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Thirtieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York,
on Monday, 6 June 1983, at 10.30 a.m.

President: Mr. SLIM (Tunisia)

CONTENTS

Opening of the session

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters

Statement by the Deputy Administrator

Statement by the Chairman of the Intersessional Committee of the Whole of the Governing Council

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The meeting was called to order at 10.55 a.m.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The PRESIDENT declared open the thirtieth session of the Governing Council and said that, as the work of the session began, the world was going through an extremely critical phase. The problems besetting mankind were very numerous, and it was the duty of all to do everything possible to overcome them. It was necessary, in that context, to bear in mind the vital importance of technical assistance in the development process of third world countries. Such assistance was an essential element in the development of the human resources of those countries, and it was one of the most important factors in promoting growth in both the industrialized nations and the developing countries. For those reasons, he hoped that the thirtieth session of the Governing Council could contribute constructively to the quest for solutions and that it would, in particular, succeed in strengthening UNDP, the only instrument for multilateral co-operation in the field of technical assistance.

2. The Council was about to consider and take decisions on important issues which might seem, at first sight, to be of concern only to UNDP but would, in a wider context, determine the ability of the Programme to continue to play the fundamental role in the development process that it had performed so effectively over the last 20 years. He had every confidence that a spirit of constructive co-operation would underlie the Council's deliberations and contribute to the success of its work.


3. The PRESIDENT said that the provisional agenda for the thirtieth session of the Governing Council, as approved by the Council at its organizational meeting for 1983, appeared in document DP/1983/L.6; in document DP/1983/L.6/Add.1, the Administrator proposed the inclusion of a new sub-item 5 (c), entitled "Use of special programme resources". If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council adopted the agenda as contained in those documents.

4. It was so decided.

5. The PRESIDENT drew attention to the tentative schedule of work contained in the annex to document DP/1983/L.7. By its decision 83/1, the Council had determined that the schedule should be purely provisional in character so that additional items might be taken up as the Council deemed necessary. The Council had also decided that, if consideration of an item was concluded before the time anticipated, it would move on to the next item immediately so as to make the best possible use of the time available and the conference services at its disposal. If there was no objection, he would take it that the Council reaffirmed that decision.

6. It was so decided.
7. The President recalled that the Council had decided at its organizational session that the Budgetary and Finance Committee should consider the items listed in paragraph 5 of document DP/1983/L.7. He suggested that the financial implications of documents DP/1983/9, DP/1983/29 and DP/1983/69 should also be referred to the Budgetary and Finance Committee.

8. It was so decided.

9. The President said that consideration of the specific tasks to be assigned to the Working Group could be left until the general debate had been concluded.

STATEMENT BY THE DEPUTY ADMINISTRATOR

10. Mr. Brown (Deputy Administrator), reading a statement prepared by the Administrator, who was indisposed and unable to attend the meeting, said that it had been a long and difficult year for developing countries, for organizations like UNDP which supported their efforts and for members of the Governing Council, who had had to attend numerous meetings. The year had not been a good one for development generally or for UNDP. Field programme expenditures for 1982 had been 10 per cent below the 1981 level, and delivery under indicative planning figures had been almost $200 million below the level targeted for the year in the decision for the illustrative allocation of resources for the third development co-operation cycle.

11. The results and recommendations arrived at by the Intersessional Committee of the Whole had not been all that the Administration had hoped for, given the plight of the developing countries, their technical co-operation needs, the capabilities of UNDP in that respect and the apparent structural imbalance affecting development generally. The Committee had, however, approached those problems with great care and concern.

12. The fearful set-backs experienced by the developing countries in their struggle towards economic and social progress had been somewhat mitigated by the more hopeful signs of world economic recovery. The recent Williamsburg Declaration had expressed the collective concern of the leaders of the industrialized market economies for the recovery of the developing countries and had stressed the special attention to be given to the flow of resources, particularly official development assistance flows, to those countries. It now seemed clear that the issues of trade, debt, finance and official development assistance were closely intertwined in the minds of world leaders and that the prospects of the developing world were seen as inextricably linked to the recovery of the world economy as a whole. For every 1 per cent increase in developing country output, the output of developed countries grew by one quarter of 1 per cent, a remarkable figure given the massive share of developed countries as a group in world output.

13. The leaders meeting at Williamsburg had also endorsed the report of the Working Group on Technology, Growth and Employment and had agreed on the need to encourage both the development of advanced technology and public acceptance of its role in promoting growth, employment and trade. The supporting role played by UNDP
in the acquisition and adaptation of technologies by developing countries could only gain further impetus in the light of such perceptions.

14. There were some slight indications that UNEP's resource outlook was beginning to show modest signs of improvement. While there had been a 6 per cent decline in voluntary contributions for 1981 and an increase of less than 1 per cent in 1982, contributions for 1983, as at 1 June, had shown a 2 per cent gain over 1982, with some 38 per cent of the $687.5 million pledged having been paid in by Governments as compared to only 28 per cent at the same time in 1982. Pledged contributions were some $22 million more than had been estimated at the time of the Pledging Conference in November 1982. Particular gratitude was due to the Governments of Canada, Norway and Sweden, which had responded to pleas with additional pledges totalling more than $12 million. In a year of substantial economic set-backs for developing countries and the world economy in general, UNEP had thus essentially managed to hold its own.

15. Cost-sharing contributions for 1983, paid by both developing country Governments and third parties, were also running some 24 per cent ahead of such contributions at the same time in 1982, demonstrating the determination of the developing countries themselves to utilize UNEP's technical co-operation services to the utmost at a time of resource constraints.

16. While marginal compared to overall needs and targets, such indicators did provide some evidence that UNEP had, like the world economy, started the process of recovery. But it must be stressed that such modest hopes had meaning only in the context of fears about the continuing integrity and effectiveness of UNEP as a central funding source for technical co-operation. The forecast of delivery of only 55 per cent of illustrative IPFs for the third cycle must and would remain in effect, since no substantial breakthrough in the Programme's funding requirements was yet perceptible and the agreed annual growth target for planning purposes of 14 per cent per annum was still far from being attained.

17. The reduction inprogramming to 55 per cent had severely affected a large number of developing countries. Many Governments had pleaded for an upward revision in their third cycle resource allocations and had described the already disastrous effect of UNDP cutbacks on their development efforts and prospects. Regrettably, all such requests had had to be rejected in view of the grim realities of the current resource situation. The Administrator would remind the Council, however, that its decision 80/30 called for a mid-cycle review in 1984 which included a consideration of IPFs of countries whose real economic position had deteriorated substantially from 1978 levels. Any adjustments would naturally be contingent on the availability of resources, but members of the Council should nevertheless begin preparing for the review so that resources commensurate with changing needs and circumstances could be mobilized for that important task.

18. Since the adoption of decision 80/30, the decline in trade, the sharp fall-off in commodity prices, the drop in ODA flows and towering debt burdens had threatened the ability of almost every developing country, and particularly the poorest among them, to recover from the current world recession despite the gradually improving...
performance of the developed economies. In such circumstances, the impact and effectiveness of every development assistance dollar became an issue of the utmost importance, with a premium placed on the strengthening of human and institutional development resources of the kind administered by UNDP. That premium bore importantly on the central resources of the one universal technical co-operation programme in continuous dialogue with the 154 developing countries and self-governing territories it served; it must be borne carefully in mind by Governments seeking an effective path to full and world-wide economic recovery. For that reason, in the introduction to his annual report (DP/1983/6), the Administrator had stated the case for a doubling of ODA resources for technical co-operation over the next five years, and he called upon members of the Council to consider that case carefully and to join the UNDP secretariat in publicizing the demonstrated need for such an adjustment in development assistance flows.

19. In that context, it was to be hoped that the endeavours of the Intersessional Committee of the Whole had not been in vain. The Committee had afforded all government representatives the opportunity to become thoroughly acquainted with UNDP's resource and programming needs, and the Administrator believed that a better understanding of the critical elements involved in the Programme's continued effectiveness as a central funding source for technical co-operation had emerged. Although the results of the short-term funding issues before that Committee had been disappointing, tribute was due to those 21 countries, most of them developing countries, which had met or exceeded the 14 per cent planning target in their own currencies or in dollars at or since the last Pledging Conference, and to those major donors which had substantially increased their contributions. Some important recommendations had been made regarding longer-term financing issues, a matter of particular importance if urgent technical co-operation needs were to be met. Earnest consideration of such long-term resource issues by the Council was imperative.

20. The Intersessional Committee of the Whole had recommended the establishment of a Programme Committee. The basic day-to-day work of UNDP went on at the developing country level, where some 85 per cent of its main programme staff was located and where the importance of its efforts was most clearly evident. It might therefore be appropriate if the Council could meet at one of the project sites, or at least at one of the field offices. Any measure that would involve the Council more closely in the Programme's work was important, and the Administrator hoped that the recommendations of the Intersessional Committee in that regard would gain the endorsement of the Council. In that connection, the first issue of the quarterly Information Report, designed to provide concrete and objective information on day-to-day UNDP activities, including data on project activities, would be available to permanent missions shortly.

21. The proposals of the Intersessional Committee with regard to evaluation were to be commended, and it should be noted that the Central Evaluation Unit, once it became operational, it would provide important inputs to the deliberations of the Programme Committee. UNDP strongly supported many of the conclusions and recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit in its report on the evaluation system of the United Nations Development Programme (JIU/REP/83/5), which was in agreement
with many of the points made by UNDP in its report to the Intersessional Committee on the same issue. Both reports emphatically agreed on the necessity of re-establishing a Central Evaluation Unit, the costs of which for 1984-1985 had been provided for in the biennial budget document before the Council at the current session. Progress had already been made in strengthening UNDP evaluation procedures and in defining more clearly the role of all participants. Strengthened evaluation would be a key management tool enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the Programme's work in the critical period ahead. The JIU report stressed the leadership role of UNDP in evaluation, and also the importance of self-evaluation although there remained a need for further clarification of the role of self-evaluation within the tripartite review system at the field level. UNDP looked forward to the early establishment of the inter-agency working group recommended by the Administrator as a consultative mechanism to bring about the required improvements in evaluation.

22. The Administrator attached great importance to the Intersessional Committee's discussion of measures to promote better understanding of the role and activities of UNDP and of the resource needs of the Programme. Although the Governing Council had from time to time addressed itself to the subject of external information, the frequent references to the problem during the meetings of the Intersessional Committee and the specific discussion on that agenda item had been most useful.

23. The Intersessional Committee had recognized the need for strengthening the information work performed by the secretariat, by Governments of both recipient and donor countries and by co-operating agencies in the United Nations system. The secretariat would do its utmost to carry those proposals forward, and part of its effort was available to the Council in part III of the annual report of the Administrator, entitled "Project Results and Programme Accomplishments" (DP/1983/6/Add.2). A further measure of UNDP's commitment in that respect was before the session in the five documents on implementation of country programmes by region, which were designed to keep members of the Council informed of problems and progress. Because so many country programmes were in their initial phase, the implementation reports were necessarily somewhat limited in scope. On the basis of those implementation reviews, it was hoped that the Council's substantive contribution to the programming process could be enhanced through a direct link between the concerns of the Council and the development of programmes at the country level.

24. The Intersessional Committee had discussed at some length the proposal that UNDP should provide management services at the field level for bilateral assistance efforts, as agreed by the developing countries involved. The Committee had referred that issue to the Council for decision on the basis of further information, which UNDP had since provided. The Administrator hoped that, on the basis of that new information, the Council would make positive recommendations on the issue.

25. As the Administrator had stated in his report for 1982 (DP/1983/6), UNDP had by no means succumbed to the resource difficulties facing it in recent years.
During the past year, the Programme had issued a number of new and improved operational guidelines for, inter alia, government execution of projects, tripartite reviews, project evaluation, project extensions, and closer relations with those non-governmental organizations which provided more than $2 billion a year in assistance to developing countries. Earlier in 1983, the Programme had also finalized a restructuring of its Office for Projects Execution to bring its operational needs into line with changing operational requirements and to increase the integration of the Office's activities with UNDP's broader activities, while retaining its special characteristics and approaches. The Office now had a directorate and two branches: an operational branch and an administrative and management branch designed to achieve balanced programme development. None of those measures would characterize a programme in retreat.

26. In response to Governing Council concerns, the Administrator had also taken steps to strengthen UNDP's resource mobilization efforts, not only in terms of the Programme's central resources but also with respect to funds administered by UNDP, trust funds and third-party cost-sharing arrangements, in order better to ensure the kind of close co-ordination of resource mobilization activities that was so urgently required for all operational activities for development. A resource mobilization unit reporting directly to the Administrator would carry out a broad range of funding, research and operational activities, including the overall supervision of country information co-ordinators, selected from among UNDP staff by the Administrator for their comprehensive and special knowledge of selected countries and organizations, and assigned to special tasks regarding resource information and mobilization efforts.

27. Since the twenty-ninth session of the Council, UNDP had completed implementation of its headquarters and field staffing reviews, had eliminated a total of 323 posts from the provisional 1982-1983 budget, had continued its recruitment freeze instituted in July 1981 and had improved the Programme's reassignment policy to ensure the increased rotation of Professional staff between headquarters and field posts and between different types of field duty stations. Partly as a result of those staffing measures, UNDP was presenting a biennial budget which provided zero growth in real or volume terms for UNDP's administrative and programme support costs on an overall basis. However, the Administrator wished to stress again that the 7.5 per cent reduction in staff posts at the field level had brought many of UNDP's on-site development service offices to the thin edge of required effectiveness, and that no further staff cuts could realistically be considered if the Programme's critical performance level was not to be impaired. The 9.7 per cent reduction in headquarters staffing had also created new work-load strains, though adjustments continued to be made.

28. In all its efforts to improve and strengthen operational effectiveness, UNDP was confronted by the resources issue. That was no less true of many of the special funds administered by UNDP or by the Administrator himself. Contributions pledged to the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF), the United Nations Financing System for Science and Technology for Development, the Trust Fund for Sudano-Sahelian Activities, the Special Voluntary Fund for the United Nations Volunteers and the Revolving Fund for Natural Resources Exploration had almost
without exception declined steadily over the past few years. The Special Fund for Land-locked Developing Countries was barely surviving as a separate funding facility, with pledges for 1983 of only $60,500. The Administrator was especially concerned about lack of progress on the future of the Financing System for Science and Technology. As established by the General Assembly, under the authority of the Administrator, the System could become an important and positive source of innovation in the multilateral system. The Financing System had been more than adequately carrying out its mandate, but was stymied pending a consensus by Governments as to how it should proceed. It was wrong for Governments to agree to the establishment of such special-purpose funds to meet clearly defined and important needs of developing countries, only to let them wither for lack of financial support; such treatment undermined the serious intent and purpose of development and international economic co-operation generally.

29. The plight of the least developed countries was especially relevant in that respect. The Paris Conference on the Least Developed Countries had set clear and important international goals for increased assistance to those countries, and the Substantial New Programme of Action had assigned a special role to UNDP and UNCDF in pursuing those goals. It was regrettable that pledges to UNDP's Special Measures Fund for the Least Developed Countries and to UNCDF had declined quite sharply, compared to contributions for 1982. The Programme's work on behalf of the least developed countries was being seriously impaired, at a time when those countries faced the most discouraging prospects in many years.

30. Nevertheless, in accordance with the mandate entrusted to it by the Paris Conference, UNDP had worked hard to assist a number of least developed countries in preparing conferences to assess and help to meet their desperate needs. Five such conferences for African countries had been held with UNDP support in 1982, and in May 1983 a round table conference for five Asian and Pacific countries had been held at Geneva. The aim of those conference had been to provide donors with a comprehensive picture of development assistance needs and to lay the foundation for a constructive dialogue with a view to meeting those needs. Effective follow-up at the country level between the Governments involved and the donors was essential. It was there that UNDP's field offices could continue to help by further strengthening government planning mechanisms, working to keep the dialogue alive and moving forward, and placing the comprehensive picture of needs before those organizations which could best assist in meeting them.

31. UNDP had made considerable efforts in the energy field. Despite its limited resources, the UNDP energy account, launched in 1980, had by the end of 1982 financed some 29 energy projects, including funding for a joint UNDP/World Bank project for the assessment of energy needs and energy development possibilities in 60 developing countries. To date, some 20 energy assessments had been completed under that project, with another 16 scheduled for completion by the end of 1983. The response of Governments had been strong, and the number of requests for such surveys currently exceeded the resources which the World Bank and UNDP had available to meet them. The assessment reports had begun to be used as basic documents for aid co-ordination meetings and had been helpful to Governments in setting up the necessary infrastructure, eliminating programming bottle-necks and...
formulating appropriate energy policies, including the selection of priority projects for their investment programmes. As a follow-up, UNDP and the World Bank had developed an energy sector management programme to assist interested Governments in defining specific technical co-operation and pre-investment activities and in identifying sources of finance, in connection with meetings of the World Bank's aid consultative groups or with UNDP round tables for least developed countries.

32. In response to General Assembly resolution 37/226, inviting further co-operation between the two organizations, UNDP and the World Bank had established a working party of senior officials to explore areas for new or enhanced co-operation. As a result, steps were being taken to enhance UNDP's service role in the implementation of technical assistance components of certain World Bank loans, where Governments so agreed, and to encourage additional possibilities for joint World Bank/IDA/UNCDF financing, as well as stepped-up exchanges of both information and staff.

33. In connection with the somewhat technical issues involved in recent operational activities, UNDP was making additional ongoing efforts to strengthen operational ties with other organizations of the United Nations system. The Administrator was pleased to report that in 1982 the UNDP Inter-Agency Task Force had been placed on a continuing basis, with fixed-term membership and continued responsibilities as the substantive secretariat for the Consultative Committee on Substantive Questions (Operations). In its six years of service to UNDP and the United Nations development system, the Task Force had proved a valuable and productive instrument both of collaboration and of substantive advice. The Administrator welcomed it as an important and highly regarded addition to the UNDP family.

34. There was a technical point to be made regarding the establishment, under UNDP's Financial Regulations, of trust funds for specified purposes consistent with the policies, aims and activities of UNDP, and without prejudice to the Programme's central resources. Three such trust funds had been established on behalf of UNDP in 1982, and one each on behalf of UNCDF and the Financing System for Science and Technology, providing a total of $6.3 million in additional resources administered by the Programme or its associated funds. The Administrator could assure the Council that, in the five projects under those new trust fund arrangements, no element of subsidy from UNDP's central resources in aid of the donor was involved.

35. It was clear that UNDP had been far from idle during the current period of adversity. The Administrator's statement was an attempt to describe as briefly as possible some of the key problems, waiting opportunities and operational imperatives confronting UNDP over the past year. No doubt, resource difficulties continued to threaten the Programme, but the Administrator was confident that, with the help and guidance of the Governing Council, UNDP could overcome those transitory difficulties and go on to do its part in building the most accomplished record of human progress ever achieved by an international co-operative effort. A special debt of thanks was due to UNDP's dedicated and hard-working staff. Though fewer in number than in previous years, they were carrying out their tasks with great skill and determination.
STATMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE INTERSESSIONAL COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE OF THE GOVERNING COUNCIL

36. The PRESIDENT said that, as stated in paragraph 3 of document DP/1983/L.7, the Council had decided to hold a short part of its annual session at a high, senior policy-maker level for the purpose of considering issues which could provide the necessary dynamism to technical co-operation activities carried out under the supervision of the Council. The period from 7 to 9 June 1983 had been designated as the high-level segment devoted to policy review. In accordance with Council decision 82/41, the 1983 policy review would focus on measures to mobilize increased resources for UNDP on an increasingly predictable, continuous and assured basis. Among the documents which the Council would have before it for that policy review was the report of the Intersessional Committee of the Whole (DP/1983/5), which he invited the Chairman of the Committee to introduce.

37. Mr. LINDORES (Canada), speaking as Chairman of the Intersessional Committee of the Whole, said that the Committee's report represented considerable effort on the part of Governments, of the Administrator and his staff and of the members of the Bureau. A special word of thanks was due to the Rapporteur.

38. The circumstances which had led to the establishment of the Intersessional Committee in June 1982 had not changed significantly. The 14 per cent growth rate of resources for the Programme as a whole was not being met, and third cycle programming was being restricted to 55 per cent of the level originally envisaged. The Programme has lost ground in real terms. There had been no shortage of explanations for that evolution of events. Three general themes had emerged during the Committee's discussions: first, that the failure to achieve approved planning levels merely reflected a lack of political will on the part of States members of the Governing Council; secondly, that the difficult world economic situation had significantly reduced the ability of member States to contribute; and, thirdly, that fluctuating currency exchange rates, and in particular the strength of the unit of account, the United States dollar, had further eroded UNDP's resource base in an unexpected manner.

39. All those factors had indeed contributed to the events that had resulted in UNDP's difficult situation. However, he was among those who believed that such explanations were simplistic, that they might hide more of the truth than they revealed and that, by their very nature, they led to a sense of helplessness about the Governing Council's ability to influence the future of UNDP. In the documentation prepared for the Intersessional Committee of the Whole and in the statements of many delegations, ample evidence had been presented showing other factors at work. For example, despite the increasing recognition of the vital importance of technical co-operation, it was not UNDP that was being asked to deliver the programmes. That was amply demonstrated by the growth of technical co-operation financing in the multilateral development banks and in other parts of the United Nations system. Despite the economic recession, the official development assistance programmes of many Governments continued to grow; however, UNDP was receiving a decreasing percentage of the growing resources. With hindsight, it was clear that even during the 1970s, when UNDP had largely met or surpassed its resource targets, two trends had been present: UNDP had not been
growing as quickly as other major multilateral institutions, and its position as the central funding agency for technical co-operation in the United Nations system had been undergoing significant erosion.

40. For some Governments, the primary objectives of establishing the Intersessional Committee of the Whole had been to try to move beyond the simplistic explanations of UNDP's plight, to try to discover the real and more complicated causes of diminishing support for the Programme and to develop, consider and assess measures to deal effectively with those factors when they had been identified.

41. Failure to mobilize adequate resources for UNDP meant that, when hard choices were being made by Governments on alternative programme delivery channels within the multilateral system, UNDP was proving to be a low priority. While other factors were certainly involved, that must inevitably be a reflection on the perceived quality of UNDP's programme. The Committee's recommendations regarding the strengthening of the role of the Governing Council and participating Governments in programme planning and programme review and those regarding arrangements for the evaluation of the results and effectiveness of the Programme were essentially aimed at simple, interrelated objectives: (a) to modify the views of participating Governments when they might have incorrect perceptions of UNDP programme weaknesses; and (b) to strengthen the Programme where weaknesses indeed existed. In other words, when Governments were limiting their contributions because of perceived UNDP weaknesses, either they should be shown that their views were wrong or UNDP should undertake appropriate corrective measures. The evaluation unit to be established by the Administrator and the proposed establishment of a Programme Committee along the lines of the Budgetary and Finance Committee were simple, inexpensive ways to help to build confidence in the Programme. It was hoped that such confidence would be translated into additional financial resources.

42. Where the financing system was concerned, the vulnerability of UNDP, which planned on a five-year basis and received its pledges on an annual basis, was all too evident. In the short span of seven years, UNDP had had to weather two major crises: the financial crisis of 1975 and the current resource crisis of the third cycle. Governments could hardly be satisfied with such a system. The Intersessional Committee's proposals represented a modest first step towards strengthening UNDP's long-term resource and planning base.

43. He would characterize the Committee's report (DP/1983/5) as modest, but significant. It was modest because the decision-making process did not allow for dramatic change. Many different views had been expressed on almost all the topics discussed, and the measures proposed represented compromises reached by the Committee. The report might therefore be described as a "lowest common denominator" report. However, it was significant because it indicated a willingness to explore new means of responding to a rapidly evolving environment. Such a willingness would be increasingly essential if UNDP was not to become the dinosaur of twentieth-century development institutions.
44. The report clearly held no magic solutions for UNDP's difficulties. It should therefore represent the beginning of a process, rather than the end of one. The ultimate success of the Committee's exercise would be determined not by the Council's adoption of the relevant recommendations, but by the extent to which the members of the Committee had been able to stimulate changes in Governments' attitudes towards UNDP and the extent to which they might have launched ideas on which the Council could build for the future. It was in that spirit that he recommended for adoption the Committee's recommendations on measures to mobilize increased resources for UNDP on an increasingly predictable, continuous and assured basis.

The meeting rose at noon.