly decision, it had decided to treat Nicaragua as if it were a least developed country for the rest of the second cycle. As a result of the Council's decision, Nicaragua's IPF for the second cycle had been increased by 6.4 per cent, i.e. by \$323,000. The secretariat would require the Council's express authorization

to provide Nicaragua with assistance over and above that deriving from its treatment as a least developed country - for example, assistance from the United Nations Capital Development Fund. In addition, the Council might give consideration to extending Nicaragua's status as a least developed country for the third cycle and deferring repayment of the agreed loan until the fourth cycle. The work of the Working Group which was considering the definition of new criteria for a review, during the third cycle, of the IPFs of countries suffering an economic decline might offer guidance to the Council. With regard to the suggestion by the United States representative that Nicaragua's IPF should be recalculated for the third cycle in the same way as the IPFs of the "other" countries mentioned in document DP/496, table 1, foot-note d/, he pointed out that the IPF of that category of countries would be recalculated solely on the basis of 1978 figures when they became available. In conclusion, he assured the meeting that the secretariat was ready to carry out any directive given by the Council.

20. The PRESIDENT said that revised versions of draft decisions on agenda item 5 (b) would be submitted to the Governing Council for approval in its 690th session. He invited the Japanese representative to introduce a draft resolution on assistance to Nicaragua.

21. Mr. ENOKI (Japan) said that the description given by the observer for Nicaragua of the situation of that country's people and of their reconstruction efforts had met with a sympathetic response on the part of many delegations. In the light of the ensuing discussions and in particular of the recommendations of the United States delegation, a draft resolution in the following terms had been prepared by several delegations, including Japan, in consultation with the observer for Nicaragua:

"The Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme,

Considering resolution 34/8 of the General Assembly endorsing the resolution of the Committee of the Whole of ECLA (E/ECLA/G/1092) which recommends that, although Nicaragua is not officially included among the least developed States on the list adopted by the General Assembly in its resolution 2768 (XXVI), it should receive, to the fullest possible extent, the same treatment as that granted in the past or that which may be granted in the future to that group of States, until the situation is normalized,

Noting that projections by the Government of Nicaragua and several international organizations indicate that the situation in Nicaragua will remain precarious beyond 1981,

Decides to authorize the Administrator, without prejudice to other measures he may recommend as special assistance to Nicaragua, to continue to extend to Nicaragua the same treatment as that granted to the category of least developed countries until the situation is normalized during the third programming cycle".

The meeting rose at 12.40 p.m.

