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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Tuesday, 5 June 1990, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. POPESCU (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

HIGH-LEVEL SEGMENT: POLICY REVIEW

1. Mr. BOTCHWEY (Ghana) said that, in the view of most analysts, the 1980s had been a disaster for Africa: per capita income had declined further even though it had risen modestly for the developing countries as a whole. It was therefore appropriate to carry out a thorough and objective appraisal of the situation, since it was only in that way that the international community would be able to deepen its understanding of the complex problems of African development and commit itself to the adoption and implementation of more resolute action to address them.
2. He did not share the view that the African crisis was wholly attributable to internal factors. A great deal more certainly needed to be done in some areas of economic management policy, but it could not be said that the African countries were not coming to grips with that task. It must not be forgotten that more than 30 African countries were engaged in the implementation of difficult structural adjustment programmes, with the support of IMF and the World Bank, while some of them no longer had access to loans from those institutions because they were in arrears in their payments. In those circumstances, it was highly regrettable that the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development was coming to an end in 1990 with little in the way of achievement. At the present time, decisive measures must be taken to alleviate the debt-servicing burden and to halt protectionism in international trade.
3. With regard to the political context of economic reform programmes, he was fully aware there could be no stable economic development without the democratic participation of the population, in particular of communities; structural democratization should, however, acquire some local form and content; it would be inappropriate, and even dangerous, to try to impose it from outside, for example, through aid conditionality. While a great deal remained to be done in that regard, the peoples of Africa would be equal to the task, since they had waged the most heroic struggles against oppression and tyranny in the past.
4. It was necessary to determine what UNDP and the donor community could do to alleviate the African crisis. He noted with satisfaction that the Administrator had taken measures to meet some of the concerns expressed by countries at the previous session of the Council. He endorsed the idea of allocating a greater portion of available resources during the fifth cycle to the poorest countries, i.e. those with a per capita GNP of less than \$750. In supporting economic recovery programmes in those countries, UNDP must continue to maintain an appropriate balance between institutional building and development programmes, in particular those of poverty alleviation, food production and preservation, and social transformation in rural areas.
5. With regard to agency support costs, he recognized the need for agencies to earn income in order to cover costs and the fact that they often had skills which the African countries needed; automatic execution by the specialized agencies of UNDP-funded projects was not, however, the best way of strengthening the efficiency of the beneficiary countries or of making those agencies accountable to the Governments concerned. Urgent steps ought to be

taken to redefine the framework and procedures by which those agencies executed projects as well as the role of beneficiary countries in controlling and monitoring their work. In the final analysis, national execution was preferable to any other modality. Those who executed projects felt responsible for them and internalized the experience they acquired to a greater extent.

6. It was of especial importance that UNDP should maintain its credibility by staying above any ideological and political influences that might be exerted by those affected by triumphalism. On the occasion of UNDP's fortieth anniversary, all countries should undertake to increase their contributions in order to double the resources available for the fifth programming cycle. He paid a tribute to the dedication with which the Administrator and the UNDP staff had worked throughout those 40 years.

7. Ms. AL-AWADHI (Observer for Kuwait) thanked the Administrator for his efforts to implement policies and programmes adopted at the international level to assist the developing countries, and in particular the least developed countries. She also congratulated the Director of the Regional Bureau for Arab States for his praiseworthy efforts to simplify the establishment of national programmes.

8. As a new decade opened, she wished to express the hope that the development strategies for the 1990s would be based on the human factor, for man was, in the last analysis, the driving force as well as the recipient of development. It was clear from the report of the Administrator that UNDP was aware of the importance of that human dimension and intended to remove any social, cultural or economic obstacles to the material, spiritual and moral development of the human person. Human resources development required the satisfaction of the essential needs of man in such areas as water supply, food, health, education and work. The health situation in the world continued to be extremely serious: malnutrition and drug addiction still wrought havoc while AIDS deprived countries of men and women in their prime working years. According to the World Health Organization, 6 million children died each year from diseases which could be prevented and \$2.5 billion needed to be spent each year on vaccination programmes for that purpose. That situation, which was due to poverty as well as to ignorance, hampered the efforts made by countries to promote economic development.

9. In that connection, she welcomed the efforts made by UNDP to assist the least developed countries in carrying out the reforms necessary to reactivate their economy and, in that way, to develop the institutional structures they lacked. By and large, the indebtedness of developing countries was so great that many of them were hardly able to maintain a minimum level of life and even less to meet their debt service burden. They had no hope of progress until the debtor and creditor countries jointly devised, in the interest of all, innovative, comprehensive and decisive solutions to the debt problem. She recalled that Kuwait had submitted a proposal to that end.

10. Natural disasters also affected all sectors of a country's economy and, in that connection, UNDP had done much to attenuate their effects in Africa and Asia.

11. While man had to be at the centre of development, it must not be forgotten that nature was the source of all life: development must therefore also respect the environment. In other words, national, regional and international programmes must ensure a balance between environmental protection and economic progress. She noted that UNDP was seeking to impart an ecological dimension to all its activities. She indicated that the Arab countries were actively preparing the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, which was to be held in Brazil in 1992, and in which they intended to support a joint policy.

12. The necessary resources must be found to resolve all those problems and to ensure a decent life in a healthy natural environment for the present and future generations. She therefore called on the great Powers to end the arms race, to renounce weapons of mass destruction, and to reduce their military budgets, so that international relations could develop in a climate of détente and the resources thus released could be used for the development of all.

13. She welcomed with satisfaction the fact that Namibia had become a Member of the United Nations and was sure that it would contribute to the development of Africa. As to Palestine, she requested the international community to provide the Palestinian people with all the assistance they needed in order to regain the exercise of their legitimate rights and the enjoyment of their territory.

14. Lastly, following the upheavals which had transformed the international political scene during the past year, the East-West dialogue should not take precedence over the North-South dialogue, at the expense of the interests of the third world; instead, those changes should be an opportunity for strengthening international peace and establishing a new economic order that would benefit all.

15. Chief FALAE (Nigeria) said that the 1990s should differ from the 1980s which had been negative for the developing countries as a whole, in particular because their debts had continued to increase; the debt of the sub-Saharan countries had risen from \$6 billion in 1970 to more than \$134 billion in 1988, i.e. the equivalent of those countries' combined GNP and three and a half times the amount of their export earnings. Six countries in the region, including Nigeria, had been reclassified as low-income countries. Moreover, the African continent was not the only one to have experienced the consequences of that indebtedness, mainly in the form of the negative transfer of resources which seriously reduced those available for socio-economic development. In the 37 poorest countries, per capita health expenditure had dropped by 50 per cent, while unemployment had increased. Environmental degradation had accelerated as countries attempted to survive by boosting agricultural and mineral production through excessive exploitation of their agricultural and mineral resources. All in all, the 1980s had been "the lost decade" for the developing countries.

16. On the threshold of the new decade which was beginning at a time of positive developments on the international economic and political scene, in the developing countries a number of problems needed to be tackled immediately: the declining standard of living; deteriorating infrastructures; and inflation and unemployment resulting from the heavy debt burden and structural adjustment programmes. There was a need, more than ever before,

for a significant increase, in real terms, in the overall resources available for development in the South. His delegation noted with satisfaction that contributions to UNDP and trust funds administered by it had attained for 1990 the figure of \$1.3 billion, representing a 5 per cent increase over the 1989 level. However, the Administrator was right to recommend that donors should increase their contributions by 16 per cent in order to double programme delivery in the fifth programming cycle (1992-1996).

17. His delegation believed that the basic criteria of per capita GNP and population should be maintained in order to determine the country IPFs for the fifth programming cycle. The practice whereby 80 per cent of the IPFs was allocated to countries with a per capita GNP of less than \$750 should be continued. However, consideration should also be given to increasing the IPFs in the fifth cycle for countries which had been reclassified downwards in the fourth cycle or granting them increased resources under the Special Programme Resources in order to facilitate their painful economic and psychological structural adjustment. His delegation fully supported the Administrator's recommendation to allocate \$300 million to the Special Programme Resources during the fifth cycle.

18. His delegation joined most delegations in supporting the maintenance of the current distribution between country and inter-country IPFs. On the other hand, in view of the need to give maximum encouragement to the economic integration of the South, it would be appropriate to revise the IPFs allocated for regional programmes. UNDP should increase its co-operation with sub-regional economic groupings, such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern African Development Co-operation Conference (SADCC) and grant them with additional assistance in order to promote investment, market development and labour mobility in those regions. His delegation also supported the Administrator's proposal that the IPF for the national liberation movements should be maintained at the same level.

19. UNDP and recipient countries should also work closely together to ensure maximum effectiveness in the deployment of resources and development assistance. A consensus seemed to have emerged in favour of strategic planning and programming to replace the project-by-project approach, which did not sufficiently promote coherent policies for national and regional development. In that regard, UNDP should make more use of the National Technical Co-operation Assessment and Programmes (NATCAPs). One such mission was currently in Nigeria and was receiving his Government's full co-operation.

20. Convinced of the need for greater harmonization of the plans of development agencies with the priorities established by Governments, his delegation had noted with satisfaction that the Administrator intended to improve UNDP's policies and methods of operation on the basis of a re-examination of its goals and objectives.

21. His country supported the various funds established by UNDP and in particular the Special Measures Fund for the Least Developed Countries, which had not yet fully realized its potential benefits and should be used to a greater extent for capital assistance. The improvement in infrastructural facilities would be of great assistance in promoting private sector development in recipient countries.

22. In the 1990s, UNDP should strive in particular to enhance institutional capacity in developing countries. Furthermore, environmental protection was also essential in order to ensure sustainable development and should also be accorded high priority within the framework of technical co-operation in the 1990s.
23. Mr. MAHLAHLA (Zimbabwe) noted that in the course of 40 years of technical co-operation for development, UNDP had achieved some of its basic objectives in the field of technical assistance. However, as with all development aid institutions, some of its projects had had a limited success for various reasons including: the failure of some Governments to provide the necessary budgetary support; the use of a project-based rather than programme-based system; the need for a counterpart as a basis for the transfer of technical know-how, an unduly rigid arrangement which did not allow of checks and balances until the expiry of the expert's contract; the failure to include evaluation as an aspect of the project, which meant that its success or failure could be determined only after completion of the project. The design of the technical assistance component in a project should therefore be clearly defined in terms of what the expert was supposed to do or "transfer" to the national counterpart. It was also necessary to include in the project a periodic monitoring and evaluation system and to determine, prior to project implementation, the length of the period during which the counterpart required an expert. The tripartite reviews of UNDP should be revised along those lines. Furthermore, while one of the advantages which UNDP had over bilateral technical assistance was that it recruited experts throughout the world and therefore enhanced local capabilities, problems of cultural differences could lead to difficulties in communication between experts and nationals.
24. There was no doubt that technical assistance had contributed a great deal towards overall development in Zimbabwe. However, in order to implement its projects, UNDP used a standard format which did not take cognizance of socio-economic and cultural differences among countries and had hampered efficient implementation of the list of projects in the pipeline. A fundamental principle should be to ensure that the format took that heterogeneity into account.
25. The success of any programme was measured by the ability of the recipient country to implement and sustain the programme long after the experts had left. UNDP must therefore recognize that the prerogative for identifying needs should rest with the recipient country and that the country should implement the programme whenever local capacity existed. In other words, the role of technical assistance should as far as possible be advisory in nature, should focus on the transfer of the requisite skills, and should develop or upgrade local capacity. Technical assistance should create a genuine partnership relation between UNDP and the recipient country.
26. The Technical Co-operation among Developing Countries (TCDC) programme could serve as a mechanism for advancing the capacity of developing countries to implement programmes; for their part, those countries should seize every opportunity to intensify that type of South-South co-operation.
27. Technical assistance was only one component of a project or programme; because countries received aid from both bilateral and multilateral organizations, it was imperative to co-ordinate all technical assistance

received by a given country; consequently, UNDP had gradually developed the National Technical Co-operation Assessment and Programmes (NATCAPs). There was no doubt that NATCAPs could increase efficiency in the use of UNDP resources and those of other donors, and his country had signed an agreement with UNDP to set up a NATCAP programme in Zimbabwe.

28. In 40 years, UNDP had set up infrastructures, developed human resources and played a catalytic role. In time, however, the executing agencies had sought to become funding agencies as well. That was why it was difficult at the present time to co-ordinate the various components of the system, a situation which affected its efficiency and the quality of services provided and projects delivered.

29. With regard to the preparations for the fifth programming cycle, his delegation could support the Administrator's proposal for a doubling of resources, provided, however, that whatever growth rate the Council agreed on, it should be one that enabled UNDP to address the needs of the developing countries. It would be unacceptable if any targeted growth rate led to a decrease in delivery in the fifth cycle relative to the fourth cycle. His delegation supported the Administrator's intention to give priority, in the allocation of available resources, to low-income countries, in particular, the least developed countries. However, it was essential to retain the floor principle as well as the supplemental criteria set out in Council decision 85/16. The Special Programme Resources were undoubtedly useful but the Administrator's proposal on that subject required further examination.

30. On the question of agency support costs, the Council had before it reports (DP/1990/9 and 71) which contained useful information and it should take a decision on the matter at the current session. The arrangements agreed on should, in general, further clarify the respective roles of Governments, UNDP and the specialized agencies within the context of the 1970 consensus, which continued to be the reference text on that issue.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.

