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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 10th MEETING

Held at Headquarters, New York,  
on Friday, 23 February 1990, at 10.45 a.m.

President:

Mr. POPESCU

(Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

UNITED NATIONS DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME: FORTY YEARS OF MULTILATERAL TECHNICAL CO-OPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

1. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator) said that the finishing touches were currently being put to the human development report, which would be available for distribution in the middle of May 1990, before the launching ceremony scheduled for the 26th of that month. Members of the Governing Council would be invited in March 1990 to a substantive briefing on the main findings and conclusions of the report. He wished to acknowledge the efforts of the United Nations system agencies which had been involved in the preparation of the report.
2. The report had three main purposes. First, it would serve as a means for Governments to exchange information on realistic and affordable ways to combine economic and social concerns. Second, it would clarify the human and financial resource implications of certain human development targets. Third, it would help to identify areas in which technical co-operation could assist Governments in reaching their human development goals. In addition, the report was of direct relevance to the mandate of UNDP, since progress in human development meant more qualified human resources and expanded job opportunities.
3. Mr. AJELLO (Assistant Administrator) said that, in response to Governing Council decision 89/68, which had requested the Administrator to make all necessary preparations for the commemoration of the fortieth anniversary of multilateral co-operation programmes of the United Nations system, and General Assembly resolution 44/209, which had invited the Secretary-General to collaborate with the Administrator in those preparations, a Working Group had been established. As a result of discussions within the Working Group, three main events had been scheduled to celebrate the anniversary. The most important of those was the plan to commemorate the anniversary on United Nations Day, 24 October 1990. The second event was the launching in May 1990 of the human development report, which would be distributed earlier to delegations and the press in order to afford the report maximum publicity. The third event was a celebration which would take place within the framework of the June session of the Governing Council in Geneva. The Government of Switzerland had made a proposal, with which he fully agreed, that the celebration should be of a solemn nature, with a focus on inviting eminent personalities and representatives of the regional offices and agencies. As part of the celebration, the Swiss Government was also planning a boat tour on Lake Geneva.
4. In addition to the three major events, resident representatives had been asked for suggestions on ways in which the anniversary could be commemorated in recipient countries. Those suggestions were currently under consideration. The participation of donor countries was also welcomed and, to that end, members of the Governing Council should request their Governments to plan appropriate celebrations in their countries on 24 October. The UNDP Division of Information was trying to identify possible publications and exhibitions which might be co-ordinated with publicity

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for the fortieth anniversary commemoration. Consideration was also being given to the sponsoring by the United Nations of various other initiatives to celebrate the anniversary. Such events would entail no expenditures for the United Nations.

5. All of the events planned for the celebration of the fortieth anniversary were based on the general idea of strengthening the public image of the United Nations and UNDP by making both more visible and by informing the public of their various activities.

6. Mr. LANGENBACHER (Switzerland) said that while it had made certain proposals regarding the fortieth anniversary celebration, his Government hoped that preparations for the event would be shared equally by all members of the Governing Council. The proposed boat ride was still awaiting authorization, which was expected to be granted.

7. In the opinion of his delegation, public relations activities and United Nations sponsorship of events were not the way to sharpen the profile of UNDP. Such a goal should be achieved through UNDP programme activities.

8. Mr. VOICU (Romania) said that his delegation supported the celebratory events proposed by the Administrator as well as the overall idea of using the occasion of the fortieth anniversary to give maximum visibility to UNDP.

9. Among its many noteworthy activities, UNDP had assisted countries in times of crisis. His own country had benefited from that type of assistance over the decades. Most recently, in December 1989, the General Assembly had adopted by consensus resolution 44/239, in which it had urged the international community to offer generous emergency humanitarian assistance to Romania. Many had responded to that appeal and he wished to thank the United Nations and other specialized agencies and all the countries concerned for their show of solidarity with the Romanian people.

10. Mr. RADE (Netherlands) said that while it was evident that technical co-operation activities had a positive impact in a number of developing countries, such activities could be made even more effective. In that connection, he wished to know whether UNDP planned, on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary celebration, to organize a meeting of experts to discuss technical co-operation.

11. Mr. PETRONE (Italy) said that his delegation supported the plans for the fortieth anniversary celebration and noted with interest that the events would not involve any charges to the UNDP budget. It agreed with the idea of using the occasion to make the public more aware of UNDP activities. To that end, UNDP should attempt to make use of NGOs, the media and any major events in countries that might tie in with the celebration of the fortieth anniversary.

12. Mr. AJELLO (Assistant Administrator) said that, as part of the celebration, a meeting of eminent personalities had been envisaged, at which issues raised in the human development report would be discussed. He appreciated the Netherland's desire to co-operate in such an effort.

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13. Although he agreed with the representative of Switzerland that the quality of UNDP programme activity was of great importance, it was also true that without public awareness, those programmes could not be sustained or improved.

14. The PRESIDENT said that if he heard no objection, he would take it that the Governing Council wished to take note of the Administrator's statement.

15. It was so decided.

OTHER MATTERS (continued)

(b) UNDP MANAGEMENT STUDY

16. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator) said that, some 18 months previously, he had asked the retiring president of one of the world's largest personnel management consultancy firms to make a study of the management of UNDP as seen from the viewpoint of the staff, donors, executing agencies and recipient countries. The author and his assistant, both of whom had been paid expenses but no fee, had interviewed well over 100 staff members and representatives of Governments and executing agencies. Knowing little about the United Nations and the way it operated, they had produced a report which, while neither couched in the careful terms characteristic of United Nations studies nor an exhaustive study of the subject, arrived at some interesting conclusions and produced some stimulating recommendations - not all of which were workable or politically feasible. In late 1989, he had sent a copy of the report, for information, to the then President of the Governing Council. Copies had been made available to members of the Council upon request, and circulated to all resident representatives and the UNDP policy and operations teams.

17. While the section of the study dealing with the governance of UNDP was largely impractical for political reasons, the parts dealing with operational aspects merited a lot of attention. For example, the authors suggested greater decentralization, more local management of projects, project management by Governments or Government appointees instead of mainly technical advisers, who might face conflicts of interest, a clearly defined mission for UNDP, and alterations to the management structure of the programme. In several of those areas the Council had already recommended action, and the Administration had already got to work or intended to do so very soon. A former UNDP resident representative in Benin had been asked to come to New York to take charge of action on the feasible suggestions.

18. As stated in the letter of transmittal to the then President of the Council, he would be personally involved in seeing many of the recommendations made in the report implemented, after appropriate consultations with the Governing Council. There would be no upheaval in UNDP as a result of the report, but consistent efforts would be made to give effect to the most productive suggestions and recommendations.

19. Mr. HAMADZIRIPI (Zimbabwe) said that the report proposed changes in UNDP which would imply altering the 1970 consensus, notably by turning UNDP into a "donor-participation-oriented organization". He wished to have a formal assurance from the Administrator that no action would be taken on any of the recommendations in the report without appropriate consultations with the Council.

20. Mr. FERNANDEZ (Observer for Liberia) questioned the usefulness of contributions by persons not well versed in the dynamics of the United Nations and interactions between organizations and sovereign States. He understood that the report had been produced pro bono publico. That, however, made things difficult: it was difficult to chastise someone who did a job as a favour. It was sometimes better to pay investigators so that they could be held to account. His delegation, too, hoped for assurances that the Administrator would take no action without first consulting the Governing Council. He had always maintained that the Administrator should be given every opportunity to make UNDP an efficient organization, but the recommendations in the current report went beyond management to attack the very foundations of multilateralism.

21. Mr. LANGENBACHER (Switzerland) said that he found both the report and the commotion it had provoked interesting. A distinction must be drawn between management, which was the prerogative of the Administrator, and governance, which was the prerogative of the Governing Council. He understood the Administrator to have said that he intended to start moving promptly on certain issues covered in a privately commissioned report. The Administrator might be entitled to do so, but perhaps he should not, at least until the Council had discussed the forthcoming report on the senior management structure of UNDP.

22. Mr. MORALES CARBALLO (Cuba) said that the study put the Council in a difficult position, since it was not the result of any Council mandate. It seemed to him that all the Council could do was to take note of it and pass on to other matters. Meanwhile, he supported the call by the representative of Zimbabwe for assurances that no action would be taken before the Council had been properly consulted.

23. Mr. COUSINS (United Kingdom) pointed out that the study was merely an internal report, circulated for information purposes. He had found it uncharacteristically readable and understandable, although he did not agree with everything it said. The recommendations it made seemed to fall into three categories. Some were not politically feasible - but the Administrator was surely aware of that. Others related to what might be called "good housekeeping", and he would expect the Administrator to put them into effect in the day-to-day management of UNDP. Finally, some recommendations evidently invited comment from the Council. He welcomed the assurances the Administrator had given during his introduction that no action would be taken on such proposals before the Council had been consulted.

24. Mr. YENEL (Observer for Turkey) said that his Government had instructed him to seek assurances that no action would be taken on the report before it had been discussed by the Council. The recommendations must be acted on with some prudence, since they embodied a corporate vision not in keeping with the way the United Nations functioned. He suggested that the Administrator might bring forward any particular points of interest for discussion at the thirty-seventh session.

25. Mr. FORBES WATT (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations) said that parts of the report implicitly related to his organization as well. Because of the way it had been circulated, the study was now in effect a public document. FAO, which had not been consulted on the matter, took exception to the way in which the study had been prepared and circulated.
26. Mr. PETRONE (Italy) remarked that if the Administrator of a programme managing assets of over \$1 billion annually could not commission an informal report for his own use, there was no point in having such an official at all. The report was an internal document and enjoyed no special status, and the Council need not take any special action in relation to it. The Administrator could decide to act or not in accordance with his own prerogatives. In so far as the study recommended action in areas for which the Administrator was solely responsible, his delegation would oppose any interference by the Council. Any suggestions requiring a decision by the Council could be submitted at the thirty-seventh session in the context of the senior management structure report.
27. Mr. DRAPER (Administrator) reiterated the assurance he had originally given to the President of the Council, namely that he would be personally involved in seeing many of the recommendations in the report implemented after appropriate consultations with the Governing Council. Any decision which lay outside his managerial prerogatives would of course be submitted to the Council. He felt that the authors of the report should not be criticized for repeating critical comments by some of the people they had spoken to. The study had never been intended to be a "smoothed out", carefully diplomatic document. Indeed, some parts had been intended to provoke reactions. He believed that a certain amount of commotion bred creativity.
28. There was no intention of turning UNDP into a donor-driven organization. The strength of UNDP lay in its ability to command support from both recipients and donors, albeit at some cost in efficiency on occasion.
29. Some of the suggestions made in the study touched on areas where action had already been recommended in, for example, General Assembly resolution 44/211. The Administration was already taking action in those areas. He intended to continue to work on the good ideas found in the report, but would seek the approval of the Council on any matter lying near the borderline between the governance and day-to-day management of UNDP.
30. Finally, the observer for Liberia had suggested that any action should await the outcome of a discussion on the report at the thirty-seventh session. It had not been his intention to submit the report for formal discussion at the thirty-seventh session, and he wondered whether that was, in fact, necessary.
31. Mr. MORALES CARBALLO (Cuba) renewed his proposal that the Council should simply take note of the report.
32. Mr. VARADACHARY (India), Mr. MOORE (United States of America), Mr. JAYASINGHE (Sri Lanka), Mr. COUSINS (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland) and Mr. PETRONE (Italy) supported that proposal.

33. Mr. EL GHAOUTH (Mauritania) said that, as the report had been brought before the Council, the matter could no longer be considered entirely informal, and proposed that one of the vice-presidents should be asked to conduct informal discussions on the action to be taken by the Council.
34. Mr. HAMADZIRIPI (Zimbabwe) and Mr. JARRETT (Observer for Liberia) supported that proposal.
35. The PRESIDENT asked Mr. Hamadziripi, in his capacity as Second Vice-President, to conduct an informal discussion of the question.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.

