

PROVISIONAL

E/2006/SR.36

3 August 2006

Original: ENGLISH

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL

Substantive session of 2006

General segment

PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 36th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,  
on Monday, 24 July 2006, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. ČEKUOLIS (Lithuania)  
(Vice-President)

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GE.06-63039 (E) 270706 030806

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In the absence of Mr. Hachani (Tunisia), Mr. Čekuolis (Lithuania),  
Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

REGIONAL COOPERATION (continued) (A/60/853-E/2006/75, E/2006/15 and Add.1, E/2006/16, E/2006/17, E/2006/18, E/2006/19 and E/2006/20)

Mr. MIYASHITA (Japan), speaking on the resolution concerning the admission of his country to membership of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), (draft resolution I, contained in E/2006/15/Add.1) expressed his appreciation to the members of ECLAC for their support and called on the Council to adopt the resolution in question.

Mr. ROSENGREN (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union welcomed the reform of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) as a model that should be emulated elsewhere in the United Nations system. The aim had been to reform ECE from the bottom up and the outcome had been positive, thus demonstrating that reform could succeed if driven by demand. The replacement of four decision-making bodies with a single executive committee had already streamlined the organization and proved effective. Further action should concentrate on implementing the workplan to further ECE work in those areas where it had recognized expertise, while enhancing partnerships with other subregional organizations.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) said his delegation strongly supported the draft resolution on reform of the Economic Commission for Europe (contained in E/2006/15/Add.1), which aimed to streamline its structure and reallocate resources and was a model of bottom-up reform.

Mr. MÉRORÈS (Haiti) expressed appreciation for the important role played by the regional commissions in helping the developing and least developed countries respond to the challenges facing them. His Government welcomed in particular the assistance provided by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean following the crises of the previous two years and the establishment of democracy in Haiti. ECLAC had been instrumental in organizing an important meeting with donors and would be closely involved in its follow-up.

Mr. RAHMAN (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office) stressed that the regional commissions were committed to improving coordination and to showing ever greater flexibility in adapting their activities to meet the needs of Member States and specific regions and to further strengthen complementarity and synergies among the various stakeholders at the operational level. That would require increased coordination between the United Nations and regional and subregional organizations and greater interregional cooperation, which was especially important. There was increasing cooperation between regional commissions, for example between ECE, the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on joint programmes in the Mediterranean region. An important factor in the regional commissions' ability to meet development objectives and promote coordination and cooperation was the availability of resources under the Development Account.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL REPERCUSSIONS OF THE ISRAELI OCCUPATION ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE IN THE OCCUPIED PALESTINIAN TERRITORY, INCLUDING JERUSALEM, AND THE ARAB POPULATION IN THE OCCUPIED SYRIAN GOLAN (continued) (A/61/67-E/2006/13)

Draft resolution on economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (E/2006/L.17)

Mr. ATTAR (Saudi Arabia) introduced the draft resolution, which expressed great concern at the situation of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan and underscored the need to put an end to that occupation with a view to ensuring the self-determination and economic and social development of those populations. Consultations on the draft resolution were continuing; he hoped they would lead to the adoption of the draft resolution by consensus as an expression of the Council's will to put an end to the suffering of the peoples of the occupied territories.

Mr. KHANE (Secretary of the Council) said that the delegations of Algeria and Egypt should have been included in the list of original sponsors of the draft resolution.

Mr. RAHMAN (Chief, Regional Commissions New York Office) pointed out that the preparation of the note by the Secretary-General (A/61/67-E/2006/13) had been a joint effort by both United Nations and non-United Nations organizations working in the Occupied Palestine Territory.

Mr. MOKTAR (Observer for Malaysia) expressed deep concern at the excessive and indiscriminate use of force by Israel, which continued to cause extensive property damage, serious injuries and loss of life, including among women and children, with total disregard for international human rights and humanitarian law. Israel had destroyed infrastructure, government buildings and water and power plants, had arbitrarily arrested and detained democratically elected government ministers, members of parliament and other officials, and had inflicted collective punishment on the Palestinian people. Its actions had exacerbated the hardship and suffering of those living under its occupation, demonstrating that the Israeli Government was not a serious partner for peace and had a cynical attitude towards the peace process. The members of the international community must all work together to facilitate peace in the region. He urged the Council to adopt the draft resolution contained in document E/2006/L.17 unanimously.

Ms. AL AKL (Observer for Lebanon) said that draft resolution E/2006/L.17 reflected the deterioration of a chronic problem, the suffering of the Palestinian people in the occupied territories, especially in Gaza. Israel had carried out collective punishment that affected Palestinians of all walks of life, in particular owing to the siege imposed on Gaza.

In view of the massacre being perpetrated in Lebanon by Israeli forces, the Lebanese people understood the predicament of their brethren in Palestine. The attack against Lebanon had killed over 350 people and had displaced many more. In Lebanon, Israel was experimenting with weapons that were illegal and was using hunger and blockades as weapons of war, in blatant violation of international humanitarian law, human rights law and the right to life. Its actions would solve nothing, but would only exacerbate the situation, thus threatening international peace and security. Her Government called for an immediate ceasefire and the lifting of the siege on Lebanon.

Mr. HUIMASALO (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, expressed grave concern at the situation in the Middle East, in particular at the deterioration of the humanitarian situation, the destruction of civilian infrastructure and, worst of all, the loss of life. The international community and all the parties involved must do their utmost to alleviate the desperate humanitarian situation of the Palestinian people and to work for a lasting peace.

Mr. ABU-KOASH (Observer for Palestine) said that Israel's extensive killing of civilians and massive destruction of vital infrastructure had brought the region to the brink of a full-fledged war. The international community must act now to avert further carnage. In the past three weeks Israeli attacks in the Occupied Palestine Territory had killed more than 100 civilians, half of whom had been children, and had injured many more. They had caused colossal destruction to institutions and infrastructure, targeting Gaza's only power plant, waterworks, bridges, schools and government ministries.

Palestinians had been impoverished because of Israel's unlawful withholding of Palestinian tax revenues and because of the severance of external aid following the democratic parliamentary elections of January 2006. About a third of the population was affected by the Government's subsequent inability to pay public-sector workers their salaries. More than 70 per cent of the Palestinian people were now living below the poverty line. Unemployment, already high, was again rising and economic activities were dwindling, as Palestinian communities were isolated by Israeli military incursions, checkpoints and the construction of the separation wall, which prevented some 60,000 Palestinian residents of Jerusalem from having access to schools, social services and workplaces. The economy was near collapse, with potentially far-reaching economic and political consequences.

The humanitarian crisis in the territories was very serious. Food was scarce and fuel and medical supplies were depleted. The focus now should be on providing relief and allowing unconditional access to humanitarian agencies. All plans for economic or social development were stalled indefinitely, as no investment or growth could take place in such a context. Israel should provide compensation for the destruction that it had wrought not only in Palestine, but

also in Lebanon. Its security pretext was no longer tenable. The Israeli rampage must stop, and Israel's occupation of Palestinian, Syrian and Lebanese territories must end as a prerequisite for economic and social development and for peace.

Mr. LEÓN GONZÁLEZ (Cuba) condemned the occupation by Israel of Palestinian territories and the aggression unleashed against Lebanon, and expressed solidarity with the Palestinian and Lebanese people who were suffering from unbridled Israeli aggression. Israel had flouted humanitarian law and human rights law in its occupation. Blockades, border closures, extrajudicial executions, arbitrary arrests, the destruction of civilians' homes, the use of indiscriminate force, torture of detainees and collective punishment had become commonplace in the Israeli occupation.

Israel had imposed a total naval and air blockade of Lebanon, and was carrying out a genocidal policy against its Arab neighbours. It was conducting an extensive military campaign against the Palestinian territories and Lebanon, with the violation of Syrian airspace and the constant shelling of heavily populated areas, targeting even water facilities and power plants in Palestine and Lebanon. Swift action was needed to bring to an end such acts of barbarism. Medical supplies must be provided to relieve the suffering. Humanitarian workers and vehicles, including ambulances, must be able to operate and circulate free of hindrance.

Israel had used the abduction of soldiers as a pretext for aggression and massive human rights violations, including the arbitrary arrest of members of the Palestinian Government and parliament, and other innocent civilians, including children. The West had imposed an embargo on aid to the Palestinians because it refused to accept their freely expressed political will following the January elections, thus worsening their plight. And now Israel had again used security concerns as a pretext to attack a sovereign State, Lebanon. It was impossible for the Security Council to take action because of the United States veto, which ensured the impunity of the aggressor and underscored the need for reform of that body. The international community must call for immediate Israeli withdrawal from Gaza and for respect of the inalienable rights of the Palestinians, including the right to a State with East Jerusalem as its capital, the right of return and the reinstatement of the 1967 borders as the sole basis for peace.

Mr. JAZAÏRY (Observer for Algeria) said that the closure of the Palestinian territories by the occupying Power was an affront to the dignity of the population and an attack upon their very lives, and transformed their communities into veritable ghettos. The occupying Power continued to level Palestinian buildings, dump toxic waste in the territories and exploit their resources, and was continuing to build the apartheid wall, with total disregard for the legal opinion handed down by the International Court of Justice and the relevant United Nations General Assembly resolutions. The Israeli military had prevented ambulances from circulating and attacked mosques and churches. The Palestinian population faced the systematic destruction of their infrastructure, and killing that amounted to genocide. Arab citizens in East Jerusalem were subjected to discrimination in all fields. Legally, politically and morally, the policies of the occupying Power amounted to an unacceptable form of collective punishment.

In Lebanon, the Israeli military had caused wanton destruction using internationally banned weapons, in clear violation of the Geneva Conventions. The Israeli actions were war crimes and crimes against humanity. Israel had placed as a condition for halting its attacks the implementation of United Nations Security Council resolution 1559 (2004), a resolution that called first and foremost for Lebanon's territorial integrity and sovereignty to be respected. Yet it had itself already disregarded numerous resolutions of the Security Council.

The root of the problem was Israel's continued occupation of Palestine, the Syrian Golan and the Shebaa farms. The only solution possible would involve the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions and respect for international law. Only stability and peace could preserve people's dignity, provide work and growth and bring an end to violence.

Ms. MUDIE (Australia) said that she was concerned at the one-sided nature of the draft resolution. The Council must be even-handed in order to ensure that the needs of the Palestinian people were addressed. Her Government had allocated \$16 million in assistance to the Palestinian people, and recognized that real improvements to their economic and social conditions would require the commitment of all parties to a comprehensive, negotiated settlement. It shared the international community's deep concern at the violence in Israel, Lebanon and the Palestinian territories, which had commenced with the attacks on Israel by Hamas and Hizbollah, and urged all sides to exercise the utmost restraint.

Mr. PUJA (Indonesia) expressed his delegation's grave concern at the latest developments in Gaza. Many major public facilities had been destroyed during the disproportionate attacks by Israel, which constituted flagrant human rights violations and a serious breach of international humanitarian law. Israel's wanton destruction of vital infrastructure in the Gaza Strip, its continued construction of the wall, and the withholding of Palestinian tax revenue still posed a threat to a viable Palestinian State. He urged the Council to add its voice to the demand for the Israeli Government to put an end forthwith to its military operations and to take immediate measures to respect the economic and social rights of the Palestinian people.

Ms. POITEVIEN CABRAL (Observer for the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said her delegation supported the draft resolution. The Palestinians, like all peoples, had a right to self-determination and to respect for their territorial integrity. Her Government had long advocated the creation of a Palestinian State in the region, to exist side by side with Israel, within safe and recognized borders. Participants in the United Nations Latin American and Caribbean Meeting on the Question of Palestine had stressed the need for full implementation of the road map and the exercise of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people. Her Government rejected unilateral Israeli action in Palestinian territory and urged Israel to withdraw its troops. Unfortunately, the veto system had tied the Security Council's hands; it was perhaps time to consider reforming it so that it could fulfil its mandate to ensure peace and security in the world.

Mr. LEVANON (Observer for Israel) said that although Gaza had been freed it was still waging war, thus demonstrating the true agenda of the Palestinians, who had fired some 350 rockets against civilians, hospitals, kindergartens and other Israeli facilities since Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. The Secretary-General's note (E/2006/13) covered the year in which Israel's total disengagement from Gaza had made it the first Palestinian territory ever to be totally in Palestinian hands. The Palestinians had not spent time building schools or hospitals, however, but launching rockets. They consistently used violence for political gain. The Palestinians had gone too far when they had kidnapped an Israeli corporal on Israel's sovereign territory, in an act of provocation by the Hamas-led Government, which had shown no sign of mending its terrorist ways and unfailingly rejected demands for it to recognize Israel, cease terrorist violence and respect prior international agreements. Meanwhile, Israel was doing its best to protect its citizens, alleviate the hardship of the civilian population and enable

humanitarian organizations to go about their business. Despite the ongoing Hamas terrorist activities, Israel did not wish to see Palestinians suffer, and sent essential goods across the border on a daily basis, as corroborated in the report.

The report under consideration was skewed against Israel and ignored the campaign of terror perpetrated against Israeli civilians. It took the Palestinian socio-economic situation out of context and deliberately shifted attention away from pressing humanitarian issues. Meanwhile, thanks to Hamas and Hizbollah, Palestinians, Lebanese and Israelis were dying.

Israel had been singled out by the Economic and Social Council for special treatment: the dire situation in Somalia and the indiscriminate killings in Darfur had engendered neither debate nor a draft resolution in the Council. Neither the present debate nor the draft resolution under consideration would bring the Palestinians closer to their aspirations or improve their lot. What was needed was not a resolution but the release of Israeli hostages and an end to the launching of missiles and the violence; in a word, an end to the culture of hate.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America) said the report was a highly politicized document, in which opinions were presented as facts and special-interest groups had been used as sources. The statistics had been grossly manipulated in order to put Israeli policy in the worst light. It contained a grudging acknowledgment that the Palestinian economic, social and financial situation had improved in the previous year in the West Bank, but was so one-sided as to undermine the ability of the United Nations to play a constructive peacebuilding role.

Neither the biased statements by previous speakers nor the report or draft resolution E/2006/L.17 reflected the reality of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Instead they suggested that only Israel's actions should be censured. His delegation called on the Hamas-led Palestinian Government to accept the Quartet principles.

His Government's policy was consistent with the views expressed by the G-8 countries: Israel and a State of Palestine should live side by side in peace and security. His country was continuing to provide aid to the Palestinian people through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and would be donating medicines

worth US\$ 10 million to the Palestinians. The Council should refrain from biased political debates and concentrate on practical measures for achieving greater security, stability and peace in the region.

Dr. SHIBIB (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that the Palestinian crisis had grave consequences for the health of people in the occupied territory. There was a shortage of essential drugs and of facilities for treating non-communicable diseases - the main cause of death - which needed not only outpatient treatment but also laboratory support and referral services.

WHO assistance in the occupied territory comprised three components: support to UNRWA; support in key areas of public health; and health-related humanitarian assistance within the revised consolidated appeal process. WHO had recently met with other agencies and some 30 donors to address ways of averting a health crisis in Palestinian territory and had been monitoring the health situation using a list of short-term indicators developed with United Nations partners. It was important to ensure that essential public-health functions and the delivery of critical health services were not compromised pending operationalization of the Temporary International Mechanism established under the auspices of the Quartet. WHO wished to avoid creating a parallel mechanism but in the meantime was responding to urgent needs using its own, limited internal resources, and was planning to enhance its technical presence to ensure better coordination and to sustain the delivery of essential health services and programmes in the Gaza Strip.

Mr. SHOUKRY (Observer for Egypt) said that the ongoing crisis was having a serious impact on the Palestinian and Syrian population in the West Bank and the Golan Heights. The international community must redouble its efforts to stop the escalation of hostilities by Israel. The occupation had exacerbated the sufferings of the Palestinian people through actions that, although defined by the Israeli army as self-defence, in fact amounted to inordinate force and a form of collective punishment. The blockade and restriction of movement of the Palestinian people had jeopardized their health care and businesses and penalized the Palestinian economy and services. The confiscation of land was in breach of the Geneva Conventions and

international humanitarian law and had divided East Jerusalem, with the concomitant victimization of children and the elderly, while the continued construction of the wall undermined the Palestinian social fabric.

The international community needed to reaffirm its solidarity with the Palestinian, Lebanese and Syrian peoples. He urged the Council to adopt a strong resolution that sent a message that the siege of the Palestinians must end. The rights of the Palestinian people must be preserved and the international community must redouble its efforts to put an end to the Israeli occupation.

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS (A/60/853-E/2006/75, A/61/62 and A/61/80-E/2006/72; E/2006/47)**

Mr. BENÍTEZ VERNON (Cuba), speaking on behalf of the Special Committee on Decolonization, stressed the importance to the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories of cooperation with the United Nations and its institutions in achieving the goal of self-government. He drew the attention of the Council to the report of the President of the Council on consultations with the Special Committee on Decolonization (E/2006/47) and the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations (A/61/62).

Participation by the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the programmes and activities of the United Nations system, as well as bodies such as the African Union and the Pacific Islands Forum, contributed to their integration into the international development process. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) for example included the Non-Self-Governing Territories in regional programmes on disaster management, good governance and technical assistance in financial sectors and, in Tokelau, had provided extensive assistance in the preparation of the referendum on free association with New Zealand. UNDP was to be commended for its enlightened approach towards the implementation of the United Nations mandate for assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) likewise had provided advice on international labour standards and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had included the territories in its Small Island Developing States Programme. He thanked the Department of Public Information and the Department of Political Affairs for their contribution to a preliminary paper on assistance to Non-Self-Governing Territories, which was an important first step towards the dissemination of information on the various United Nations assistance programmes available to those territories.

Recalling Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/49, welcoming Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean resolution 574 (XXVII) calling for the necessary mechanisms for its associate members, including small island Non-Self-Governing Territories, to participate in the special sessions of the General Assembly and in the work of the Economic and Social Council, he said the Special Committee on Decolonization looked forward to working with the Economic and Social Council to ensure the implementation of that initiative. The Special Committee would likewise continue its cooperation with the Economic and Social Council with a view to assisting the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their economic and social development and bringing them closer to the ultimate objective of the total completion of the decolonization process.

#### COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS

- (a) REPORTS OF COORDINATION BODIES (E/2006/66)
- (b) PROPOSED STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2008-2009 (A/61/6)

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the report of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2005/06 (E/2006/66), said that it testified to a renewed commitment by the organizations of the United Nations system to strive for results, to undertake the internal reforms required to maximize outcomes and to accept accountability for progress to that end. It was significant that the executive heads had been eager to share with the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence their experience and reflections on ways of bringing about qualitative

improvements in the capacity of the international system to foster sustained development. The thrust of the executive heads' messages to the panel was: help to simplify the system but avoid simplistic solutions; focus on core mandates but not at the expense of efforts to strengthen synergies and to address economic and social complexities; look beyond symptoms to root causes; and take into account all issues that impinge on effectiveness and coherence, including governance and funding arrangements.

The Chief Executives Board for Coordination was conscious that the capacity of the United Nations system to advance would depend in some measure on the effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council in exercising the new functions entrusted to it by the 2005 World Summit. One of the main constraints to progress in coordination over the past year had been a lack of political will combined with the failure of intergovernmental bodies to adequately exercise their system-wide functions. The reason why the Millennium Declaration had had such a unifying impact was because it had provided the system with a common policy framework that engaged and committed all its constituent elements. Similarly, no decisions by the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council had had a greater impact on the United Nations system as a whole than the resolutions adopted within the framework of the triennial comprehensive policy review, which addressed the way the system worked in the realm of operational activities for development. The Council's new functions, in the form of the ministerial-level substantive reviews and the Development Cooperation Forum, held out the promise of real progress towards improved coordination of the development cooperation system.

The way the Council opted to structure the new meetings would shape the future agenda of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination. Since the annual ministerial-level reviews and the Development Cooperation Forum would address a broader range of issues than the functioning of the system itself, the coordination segment could in due course become the main focus for dialogue on the system's specific contribution to advancing internationally agreed development goals. In that context, he hoped that the Council would take up the Secretary-General's proposal on the organization of meetings with the executive heads of the

specialized agencies, including “infrastructure” agencies such as the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and the International Maritime Organization (IMO), which played an important role in advancing development yet were somehow not an integral part of the dialogue with the Council.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America), expressing surprise that no other representative had requested to speak on sub-items (a) and (b), said that the lack of attention to such an important issue as coordination was one of the reasons why the Economic and Social Council was widely perceived as a weak and inconsequential organ. He wondered whether any participant in the meeting had actually found time to read the very long and detailed document submitted to the Council on the proposed strategic framework for the biennium 2008-2009 (A/61/6). Yet, in order to exercise the wide and diverse responsibilities entrusted to it, the Council had to find a way of engaging with the details contained in such documents. He hoped that the Council would find a way of focusing in the coming year on an issue that his delegation regarded as very important.

Mr. KHAN (Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that the Secretariat had repeatedly put forward other options for dealing with the proposed strategic framework for the biennium and other such voluminous documents. The Council could review the document during the coordination segment rather than in the general segment, where it was too often overshadowed by items that were contentious and time-consuming. It was high time to address a problem that was preventing the Council from exercising its coordination responsibilities effectively.

Ms. FERNANDO (Sri Lanka), endorsing the suggestion of Mr. Khan, asked whether it would also be possible to prepare an executive summary of very large documents such as the different fascicles of A/61/6.

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs) noted that the strategic framework document, unlike the more succinct overview of the system provided by the Chief Executives Board for Coordination, was intended

specifically for the General Assembly rather than the Economic and Social Council. If members of the Council so wished, the Secretariat could prepare a summary document highlighting issues of particular relevance and interest to the Council.

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to take note of the report of the Chief Executives Board for Coordination for 2005/06 (E/2006/66).

It was so decided.

- (c) INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF INFORMATICS (E/2006/79)
- (f) INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES TASK FORCE (E/2006/63)

Mr. KHAN (Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination, Department of Economic and Social Affairs) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on international cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2006/79), which described the efforts of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics and the Secretariat to make Secretariat resources available to Member States. Those efforts had focused on improving the working conditions for delegations, including by making Wi-Fi access available throughout the public areas at headquarters in New York, installing electronic panels at the entrances to meeting rooms and establishing a prototype website to support the elections process for United Nations bodies. The working group had worked effectively to make information technology available for the benefit of the diplomatic community, in the context of the ongoing modernization of Secretariat resources.

Turning to the note by the Secretary-General on the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (E/2006/63), he recalled that the task force had concluded its four-year mandate in December 2005. The task force had been a successful experiment in providing a truly multi-stakeholder platform for dialogue on information and communication technologies, and in particular on their contribution to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The task force had never been a negotiating body; it had gathered together high-level policymakers from all stakeholder groups to focus on strategic issues relating to information and communication technologies in order to help Member States apply those technologies in the

context of the Millennium Development Goals. The task force had played a key role at the two phases of the World Summit on the Information Society, underscoring the central role information and communication technologies could play in meeting the Millennium Development Goals and promoting a universal and inclusive information society. It had also been instrumental in highlighting the role the private sector could play in that regard. It had been a successful advocate for changing perceptions, practices and policies relating to information and communication technologies, especially in the developing countries, transition economies and the Commonwealth of Independent States, showing that such technologies had sectoral and cross-sectoral applications and could transform and transcend traditional development models. He noted that the work of the task force had been carried out entirely through voluntary funding at very little cost to the regular budget of the United Nations.

The experience of the task force provided a successful model which could be replicated elsewhere. Accordingly, the Secretary-General had recently launched the global alliance for information and communication technologies and development, through which the United Nations would continue to play a leadership role, coordinating all stakeholders with a view to meeting the demand from Member States for information and communication technologies. The global alliance was a mechanism which could achieve much broader results than the task force, included high-level representation from the private sector and would form a network of networks working at the policy and technology levels. The task force, which had laid the foundations for the global alliance, had shown that the United Nations could continue to function and achieve significant results through innovative action in the twenty-first century.

Mr. PETROV (Russian Federation) welcomed the efforts of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics to improve Member States' access to United Nations information services; those efforts should be extended to all United Nations centres. He also welcomed the measures adopted to facilitate the work of delegations, improve coordination with the Secretariat and provide training to delegations. The mandate of the working group should be extended for another year.

He underscored the importance of the work of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, in particular its contribution to the Geneva and Tunis phases of the World Summit on the Information Society. His delegation supported the launch of the global

alliance for information and communication technologies and development and looked forward to continuing cooperation with international stakeholders to ensure implementation of the outcomes of the 2005 World Summit and the World Summit on the Information Society.

Mr. TRIBUSH (Observer for Belarus), referring to the report of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force (E/2006/63), said that it was important to step up efforts to attain the goals of the World Summit on the Information Society. International assistance had a major role to play in the formulation of national information and communication technology (ICT) strategies, the exchange of national experience and the implementation of national partnerships to further progress towards a fair global information society. His country, which was implementing a wide-ranging programme in the context of its national ICT strategy, was ready to share its experience to that end.

Ms. LIU Zhongxin (China) expressed appreciation of the contribution of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics to improvements in the information technology services provided to Member States at United Nations Headquarters and online. Her Government, which had actively supported the work of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, hoped that the new global alliance for information and communication technologies and development would serve as a platform for cooperation among the diverse stakeholders and thereby help to bridge the digital divide and attain the Millennium Development Goals.

Ms. FINSKAS (Observer for Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, endorsed the positive evaluation of the work of the Information and Communication Technologies Task Force contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/2006/63). The success of the task force in the preparation of the World Summit on the Information Society demonstrated the importance of the participation of all stakeholders in the implementation and follow-up of the Summit's outcomes.

Mr. LAWRENCE (United States of America) said the Secretary-General's report on international cooperation in the field of informatics (E/2006/79) testified to substantial progress in utilizing information and communication technology to maximize the effectiveness of the Economic and Social Council and facilitate the task of those participating in its work. The

Secretariat should build on the success of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics to incorporate ICT management into its core operations. The Information and Communication Technologies Task Force, which had made a valuable contribution to harnessing the potential of information and communication technology in the cause of development, was an example of how such a body could fulfil its mandate within a limited period. Noting that it already had a successor in the form of the global alliance for information and communication technologies and development, he urged all concerned with the follow-up to the World Summit on the Information Society to ensure that new bodies did not proliferate and that existing ones coordinated to the fullest extent possible so as to maximize the resources available for the creation of digital opportunities for all.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.