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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 721st MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Wednesday, 17 June 1981, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. ABDULAH (Trinidad and Tobago)

Other funds and programmes (continued)

- (b) United Nations Volunteers (continued)
- (c) United Nations Capital Development Fund (continued)
- (d) United Nations Revolving Fund for National Resources Exploration (continued)
- (e) United Nations Interim Fund for Science and Technology for Development (continued)
- (g) United Nations Special Fund for Land-locked Developing Countries
- (h) Assistance to drought-stricken countries in Africa and follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Desertification

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

OTHER FUNDS AND PROGRAMMES (continued)

- (b) UNITED NATIONS VOLUNTEERS (continued) (DP/535)
- (c) UNITED NATIONS CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT FUND (continued) (DP/536 and Corr.1; DP/INF/34)
- (d) UNITED NATIONS REVOLVING FUND FOR NATURAL RESOURCES EXPLORATION (continued) (DP/537, DP/538; E/1981/23; DP/NRE/PROJECTS/1-4)
- (e) UNITED NATIONS INTERIM FUND FOR SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (DP/539)

1. Miss ANSTEE (Assistant Secretary-General, Department of Technical Co-operation for Development) said that the United Nations development system should make a concerted effort to use available resources as rationally and as efficiently as possible. The United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration represented an example of partnership among agencies in that it was intended to draw fully on existing capacities in the organizations principally involved: UNDP, the World Bank and the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. The latter had been closely associated with the Revolving Fund and had provided technical support, mainly in the field of mineral development. It could, however, play a more active role at the policy level and with respect to technical support for specific projects. The Department could also assist the Revolving Fund should the Governing Council and the Economic and Social Council decide that the Fund should expand its activities from exploration for solid minerals to exploration for geothermal energy resources, petroleum and gas, fields in which it had wide experience.

2. The Working Group of Government Experts established to review and analyse the activities of the Revolving Fund had implicitly acknowledged the idea of partnership on which the Revolving Fund was based. In its report (E/1981/23, para. 48) the Group had expressed the view that UNDP's administration of the Revolving Fund assured appropriate support to carry out its managerial and financial responsibilities. It had agreed (E/1981/23, para. 50) that maximum use should be made of the technical services of the Division of Natural Resources and Energy of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development for the operational activities of the Revolving Fund and that those services should also be used for feasibility studies, petroleum and gas exploration, and geothermal development.

3. The Committee on Natural Resources had likewise advocated close co-operation between the Revolving Fund and the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. It was gratifying that the Administrator of UNDP had indicated his determination to achieve a viable working relationship, taking account of the strengths, mandated functions and competence of each partner, that would make the Revolving Fund a prime example of co-operation between the agencies involved for the benefit of developing countries.

(Miss Anstee)

4. During 1980 the Revolving Fund had made encouraging progress in the assistance provided to developing countries in the field of mineral exploration. The Department hoped to collaborate more closely with the Revolving Fund and anticipated greater achievements in the years ahead, based on successful co-operation aimed at making optimum use of the limited resources available.

5. Mr. MIYAKAWA (Japan) said that his country attached great importance to the Revolving Fund since natural resources exploration was critical to the economic development of developing countries and to the growth of the world economy as a whole. He trusted that the Revolving Fund would expand its activities to meet the increasing needs of developing countries. The number of projects being implemented by the Revolving Fund had increased markedly, reflecting great interest by recipient countries.

6. His delegation welcomed the proposal made by the Working Group of Government Experts to ease the rather strict replenishment conditions, which would allay the apprehension felt by recipient countries. The Group's recommendations on horizontal expansion were also appropriate. Many delegations had stressed the importance of developing alternative sources of energy, a view which Japan fully shared. The Revolving Fund had an important role to play in that process. A problem was created by the limited financial resources available to the Fund, yet it should be possible to undertake the development of hydrothermal systems and exploratory drilling without incurring significant additional financial burdens. With respect to hydrocarbons, the Group had merely recommended that a group of petroleum experts should be established, on the assumption that substantial additional funding would be made available. His delegation fully supported the Group's recommendations.

7. With regard to the proposal to grant the Administrator authority to approve supplementary short-term funding, his delegation believed that any such funding should be limited to the minimum amount necessary to ensure the continuity of projects.

8. The Revolving Fund was in greater need than ever of support from all Governments. His delegation appealed to all Governments in a position to do so to make generous contributions to the Fund.

9. Mr. CHEN Xingnan (China) said his delegation was pleased that in 1980 more projects had been approved for implementation by the Revolving Fund than in previous years. The exploitation of resources was important for the development of the national economies of the developing countries, although the latter sometimes lacked adequate technology and funds. The Revolving Fund had a role to play in that respect.

10. The Working Group of Government Experts had considered the Revolving Fund's functions and institutional arrangements and the system of reimbursement. The Fund's administrative and procedural arrangements for operation activities should be amended to take more account of the sovereignty of recipient

(Mr. Chen Xingnang, China)

countries. The system of reimbursement merited careful study, and should take account of the interests of recipient countries. His delegation supported the proposal of the Working Group that the rate of replenishment of contributions from user countries should be reduced from 2 per cent to 1 per cent. He trusted that the Group's proposal to expand the activities of the Revolving Fund to encompass geothermal energy and hydrocarbons would not lead to any duplication within the United Nations system.

11. The support given by Japan, Canada, the Netherlands and certain other countries to the Revolving Fund was most welcome. Other countries should increase their contributions. The efforts made to secure joint financing for the Revolving Fund were gratifying. Given the nature of natural resources exploration, the Governing Council might well authorize the Administrator to approve supplementary short-term funding.

12. A group of experts from the Revolving Fund had visited China and held talks on co-operation in geological exploration within China. It was to be hoped that such co-operation would continue. His country supported the adoption of the projects for Benin, the Congo and Mali.

13. Ms. SCHELTEMA (Netherlands) said that her delegation welcomed the expansion of the Revolving Fund's operational activities and the interest shown by potential recipient countries. Although her delegation could support the new projects before the Council, the proposals on supplementary short-term funding and full funding should be seen in the broader context of the Revolving Fund as a whole.

14. The review of the activities of the Revolving Fund carried out by the Working Group had been conducted too early, given the limited operational experience obtained. The failure of the Group to examine both approved and executed and non-approved projects was disappointing. The Group's report contained little new information.

15. The proposed expansion of activities should be considered carefully. Her delegation agreed with the proposals on vertical expansion, yet was reluctant to support any horizontal expansion until the Revolving Fund's operations were placed on a sound basis. The inclusion of hydrocarbon work did not therefore seem appropriate, nor had the Revolving Fund's potential in the field of geothermal energy been convincingly demonstrated. Her delegation thus preferred to maintain the existing mandate.

16. It was regrettable that the replenishment formula, which constituted the backbone of the Revolving Fund, had not met with general acceptance. Her delegation could support the proposed relaxation of the formula, although that might have a negative influence on the Fund's goal of self-financing. The lowering of the repayment percentage in favour of the least developed countries should be complemented by an appropriate lowering of the ceiling on replenishment for those countries.

(Ms. Scheltema, Netherlands)

17. The institutional arrangements for the Revolving Fund had caused her Government some concern. Any report on co-operation between the Revolving Fund and other organs of the United Nations system should await the outcome of the United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy. In the meantime, other practical measures could be taken.

18. The subject of funding seemed to represent a vicious circle. The Revolving Fund had encountered difficulties in enlarging its operational activities because of inadequate financial resources and hesitation on the part of potential recipient countries, while donor countries seemed reluctant to contribute because of the limited scope of operational activities. The only solution lay in a significant increase in voluntary contributions, primarily through the enlargement of the number of donor countries.

19. Mrs. VERVALCKE (Belgium) said that the United Nations Capital Development Fund enjoyed the full confidence of her delegation. Belgium had also contributed to the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration and would continue to do so. Unfortunately, the Revolving Fund appeared to be developing rather slowly. A reduction in its overhead expenses would be welcome.

20. The report of the Working Group of Government Experts on the Revolving Fund was premature, as were the proposals for the expansion of the Fund. It was important to know whether the developing countries really supported the Revolving Fund and whether it met their needs. The Revolving Fund should be based on the resources already available within the United Nations system.

21. Mr. BRUNI (Italy) said that his delegation was concerned about the proliferation of funds.

22. Italy had contributed to the United Nations Volunteers programme, and was glad that more countries had received Volunteers. Staff for the programme should be recruited extremely carefully, since they had an important role to play in promoting development.

23. Italy had also contributed to the United Nations Capital Development Fund, which was aimed at assisting the least developed countries. The activities of that Fund should be expanded.

24. The United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration represented something of a new departure within the United Nations system. Its mandate and operational rules were extremely complex, which might explain why it had made rather slow progress. It appeared that developing countries had begun to display more interest in the activities of the Revolving Fund.

25. The report of the Working Group of Government Experts contained interesting suggestions on the replenishment formula and the possible extension of the activities of the Revolving Fund to include geothermal energy. The United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy should consider the future

(Mr. Bruni, Italy)

co-ordination of activities relating to energy sources. The first meeting of the Working Group had been useful, and its work should continue.

26. Italy was a major contributor to the United Nations Interim Fund for Science and Technology for Development. His delegation welcomed contributions made to that Fund by other countries, but found the list of contributors rather unbalanced. Certain groups of countries displayed a lack of interest in the Fund, and it had been possible to approve only a small percentage of the projects submitted for consideration due to the limited resources available.

27. Mr. AHLANDER (Sweden), speaking on behalf of the Nordic countries, observed that the United Nations Volunteers programme had marked its first decade, having provided the services of 2,000 Volunteers since 1971 and having already attained in 1981 the 1983 target of 1,000 Volunteers. The activity of the Volunteers should be seen as an input into the development process which was pragmatic, not ideological. Quality rather than quantity should determine the future expansion of the programme. The Administrator should give serious thought to the desirability of preparing a short analytical report on the future use of Volunteers in the development process, for submission to the next session of the Governing Council.

28. The United Nations Volunteers programme was predicated on universality of participation and was intended to offer opportunities to young professionals from developing countries, in the spirit of technical co-operation among developing countries. Yet 50 per cent of the Volunteers had come from only five developing countries. In the long run such a situation would affect the credibility of the programme, and the imbalance must be corrected in the near future. Careful consideration should be given to the relationship between the United Nations Volunteers programme and other United Nations agencies. For example, the programme could in no way be considered an executing agency or an executive arm of UNDP.

29. With regard to the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), he noted with satisfaction that its disbursements had risen from \$8.9 million in 1979 to \$19.8 million in 1980. The Fund possessed a number of special features: it was aimed at the poorest countries, it called for local participation and it provided flexible assistance in areas where other agencies did not have a mandate. The Fund would have an important role to play, together with the UNDP Special Measures Fund for the Least Developed Countries, in the follow-up to the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries to be held in Paris. The Administrator should prepare documents on both Funds, considering in depth the relationship between them with regard to future developments in the least developed countries, and submit them to the Paris Conference.

30. His delegation had briefly reviewed the information in document DP/536 on the implementation of the UNCDF partial funding system, which at first glance seemed useful. It felt, however, that the experimental period should be extended to three years, and that a full report on the partial funding system should be submitted to the Governing Council in June 1982.

31. Mr. GADELHAK (Egypt), referring to the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration, said that the terms of the payments system were not flexible enough for developing countries. He agreed with the Chinese delegation that the rate of replenishment of contributions from user countries should be reduced from 2 per cent to 1 per cent. Agreement still had not been reached with some Governments on projects involving the Revolving Fund adopted the previous year by the Governing Council. The Council should therefore recommend continuation of negotiations between the Fund and those Governments.

32. Mr. LATOUR MANCILLA (Cuba) reiterated his country's full support for the United Nations Interim Fund for Science and Technology for Development whose activities were an instance of exemplary dynamism. The third world countries wanted new and advanced technology to be provided for development in the areas in which the Interim Fund specialized. The activities of the Interim Fund were an important element in their struggle to emerge from backwardness and poverty, and they rightly demanded that those activities should not be impeded. Cuba hoped that the difficulties of the Interim Fund would be overcome, with the full support of the international community.

33. Mr. SCHMID (Austria) said that his country hoped soon to be able to give financial as well as moral support to the United Nations Capital Development Fund.

34. With regard to the United Nations Interim Fund for Science and Technology for Development, Austria was one of the few countries to have adhered to its commitments: of the \$2 million pledged, \$1 million had been paid in 1980, and another \$1 million would be paid within the next few months. He noted with satisfaction the generous contributions announced by Italy and the Netherlands and appealed to all other donor countries to fulfil their pledges. The crucial importance of the transfer of technology had been acknowledged by the 1979 United Nations Conference on Science and Technology for Development and in the International Development Strategy for the Third Development Decade. Pending the implementation of the United Nations Financing System for Science and Technology established by General Assembly resolution 34/218, the Interim Fund was to assure the transition from an ad hoc to a stable system of financing the transfer of technology from industrialized to developing countries. The fact that more than 800 requests for support had so far been received from more than 80 developing countries was eloquent testimony to the need for such a fund. The current resources of the Interim Fund were clearly totally inadequate, and it was to be hoped that satisfactory decisions on its speedy replenishment and a more permanent financing system would be reached at the resumed third session of the Intergovernmental Committee on Science and Technology for Development. Austria would continue to support United Nations activities connected with the transfer of science and technology to developing countries.

35. Mr. ALVAREZ (Mexico) said that Mexico attached great importance to the Interim Fund. In 1976, his Government prepared an inventory of the scientific and technological research in progress in Mexico and drawn up a national plan for science and technology. Such planning activities were of crucial importance and the international community, through the Interim Fund, could support them. The Fund could contribute to technical research in developing countries in an ordered way, as part of a general plan of development. Mexico had proposed several projects which had been adopted by the Fund, one of which, currently being implemented, would lead to the establishment of an industrial policy in keeping with modern trends.

36. The Interim Fund could also be very useful to the developing world in other areas. It should be conceived as a multilateral autonomous institution which supported the scientific and technological structures of a country or created them where they did not exist.

37. Mexico shared the concern of other delegations regarding the low level of contributions to the Interim Fund. His country would make a special effort to make an adequate contribution and urged all to do so. The Interim Fund was essential to the development of the third world.

38. Mr. GONZALEZ (Argentina) said that his delegation had a high opinion of the activities of the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration, as exemplified by the project currently being implemented in Argentina. His delegation agreed that the Fund's activities should be expanded, but did not see any need to establish a group of petroleum experts as proposed in paragraph (d) of the recommendation by the Administration (DP/538, para. 3).

39. With regard to the United Nations Interim Fund for Science and Technology for Development, his delegation shared the Administrator's concern about contribution from Governments. Argentina considered the Financing System for Science and Technology for Development to be of primary importance and had therefore already paid the contribution it had pledged to the Interim Fund. In allocating reserves, the Interim Fund should strike a balance between regional distribution and the relevance of the project submitted.

40. Mr. MOUMOUNI (Niger) observed that the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration had overcome its initial difficulties and achieved tangible results in carrying out its operational programme. More projects than ever before had been approved in 1980 and most of the projects approved had been implemented within the time specified. The developing countries which faced enormous difficulties in financing their research projects and activities, placed high hopes in the Revolving Fund. Once the Niger had established its priorities, particularly in the field of mining, where a large research programme was under way, it would submit exploration projects for financing under the Revolving Fund. His Government also hoped that the Revolving Fund would consider the possibility of financing regional projects involving several countries. It fully supported the goal of an annual increase of \$10 million in the resources of the Revolving Fund and urged all countries to make still more substantial contributions to the

(Mr. Moumouni, Niger)

Fund. It also fully supported the recommendations contained in documents DP/NRE/PROJECTS/1, 2, 3 and 4.

41. With respect to the United Nations Interim Fund on Science and Technology for Development, the contributions announced at the pledging conference in 1980 had fallen far short of the goal of \$250 million set for the Fund in the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development. It was unanimously recognized within the United Nations system that science and technology were fundamental to the development of developing countries and to the search for a new international economic order, and also that the direction science and technology were taking tended rather to aggravate the already marked disparities between the developed and developing countries, with modern technology becoming less and less suited to the needs and priorities of the third world. The renewed call for contributions in General Assembly resolution 35/67 had not improved the financing prospects of the Interim Fund and the Niger once again appealed to the developed countries to display greater concern by increasing their financial contribution to the development activities of the United Nations system.

42. Mr. DORADO (Observer for the Philippines) said that the countries which had received support from the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration could testify to the benefits they had derived. The Revolving Fund had helped his own country to undertake a project which not only provided it with the means to search for new energy resources but also provided employment for people who might otherwise have been displaced owing to the exhaustion of other resources in the region concerned. The project formed an important part of the area development programme, and provided inputs for other spheres of development in the Philippines.

43. The question was why so many countries which could do so were not contributing to the Revolving Fund. A number of States complained that not enough money was being invested in natural resources exploration, especially in developing countries, and concern had been expressed that the future might bring a crisis in the supply of vital minerals. Such concerns, however, had not been met by commitments to increase the resources available for exploration. Accordingly, his delegation supported the report of the Working Group of Government Experts, and hoped that the Council would endorse the recommendations contained therein.

44. Mr. THYNNES (Assistant Administrator for Special Activities) said he was disappointed that it had not proved possible to amass more than one sixth of the resources envisaged at the Vienna Conference for the United Nations Interim Fund for Science and Technology for Development; that fact severely limited the activities of a Fund whose services were required by most developing countries. He hoped that the support for the Interim Fund expressed by several delegations would result in larger pledges to the Fund in future.

(Mr. Thynnes)

45. He was aware that some countries found the 2 per cent replenishment formula applied to the United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration rather high, but with the introduction of the repayment ceiling and the concessional reduction for least-developed countries recommended by the Working Group, there was some doubt whether the Fund would be a truly revolving fund in the future, unless it achieved a higher success ratio than could be expected at the moment. The problem, therefore, was to find a balance between the risks taken by donor and recipient countries, and he believed that a 2 per cent replenishment rate was not far from the right solution.

46. Some of the projects approved the previous year had not been finalized within the time allotted but, given the latitude allowed the Administrator, he foresaw no great difficulties solving that problem. In reply to the question whether the Revolving Fund really responded to the needs of recipient countries, he could do no better than refer to the statements by the representative of the Niger and the observer for the Philippines. The Revolving Fund had got off to a slow start, but many countries had now accepted the principles set out in document DP/142, and many more had expressed interest in receiving assistance.

47. He shared the concern of some delegations regarding the work of the Working Group of Government Experts, but on account of its limitations rather than its quality. Delegations had had little time to study the group's Report (E/1981/23): UNDP would not be averse to reconvening a group when more experience had been acquired, but the group would have to be smaller if it was to be able to go into as much detail as seemed desirable. The Revolving Fund would become involved in geothermal energy and hydrocarbons production only to the extent that its resources allowed it to do so; he believed it was important to open the door to such applications, however, so that there would be no limitations on the role of the Revolving Fund following the forthcoming United Nations Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy.

48. In view of the need for co-operation between the Revolving Fund and other United Nations entities, he had welcomed the statement by the Assistant Secretary-General of the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. Co-operation would require constant attention by the Administrator in order to ascertain how the system could be used to minimize the burdens on the Revolving Fund and the system as a whole. He was convinced that the problems in that area could be overcome.

49. Mr. KOBAYASHI (Director, United Nations Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration) thanked delegations for their encouragement and guidance and assured them that he was determined to promote efficient and responsible management of the Revolving Fund so as to improve the assistance it could provide to developing countries.

50. Mr. NABULSI (Executive Co-ordinator, United Nations Volunteers) said that one of the major guarantees that the quality of United Nations Volunteers would remain high was provided by the recipient countries: no Volunteer was accepted until the recipient country had indicated its approval. In the case of Volunteers already working for a technical agency, the agency also had to indicate that the Volunteer was of sufficiently high quality before assignment took place. In many instances, candidates had had to be turned down because their qualifications had been found inadequate. Such monitoring would continue at the highest possible level.

51. The Volunteers currently numbered 1,000, not because of any particular desire to reach that specific number but because the programme was responding to the desires and needs of Government. As to the suggestion that a report should be prepared on the use of Volunteers in development, such an idea had been under consideration for some time. A symposium would be held early in 1982 at which recipient and donor countries could assess together the role of the Volunteers as an input to the technical co-operation programme. The symposium should facilitate the preparation of guidelines for future involvement.

52. He was aware that virtually all United Nations Volunteers came from five large developing countries and four major industrialized countries. Discussions were under way with other States which might be able to provide Volunteers, and he hoped there would be a larger spread of nationalities by 1982. Nevertheless, the programme was a voluntary one and it was difficult to refuse candidates on the basis of their nationality, creed or culture alone.

53. Turning the United Nations Volunteers programme into an independent agency was the last thing he had in mind. The programme was happily working under UNDP and had no aspirations to independence. It was regarded as an agency only to the extent that the General Assembly had designated it the lead executing agency where youth programmes were concerned.

54. The programme had good relationships with the other agencies; when problems cropped up, they were quickly solved. Mention had been made of a difference with UNESCO, concerning the provision of a teacher to the Central African Republic, but UNESCO was quite satisfied with the settlement reached. Essentially, the Volunteers had been able to provide a teacher at short notice, while UNESCO had not.

55. The PRESIDENT noted that some delegations were not in a position to take decisions on subitems (b), (c), (d) and (e) of agenda item 7. He therefore announced that decisions would be postponed until the following meeting, but observed that, as a matter of principle, delegations should be prepared to take decisions at the end of the discussion on each individual item or subitem when no financial implications were involved.

(g) United Nations Special Fund for Land-locked Developing Countries (DP/541)

56. Mr. BROWN (Deputy Administrator), introducing document DP/541 on the United Nations Special Fund for Land-locked Developing Countries on behalf of the Administrator, reported with regret that there had been no improvement in the Fund's financial resources in 1980. Voluntary contributions pledged for 1981 amounted to less than \$64,000, which was obviously insufficient for any expansion of activities. Notwithstanding those financial constraints, however, a number of projects had been successfully completed, including a prefeasibility study for the establishment of a 35-kilometre ropeway for Bhutan, to which the Fund had contributed \$16,000; assistance for the purchase of a tugboat by the Paraguayan Government as part of a project to dredge the Paraguay River in order to improve access to the Atlantic for several countries, to which the Fund's contribution had been approximately \$45,000; and a national airline feasibility study for Botswana, at a cost of \$22,000.

57. Experience with those and other projects had served to highlight the substantial requirements of land-locked developing countries for specialized assistance from the Fund. The Administrator was therefore again making a plea for support. As he had stated at the twenty-seventh session, the Fund must have substantial increased support from the international community, especially since an important principle was involved: special purpose funds must not be created by a well-intentioned world only to wither for lack of support.

(h) Assistance to drought-stricken countries in Africa and follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Desertification (A/36/208 and Add.1; DP/543, DP/544)

58. Mr. DOO KINGUÉ (Assistant Administrator, Regional Director for Africa), introducing document DP/544 and Corr.1, said that the situation in the Sahel was still much as described in the report although it was not yet possible to reach any conclusion about the situation for the current year because the rainy season was not due to commence until July.

59. There had likewise been no significant change in East Africa, apart from the serious floods which continued to affect certain parts of Somalia and eastern Ethiopia. In Uganda, the focal point for co-ordination and planning with the Government in respect of the relief effort in the Karamoja and West Nile districts was the Relief Co-ordinating Unit set up in January 1981. The Unit, chaired by the UNDP Resident Representative, who was also the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Emergency Relief Operations in Uganda, comprised all the United Nations agencies involved in the relief effort. Together with voluntary agencies, they were also participating in the Ugandan Government's National Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation.

60. According to the latest information, an impressive effort had been made by the population of the Karamoja area to plant some 26,500 hectares of food crops. Despite that effort, however, the international community would probably have to continue supporting for some time what even in normal circumstances had been

(Mr. Doo Kingué)

a food-deficit area. In the West Nile area, where only some 20 per cent of cultivable land had been planted, the situation was not very promising. Although forward food-supply plans could not be completed because of uncertainty about the rains, there was no doubt that the need for international aid would continue, even though the quantity would depend on the abundance of rainfall.

61. Since the report had been drafted, the situation in Botswana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Malawi, the United Republic of Tanzania and Zimbabwe had improved considerably. The opposite was true of some other countries, particularly Madagascar and Mozambique. Indeed, in Mozambique the food deficit had proved larger than projected. Furthermore, four countries not mentioned in the report had since been hit by drought. A recent report from the Government of Angola had described the situation in the Benguela, Cunene, Mocamedes and Huila provinces as alarming, and a joint FAO/UNDP mission had gone there to study the situation. The gravity of the situation in Djibouti could be measured by the fact that the level of water sources had dropped from 30 to 60 per cent, according to region, and the salinity of certain ponds had increased to 5 grams per litre.

62. In Morocco, a sharp drop in rainfall had seriously affected the 1980/1981 harvest, reducing cereal yield by 52 per cent, as well as leading to major livestock losses. There had been a shortfall of some 8.7 million quintals of cereals and the Government had had to import 1.8 million metric tons of animal feed. In Swaziland, maize production had dropped by 25 per cent and cotton production by 30 per cent as a result of drought, particularly in the south-east of the country.

63. Despite some improvements, therefore, two African countries out of five were still drought-stricken, and there was no guarantee that the rest would be spared in the future.

64. With respect to the special programme of assistance to African countries stricken by drought and/or threatened by desertification, he referred the Governing Council to paragraph 127 of document DP/544 and said that anti-desertification and protection of the African environment had been selected by the African Ministers of Planning as one of the 10 priority fields for UNDP assistance under the regional programme for the next cycle which would be submitted for approval by the Council in June 1982. The broad outline of the programme had been discussed at the inter-agency meeting held at Nairobi. Since it would cover a very wide variety of activities, ranging from water development and protection of grazing lands to reforestation and renewable energy, assistance would be required not only from UNDP, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), but also from bilateral and multilateral sources of funding.

65. Mr. LA MUNIÈRE (Director, United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the medium-term and long-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region (A/36/208 and Add.1), and the report of the Administrator on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region (DP/543), said that the two documents attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of UNSO activities. Since the finalization of those reports, significant progress had been made in programme planning and project development, as well as resource mobilization.

66. In April-May 1981 a planning and programming mission had visited Guinea, Guinea-Bissau and Uganda. In Guinea it had identified several major projects to control and reverse the degradation of parts of the Fouta Djallon massif, and had taken stock of the desertification of the northern part of the country. A total of 10 project requests had been prepared in conjunction with the Government. In Guinea-Bissau, the mission had formulated nine project proposals to deal with environmental problems and their relationship to the ecology of the Sahel and the problem of desertification. Fifteen priority desertification control project proposals had been formulated with the Government of Uganda, where the mission had been able to assess at first hand the problems affecting the drought-stricken Karamoja.

67. In addition, three important programming missions had been undertaken in association with donors' representatives. A joint DANIDA/UNSO mission had visited the Gambia and Senegal, where it had prepared three energy conservation projects, and a similar mission would soon go to Cape Verde to examine the development potential and means of harnessing wind energy resources. UNSO had also assisted representatives of the Swedish Government and of SIDA on a fact-finding and project identification mission to Niger, Senegal and the Upper Volta in the course of which five desertification control projects had been selected for further development and implementation. A joint Finnish/UNSO mission to Niger and the Upper Volta had resulted in the identification of a number of anti-desertification projects, primarily in the area of afforestation and deforestation control, which the Finnish Government had expressed interest in supporting. Such missions seemed to be particularly constructive, and he hoped that such a pragmatic approach would continue to be used and, where possible, expanded. Indeed, it had already been agreed that technical missions with Yugoslav and UNSO representatives would visit some of the Sudano-Sahelian countries to discuss the substantive and operational details of projects which the Yugoslav Government would be prepared to support.

68. Another important UNSO formulation mission had visited Somalia and the Sudan to assist the two Governments in the further development of desertification control in rangeland areas. In addition, project proposals for fuelwood plantations in Ethiopiá were in preparation as a result of an FAO Investment Centre mission to that country, and two further missions would visit Mali to determine the feasibility of setting up a special unit to produce solar energy equipment and to develop a pilot livestock production programme in the internal flood plain of the Niger respectively.

(Mr. la Munière)

69. Important negotiations with bilateral donors had recently been concluded for a significant expansion of the road programme in Mauritania; a further extension of the feeder road system in Mali and Senegal was currently being negotiated with prospective donors. Having begun primarily as a means to ensure year-round access to isolated regions of the Sahel chronically affected by drought and related natural disasters, the feeder road programme was fast becoming an important element of over-all development planning in many countries. While it had not been possible to make adequate provision under UNSO-supported programmes for road maintenance on a permanent basis, a study was being undertaken with a view to developing an optimal formula for each country. A more detailed report would be submitted to the next session of the Council.

70. The progress in resource mobilization was a result not only of intensified fund-raising activities and of the expansion of the UNSO desertification-control mandate, but also of the growing recognition by the international community of the importance and magnitude of the problems posed by persistent drought and continual desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian area.

71. As far as UNSO working methods and modes of operation were concerned (A/36/208, paras. 12 to 28), he stressed that, though an integral part of the United Nations system, the Office was strictly extrabudgetary. It depended on voluntary contributions made mostly on a project-by-project basis, the only exception being the programme support costs provided by UNDP and UNEP as part of their desertification-control joint venture. Since UNSO began its programming cycle with priority Government requests and proceeded to submit those projects to the donor community, most of its contributions were project-tied. However, any unearmarked contributions were used primarily for programme and project development, for instance, to finance technical missions, feasibility studies or pilot projects. When working with Governments on project proposals UNSO tried to promote various forms of complementary, joint or parallel financing which combined, as appropriate, elements of capital investment and technical co-operation. In terms of financial value, therefore, the projects were often substantially in excess of the inputs to the Trust Fund and its achievements in resource mobilization should be measured not only by the financing provided but also by its ability to increase and expedite the flow of bilateral resources.

72. In 1980, on the initiative of the UNDP Administrator, UNSO had been included in the United Nations Pledging Conference for Development Activities and the strong support given to that initiative by the General Assembly in resolution 35/86 would, he believed, help to expand the resource base further and enhance the ability of UNSO to carry out its responsibilities.

73. With respect to the nine substantive sectors on which UNSO was likely to concentrate its attention in the forthcoming biennium, he said that it did not have its own priorities except to the extent that they were implied by the nature of its two mandates of drought-related recovery and rehabilitation and desertification control. Within those broad parameters it was the specific needs of individual

(Mr. la Munière)

Governments which provided the emphasis, it therefore differed from country to country. Indeed, where the members of the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) were concerned, priority projects had been carefully assessed both nationally and on a regional basis. As a reflection of the priorities expressed by the Governments concerned, UNSO was likely to concentrate its efforts over the next two years on control of water resources, with special attention to surface-water harvesting, food production in the Sahel or arid areas, range management and conservation measures, sand stabilization, training activities, afforestation and reforestation, development of new and renewable sources of energy, institutional support for national units dealing with problems of drought rehabilitation and desertification control and assistance in the development of secondary road systems to link isolated drought-prone areas with the rest of the nation on a year-round basis.

74. While UNSO had no intention of getting involved in energy issues which belonged more appropriately elsewhere, it would certainly be increasing its activities in connexion with fuelwood plantations, improved technology for charcoal production, and the development of alternative sources of fuel and more efficient stoves, as well as local manufacture of simple equipment for household use, given that 80 per cent of the energy consumed by the population of the Sudano-Sahelian region came from wood resources and that deforestation was one of the most important man-made factors affecting desertification there.

75. Reporting on the ninth session of the Governing Council of UNEP, the agency on behalf of which UNSO acted under its desertification-control mandate, he said that a decision had been taken to include Benin in the list of countries eligible to receive assistance through UNSO in order to implement the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. He trusted that the Governing Council of UNDP would endorse that decision. UNEP had also extended its support, through its contribution to the administrative and operational costs of the joint venture, to UNSO activities to benefit countries facing the threat of desertification.

76. As far as the Sudano-Sahelian region was concerned, UNSO maintained a close, highly productive relationship with CILSS at all levels, and it also worked closely with concerned agencies of the United Nations system, and particularly with the UNDP Regional Bureau for Africa and Regional Bureau for Arab States. The addendum to document A/36/208 dealt with inter-agency contacts on the broad scale.

77. Despite the progress made, the severity of the drought and related ecological disturbances in the Sahel, the advance of desertification throughout the Sudano-Sahelian region, and the increasingly difficult living conditions confronting the population there continued to pose significant problems for UNSO, particularly in view of its limited financial and material resources. He hoped that in the forthcoming biennium, with the Governing Council's assistance and support, it would be possible to contribute at least to a partial solution of the problems and to alleviate some of the hardships on a longer-term basis.