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PROVISIONAL SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 40th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Monday, 23 July 2007, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. MÉRORÈS (Haiti)
(Vice-President)

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

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL QUESTIONS (A/62/8, A/62/25, A/62/78-E/2007/62, A/62/89-E/2007/76, E/2006/33, E/2007/29, E/2007/33, E/2007/42 and Corr.1, E/2007/53, E/2007/61, E/2007/58 and E/2007/L.9)

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Mr. OPSCHOOR (Committee for Development Policy (CDP)), introducing the 2007 report (E/2007/33) of the Committee for Development Policy, said that the report focused on three main issues: strengthening the international partnership for poverty reduction; climate change and sustainable development; and improvement of information exchanges between the Committee and the countries considered for inclusion in, or graduation from, the list of least developed countries.

Climate change - which was already taking its toll in the form of widespread melting of glaciers, sea level rise and extreme weather patterns and which threatened to give rise within a few decades to even more dramatic impacts - was, in the words of the United Nations Secretary-General, “the defining issue of our era”. Climate change adversely affected socio-economic development, particularly in the most vulnerable developing countries, and especially among the poor, who were most exposed to the elements of nature. In keeping with the 2007 Ministerial Declaration of the High-level Segment of the Council - which reaffirmed that responses to climate change should be coordinated with social and economic development in an integrated manner, taking into account the priority needs of developing countries - the Committee stressed that confronting climate change and sustainable development required a new partnership between developed and developing countries.

The Committee, which was concerned that targets set by the Kyoto Protocol for reducing greenhouse gas emissions had not been met, believed that more attention should be given to efforts at adaptation, as distinct from mitigation, to assist those most affected. There was a need, post-Kyoto, for a two-track approach aimed simultaneously at emission cuts in developed countries; and faster and, as far as possible, decarbonized growth in the developing countries, with technological and financial assistance from the developed world.

In the Committee's view, the Economic and Social Council could play a proactive role in that regard by initiating a process for reviewing the Millennium Development Goals so as to properly reflect the threat posed by climate change on development goals, and by providing a platform for an overarching policy dialogue integrating climate within the development agenda.

With regard to the Committee's review of the procedures for inclusion in, and graduation from, the list of least developed countries (LDCs), the Committee requested the Council to consider and endorse the guidelines it had drawn up on that process, with particular regard to the exchange of information between the Committee and the countries concerned.

He recalled in that context that the Committee in its 2006 report (E/2006/33) had recommended that Samoa should be graduated from the list of least developed countries. In a letter to the President of the Council dated April 2007, it had repeated that recommendation, having taken due consideration of the concerns expressed by the Government of Samoa in the light of the framework laid out in General Assembly resolution A/RES/59/209. Samoa, which was an example - like Cape Verde - of a vulnerable economy that had overcome structural impediments to obtain sustained income growth and progress in human development, had argued the case for changing the criteria for graduation as they related to economic vulnerability and had requested that its eligibility for graduation be reconsidered. The Committee, while recognizing the need for periodic review of the criteria, together with the importance of safeguarding the impartiality and integrity of the listing process, considered it essential that the review of criteria should remain delinked from the actual review of the list of LDCs, noting that the countries most in need of special benefits were best served by a credible list.

Mr. SETH (Director, Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development (E/2007/61), highlighted the results achieved by the Alliance in two pilot countries, Madagascar and the Dominican Republic, in association with national institutions and various development partners, donor countries, civil society and the private sector, and suggested ways to promote national mechanisms to enhance partnership projects for rural development.

The report examined the work of the Alliance, its accomplishments and the continuing challenges and constraints in promoting partnerships for rural development. It provided an overview of the importance attached to the pilot initiatives by the Governments concerned, the need for public-private partnerships, the establishment of national mechanisms in the pilot countries, the progress achieved in promoting partnerships, and examples of the impact public-private alliances have had on rural development in Madagascar and the Dominican Republic. It also discussed challenges and constraints faced in the successful implementation of partnership initiatives, the importance of strengthening local capacities and the need for heightened global advocacy. The report, finally, made a number of recommendations to improve the work of the Alliance based on the experience of the two pilot projects.

Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on products harmful to health and the environment (A/62/78-E/2007/62), he said that it constituted the eighth triennial review of the Consolidated List of Products Whose Consumption and/or Sale Have Been Banned, Withdrawn, Severely Restricted or Not Approved by Governments. The List, covering over one thousand pharmaceuticals, agricultural and industrial chemicals, and consumer products regulated on account of their chemical composition, provided a tool for government agencies for the purposes of regulation and for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and concerned citizen groups to raise public awareness of the adverse effects of listed harmful products on health and the environment.

The report reviewed developments since 2004 in the area of environmentally sound management of chemicals, described activities undertaken by United Nations system entities and

other intergovernmental mechanisms, provided a progress report on the Rotterdam and Stockholm chemical conventions, and considered the impact of a number of other normative instruments and cooperation initiatives in the field of chemicals management. In that regard, it highlighted the wide gap between developed and developing countries in their ability to implement chemicals management policies, and considered that cooperation on chemicals management in Europe provided a model for other regions of the world.

The report recommended the need to fully implement national development strategies consistent with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management in order to achieve the 2020 targets of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, and to pursue capacity-building activities in developing countries with additional financial resources in support of national efforts to improve the management of toxic chemicals. The guidance of the Council was also sought on the continued publication of the Consolidated List, in view of its posting on the departmental website since 2003 and the availability of similar information from electronic and other sources.

Ms. GEBRE-EGZIABHER (Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda (E/2007/58), said that the efforts of UN-Habitat were increasingly focused on the Millennium Development Goals of slum upgrading, water and sanitation and slum prevention, which served as entry points for addressing the twin Habitat Agenda goals of “adequate shelter for all” and “sustainable human settlements in an urbanizing world”.

Urbanization was taking place increasingly rapidly and on an unprecedented scale, creating massive accommodation and infrastructure needs and causing the number of slum dwellers to escalate, mostly in the developing countries.

Slums and other manifestations of the urbanization of poverty, breeding crime, violence and disease posed direct challenges to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the attainment of internationally agreed goals. A survey had shown that the majority of countries

continued to witness the proliferation of slums. Unless very large investments were made in housing and urban development over the next two decades, most of the growing urban population of the developing countries would not escape the trap of urban poverty, deplorable housing conditions, poor health, poor nutrition, and low productivity.

There was a need to mainstream the urban agenda and to build awareness - starting at the local level - as the key to mobilizing resources. At the global level, a harmonized approach to monitoring the social, economic and environmental challenges of urbanization - taking a lead from the World Urban Forum - would greatly improve advocacy and awareness-building. Regionally, UN-Habitat had organized ministerial and high-level meetings on housing and urban development for Africa and the Asia and Pacific regions, following the seminal meeting for the Latin American and Caribbean region, and such meetings would in future be held annually, and from 2008 would include countries with economies in transition.

Another mechanism mobilizing a number of United Nations entities, bilateral and unilateral donors, researchers and professional associations was the Global Land Tool Network, which addressed the fundamental issue of land and property rights for the urban poor. Coordination was also being pursued at the inter-agency level, while at the country level UN-Habitat had proposed an enhanced normative and operational framework for the integration of urban issues in national development strategies and measures to revitalize Habitat National Committees.

The report of the Secretary-General recommended urgent action to mainstream sustainable urbanization and urban poverty reduction, called for revitalization of National Habitat Committees to ensure monitoring and implementation of the Habitat Agenda, and encouraged a review of macroeconomic policies that favoured pro-poor investment in housing and urban development to address the social consequences of rapid urbanization and to stimulate local economic development and employment generation.

Mr. KERVELLA (Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)), introducing the report for the biennium 2005-2006 on the work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of

Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals said that the Committee existed to improve the safety of the international transport of dangerous goods, to facilitate trade by recommending the application of harmonized requirements for all modes of transport, and to deal intersectorally with the global harmonization of the classification and labelling of chemicals. The report summarized the actions taken in implementation of Council resolution 2005/53 concerning the publication of revised editions of normative texts within its spheres of competence and the status of implementation of the relevant provisions by international organizations and Governments, reported on the work of the Committee in 2005 and 2006, and set out the Committee's proposed programme of work and schedule of meetings for 2007-2008. The draft resolution contained in the report made a number of requests to the Secretary-General concerning the dissemination, publication and implementation of the revised normative texts, drew attention to the problems caused when the shipment of radioactive material was denied, and stressed the importance of the participation of developing countries and economies in transition in the work of the Committee.

Ms. AYESHA (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and referring to the report on the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, regretted that the Commission had been unable to reach agreement on the thematic cluster encompassing energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution and the atmosphere, and climate change, given their relevance to global efforts to eradicate poverty and achieve sustained economic growth and sustainable development.

The Commission was uniquely placed to ensure full and effective implementation of commitments concerning integration of economic development, social development and environmental protection. In seeking solutions to the challenges of sustainable development, it was important to focus on the priority problems of poverty, hunger and underdevelopment. Partnerships based on the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities were essential to addressing the huge challenge of environmental degradation and climate change, which was beyond the capacity of the developing countries alone.

Implementation had been the Achilles heel of the global development agenda, and it was important to scale up efforts to implement the global partnership for development as set out in the Millennium Declaration, the Monterrey Consensus and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, as well as to complete the Doha Round of trade negotiations and to enhance official development assistance and other financing flows to the developing countries. The effective implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Capacity-building and Technology Transfer would be a measure of the seriousness of the international community in translating its commitments into action.

The Group of 77 and China hoped that subsequent sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development would reach agreement on development-oriented policy options and actions and on a built-in mechanism for their follow-up and implementation.

Welcoming the report of the Secretary-General on coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda (E/2007/58), she emphasized the need to tackle the social, economic and environmental problems caused by rapidly increasing urbanization and ensure sustainable human settlements and adequate shelter for all. More than 1 billion people in the developing world lived in poverty in urban slums, most without access to basic services, and the international community must implement the commitment made at the 2005 World Summit to significantly improve the lives of 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020. To that end it should support UN-Habitat, the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlement Foundation and the Slum Upgrading Facility and strengthen its financial, technological and debt relief assistance for the developing countries.

She took note of the report of the UN-Habitat Governing Council on its twenty-first session (A/62/8) and hoped that the approval of the biennial work programme and budget and the strengthening of UN-Habitat and the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation would facilitate the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. United Nations programmes in areas such as shelter, water and sanitation and the contribution of other actors in the area of human settlements played an important role in poverty reduction and the promotion of sustainable development and economic growth.

Efforts to improve human settlements could be accelerated through regional and national capacity-building based on sharing of experience and common regional policy formulation and implementation. She therefore expressed support for the ongoing ministerial meetings on housing and urban development at the regional level organized in close collaboration with the regional commissions. UN-Habitat and development partners should likewise strengthen the developing countries' activities in the areas of slum improvement, slum prevention and the reduction of urban poverty through the development of strategic partnerships for capacity-building and resource mobilization for investment in pro-poor housing and related infrastructure and services.

Mr. SILVESTRE (Portugal), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey, the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia, and, in addition, Armenia, Iceland, Norway, the Republic of Moldova, and Ukraine, with regard to the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its fifteenth session (E/2007/29), expressed regret that the Commission had been unable to reach an agreed outcome. Issues such as climate change, energy for sustainable development, industrial development and pollution required ambitious international commitments, and the Chairperson's summary fell short of providing an adequate and timely response to the expectations of the European Union and the international community.

The European Union remained convinced however that the Commission, as a multi-stakeholder forum, could play a vital role in coordinating and promoting sustainable development at the global level and reaffirmed its commitment to the work of the Commission. It was therefore essential to find ways to ensure that future Commission cycles, within its existing policy mandate, resulted in the progressive, clear and action-oriented outcomes necessary for achieving the common goal of sustainable development and the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mr. GASS (Observer for Switzerland) said that the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (E/2007/29) had provided an opportunity to discuss

numerous policy issues. Access to energy in particular was essential to realization of the Millennium Development Goals, especially poverty reduction. More than 2 billion people in the developing world currently did not have reliable access to environmentally sound energy sources.

The Commission had been unable to reach consensus on an outcome document for its fifteenth session. While the Chairperson's summary contained some positive elements, his delegation believed that it fell short of the commitments already made, for example at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. The lack of consensus should motivate the parties involved to redouble their efforts to ensure that the Commission carried out its mandate successfully.

He welcomed the progress made during the twenty-fourth session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (A/62/25), including the establishment of a working group on mercury and the adoption of an updated water policy and strategy that stressed the importance of ecosystems, including land-based ones, for water management. For the first time reference was made to internalizing environmental costs (pricing). Such innovative new economic instruments would be increasingly important not only for water management but also for biological diversity and the climate.

He took note of the report of the United Nations Forum on Forests on its seventh session (E/2007/42), in particular the adoption of a multi-year programme of work and a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. He looked forward to future sessions of the Forum and to the increased role to be played by regions and welcomed the Forum's increased focus on exchange of experience and discussion of challenges rather than lengthy negotiations.

Alliances would be increasingly important in marshalling the financial resources needed for the sustainable management of forests, and he hoped the non-legally binding instrument, while neither particularly innovative or ambitious, would help countries manage their forests. His Government and the Government of South Africa would jointly organize, in South Africa, a seminar on sectoral governance of forests in Africa, which would address issues such as the decentralization of forest management.

Ms. KULZHANOVA (Kazakhstan), underlining the importance of national, regional and global actions to ensure sustainable economic and social development while at the same time preserving the environment for future generations, said that the United Nations had a leading role to play in that regard.

Kazakhstan was experiencing high economic growth and was a major oil producing country, but her Government was nevertheless committed to the goal of sustainable development and to measures such as energy conservation, protection of the environment and cooperation in international efforts to address the problem of climate change. National measures included the establishment of a National Council on Sustainable Development and the adoption of an Ecological Code, a Transition to Sustainable Development Plan 2007-2024 and a framework strategy aimed at ensuring that 5 per cent of national energy resources were derived from alternative sources by 2024.

At the regional level her Government was active in the Environment for Europe and Environment and Development in Asia processes. It was of the view that closer coordination between those two processes would contribute to protection of the environment and sustainable development in Eurasia and, in keeping with the priority it accorded to sustainable development, looked forward to hosting the next world summit on sustainable development.

Mr. ALMIAHI (Iraq) expressed support for the efforts of the international community to promote sustainable development and for the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. His Government recognized that sustainable development was the key to economic growth and that the benefits of growth and development must be shared equally among all sectors of society, thus empowering the population, especially the poor. Adequate safeguards must however be put into place to protect the environment. Iraq's domestic legislation took into account the need to promote development while measuring the effect of human activity on the environment, and required all social and economic programmes to include an environmental dimension.

Poverty and unemployment constituted a breeding ground for terrorism, and it was therefore vital to meet the development goals of poverty reduction and job creation, which were essential for real economic and social progress. Iraq's experience had shown that development was only possible in a democratic and secure environment where there was equal opportunity for all. Its past history of conflict and sanctions had caused instability and insecurity and seriously affected infrastructure, industry and agriculture.

The United Nations, and the Council in particular, must ensure that United Nations agencies returned to work in Iraq with a view to promoting education, democracy and social and economic development. He was confident that the Council would act to meet the basic needs of the population of Iraq and play an important role in overcoming the obstacles to development in the country.

Mr. HAART (Barbados) stressed the importance of the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, with particular regard to follow-up to international commitments relating to the small island developing States, such as the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy for Implementation. That role should be fully reflected in the outcomes of the Commission. The integration of a day devoted to the small island developing States during the Commission's review year and of a session on those States during the intergovernmental preparatory meeting of the policy year contributed to better understanding of their unique problems and the policies needed to overcome them. His delegation would continue to work with others to strengthen the Commission to enable it to fulfil its mandate with regard to the small island developing States.

Although the Commission had not reached a consensus outcome at its fifteenth session, the session had not been a failure. It had become clear that there was an emerging global commitment on the need to address complex issues such as climate change and energy through a comprehensive agreement in the context of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. He stressed that for the small island developing States, climate change was no longer merely an issue for sustainable development but a matter of survival and there must therefore be an urgent and coordinated response to that challenge.

The Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), held in Barbados from 1-4 July 2007 and chaired by Barbados, had issued its strongest statement ever on climate change, indicated grave concern at the effects of climate change on the region and alarm at the finding of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change that human activity was the main cause of global warming, and called for urgent action to avoid a global disaster. The statement emphasized that dangerous climate change was already occurring and that measures to address its current and future effects must be made a priority, including substantial and binding emission reductions and the allocation of increased resources to help developing countries, in particular the small island developing States, adapt to its adverse consequences.

The Heads of Government had pledged to work within the Alliance of Small Island Developing States and with international partners to achieve those goals. They had also welcomed the efforts by the convening of two high-level events in New York on 31 July-1 August and 24 September 2007 to prepare for the Bali Climate Change Conference and had decided to play an active role at those meetings.

Mr. OWADE (Observer for Kenya), associating himself with the statement made by the representative of Pakistan on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed regret that the Commission on Sustainable Development had not been able to achieve consensus on an outcome document, especially given the critical role issues such as energy and climate change would play in achieving international sustainable development goals. That lack of consensus should not affect follow-up of the relevant conference and summit outcomes. The role of the Commission should in fact be strengthened to ensure that it continued to contribute to the global development agenda.

Climate change threatened social and economic development, particularly in the developing countries, and he hoped that forthcoming international meetings on climate change in New York and Bali would lead to consensus on that critical issue. Energy in particular, which was crucial for development, was a priority area and mechanisms to ensure that the developing countries had access to a mix of clean and affordable energy sources must be developed. To that end, development partners should strengthen technology transfer and capacity-building and allocate increased technical and financial resources to energy. Such efforts should not however undermine food and other security concerns.

With regard to human settlements, he said that the trend towards urbanization required the urgent attention of the international community, especially given that 95 per cent of the growth in urbanization was occurring in the developing countries, about 1 billion people lived in slums, and the highest growth rate for slums, 5 per cent, was in sub-Saharan Africa. That highlighted the need to implement the Habitat Agenda, especially with regard to slum prevention and improvement, basic services and infrastructure. He therefore stressed the need to increase the resources of the United Nations Human Settlement Programme and called on development partners to contribute generously to the proposed Africa fund/financing mechanism on slum prevention and upgrading.

Environmental protection was a pillar of sustainable development, and he welcomed the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) on its twenty-fourth session (A/62/25), in particular the decision on the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building. In order for UNEP to be effective, its scientific, technical and financial resources must be strengthened in the context of the regular budget of the United Nations. He hoped the ongoing debate on environmental governance within the United Nations system would lead to a strengthening of UNEP within its existing mandate.

Turning to the United Nations Forum on Forests, he welcomed the adoption of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and a multi-year programme of work, which would lead to a strengthened international framework for forest management. Concrete measures must likewise be adopted to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable forest management at all levels.

Ms. MOSCHINSKAYA (Belarus) said that, while there had been no agreed outcome at the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, there had been a positive exchange of views on issues such as the need for all countries, in particular the developing countries and emerging economies, to have access to environmentally sound energy resources. The volatility of international energy markets had highlighted the need to develop stronger bilateral and multilateral mechanisms for regulating markets and prices and ensure

equitable access to energy, including alternative energy sources. Belarus had undergone 10 years of strong growth and developed its export sector but was also working to increase energy efficiency. Over the next five years her Government would increase investment in measures to reduce energy consumption and costs and develop alternative and renewable energy sources.

She recalled that Agenda 21 committed all countries to collective responsibility for economic and social development and protection of the environment. Practical activities to meet that commitment must be based on international partnerships to ensure decent living conditions for the people of the world and for the provision and management of environmentally sound technologies and resources. Her Government had had the experience of dealing with the consequences of the Chernobyl nuclear disaster. As a result it was particularly motivated to play an active role in promoting environmental concerns; for example, it had signed the Montreal and Kyoto Protocols and developed a timetable to reduce and eliminate the use of environmentally dangerous substances and would continue to address international environmental concerns at the regional level.

Her delegation supported the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, in particular with regard to issues such as housing for the disadvantaged and effective land management planning to protect the environment. Given the rapid growth in urbanization it attached special importance to the need to promote sustainable smaller urban centres and the better quality of life they could offer. Her Government was developing a new land use policy aimed at promoting the creation of such smaller centres, including adequate housing and infrastructure, in particular in agricultural areas.

Turning to the issue of forests, she said that her Government supported the environmentally sound management of forest resources and had implemented a strategic plan for the sustainable development of its forest resources for the coming years aimed at preserving the nation's flora and fauna. She therefore expressed support for the efforts of the United Nations Forum on Forests to coordinate the rational management of forest resources at the national, regional and international levels.

Ms. COPA ROMERO (Bolivia), aligning herself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the global environment was deteriorating increasingly due to the indiscriminate use of natural resources. Production and environmental protection had yet to be reconciled; and while there were alternative ways of increasing production, particularly of food, they were not unlimited and in some geographic regions were very limited. It was clear that decision-making in a given country affected the ecological balance of third countries, that environmental problems were cross-frontier in nature and affected the interests and fate of all countries, and that the future development of humanity was accordingly dependent on practical, feasible and rapid solutions being found to those problems.

Bolivia considered that the future relationship between man and nature would be based on the centuries-old indigenous custom of taking only what was necessary from the earth so that it would be able to provide for future generations. Institutions involved in environmental education would have to ensure that such thinking was integrated into all bodies of society, with a focus on community action. A fundamental objective of the education process was to ensure that individuals and society as a whole understood the complex nature of the natural and man-made environments, and acquired the knowledge, values, behaviour and practical ability to participate responsibly and efficiently in protecting the environment in such a way as to resolve current and future ecological problems.

In developed countries, environmental damage was characterized by high levels of contamination and other forms of environmental degradation. In developing countries, the existence of other problems such as low standard of living and a lack of essential social services meant that environmental concerns were not given priority, as attention was focused on combating undernourishment, disease, illiteracy, housing shortages and unemployment.

The disaster that had occurred in Bolivia in February 2007 had highlighted the increasing vulnerability of countries to such events. In the light of the current worsening environmental situation and the fact that the biological wealth of the planet was being reduced irreversibly, the international community must work towards comprehensive sustainable development that was compatible with environmental protection. The necessary financial, technological and other resources should be provided by the developed countries, given their increased responsibility for global environmental degradation.

Mr. ADSETT (Canada) said that Canada supported the safe transport of all dangerous goods, including radioactive materials. Canada shared the concern of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals with regard to the denial or delay of shipments of short-lived medical isotopes used for the diagnosis and/or treatment of disease, which could have negative consequences on health, research and the development of safe nuclear technologies. Canada welcomed the efforts of the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transportation of Dangerous Goods and the International Atomic Energy Agency Steering Committee on denials of shipments of radioactive material to facilitate the transport and rapid delivery of short-lived medical radioisotopes and encouraged both groups to collaborate closely in that regard.

Mr. MAKSIMYCHEV (Russian Federation) said that the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development was a crucial link in the United Nations system for implementing the decisions of relevant international conferences and for strengthening and furthering international development cooperation. His Government regretted that a negative precedent had been set at the fifteenth session of the Commission through the failure to reach agreement on the important topics of energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution, and climate change, and hoped that future sessions would be marked by a more objective and balanced approach to the cluster of issues concerned.

His Government, which was actively collaborating with UN-Habitat to ensure sustainable development in Russian regions, towns and rural communities, supported its efforts to address problems of urbanization, including the provision of accessible, decent housing, particularly for vulnerable groups. UN-Habitat activities in the Arctic region were of particular interest to the Russian Federation, and should be coordinated with all interested States and other international programmes and organizations, particularly the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Arctic Council. The Russian Government welcomed the UN-Habitat Mid-term Strategic and Institutional Plan for the period 2008-2013, focused on specific results, strengthened partnerships and increased mobilization of resources.

The Russian Federation wished to see the role of UNEP strengthened and international cooperation under its auspices enhanced so as to ensure constructive collaboration with other

United Nations agencies within the context of their mandates, avoiding any duplication of activities. The UNEP Moscow office had conducted valuable work, including playing an important role in the cooperation programme between UNEP and the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources for the period 2005-2007, the national programme of action for the Arctic, and projects addressing pollution.

The Russian Federation was also involved in strengthening international cooperation on sustainable forest management, and commended the work of the United Nations Forum on Forests for bringing forestry issues to the forefront of the global sustainable development agenda. New working methods, centred on long-term perspectives, agreed strategic forestry targets and the adoption of an international instrument on sustainable forest development were important outcomes of the Forum's reform. The main priority for the future was to strengthen coordination among all United Nations agencies addressing forestry issues, as well as the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, in order to ensure the effective and timely implementation of all of the sections of the Forum's Multi-Year Programme of Work.

Mr. GUBA AISI (Observer for Papua New Guinea) reported that in March 2006 the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (CDP) had recommended that his country should be included in the list of least developed countries, based on an assessment of gross national income per capita and the economic vulnerability and human assets indices. The recommendation, which implied that the country had taken a step backwards in the development process, had been made at a time when Papua New Guinea was experiencing strong economic growth and political stability. In view of that apparent contradiction, the Government had refrained from giving an immediate formal response in order to study the recommendation in greater detail.

Despite challenges over the past 30 years, the economy of Papua New Guinea was currently robust, having benefited from high global oil and commodity prices in the past five years. For example, between 2002 and 2006, real GDP growth had increased from -0.2 per cent to an average of 2.7 per cent, inflation had fallen from 11.8 per cent to 2.9 per cent, the currency had stabilized, interest rates had fallen from 13.5 per cent to 3.3 per cent, and government debt had fallen from over 70 per cent of GDP to less than 40 per cent.

While acknowledging that data collection and collation remained institutional challenges in his country, he pointed out that variances in some of the data used by CDP needed to be reviewed, particularly the figure for GNI per capita, which at \$527 contrasted with a World Bank figure of \$660 for 2005. Although the 2005 data had not been available to the Committee when the recommendation had been made, the significantly higher figure highlighted a more general trend of economic progress in Papua New Guinea, which was not mentioned in the CDP report.

The economic vulnerability index had characterized Papua New Guinea's economy as highly vulnerable, implying that it was undiversified and susceptible to exogenous shocks. However, the indicators had considered only the production of the formal sector. The merits of the economic vulnerability index were less obvious than those of the human assets index, and there was a lack of information regarding the methodology and logic behind each specific indicator. If countries were expected to subscribe to such indicators, a more detailed explanation should be provided.

In view of the foregoing considerations, Papua New Guinea made it known that it was formally declining the recommendation for inclusion in the list of least developed countries.

Ms. ADRIANJAKA (Madagascar), speaking on behalf of Madagascar and the Dominican Republic, the two pilot countries of the United Nations Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development, drew attention to the report of the Secretary-General on the subject (E/2007/61), and said that a draft resolution on the item was currently under negotiation.

The Malagasy Government recognized the importance of adopting a pro-poor business approach to development and the advantages for rural development of bringing together actors from Government, the private sector, NGOs, academic institutions and United Nations bodies, as affirmed in the Council's 2003 Ministerial Declaration. Following the Council's endorsement of Madagascar as the first pilot country of the Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development in 2004, the participation of high-level partners at the national level had led to the establishment of the non-profit organization Alliance-Madagascar. An American dairy company had subsequently been invited to help develop a business-oriented rural development master plan for Madagascar, which had resulted in it being selected as the first country in the United States

Government's new development financing mechanism, the Millennium Challenge Corporation. The Dominican Republic, following its endorsement by the Council in 2005 as the second pilot country for the Alliance, had established a Presidential Commission on the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development, and was one of a few countries involved in a pilot project to prepare a national Millennium Development Goals needs assessment.

It was time to place greater emphasis on public-private collaboration and multi-stakeholder partnerships to combat poverty and achieve the international development goals. An early success for the Alliance had been the Regional Consultation on Migration, Remittances and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean, organized in July 2006 in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme and other partners. Various United Nations agencies and other bodies were now involved in public-private partnerships for rural development in Madagascar and the Dominican Republic, some as a result of encouragement from the Public-Private Alliance and many others from a growing recognition of the importance of public-private partnerships. The recent High-level Segment of the Council, the Global Compact Leaders Summit and the Civil Society Development Forum had all highlighted the importance of partnerships against poverty.

The report of the Secretary-General recommended that the capacities of mechanisms for promoting public-private partnerships in the two pilot countries should be evaluated, that partners should share their experiences and that United Nations agencies should increase efforts for advocacy and facilitation of partnerships. In that regard, the efforts of the Office for Economic and Social Council Support and Coordination deserved continued support. Mention should also be made of the recently launched Public-Private Alliance Foundation, which was building project-related relations with investors, commercial interests, government officials and community groups in relation to agribusiness, information technology and microfinance, with the Dominican Republic and Madagascar as the first focus countries.

Mr. SOEPRAPTO (Indonesia), aligning himself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the need for sustainable development was clear, with more than 1 billion people still surviving on less than \$1 a day and without access to basic services such as health care, education, water and sanitation. By 2050 the world would have to

support a further 3 billion people, and the growing population's environmental footprint would increase as demand for natural resources such as oil, wood and water grew. Therefore, resources must be used more sustainably, and cities and towns must be planned. International cooperation was required to overcome such problems.

He noted that half of the world's population currently lived in cities and towns, and by 2050 the proportion would increase to two thirds, with most growth occurring in developing countries. Many urban dwellers were living below the poverty line and lacked clean water and sanitation. In addition to national efforts to address those issues, the contribution of the United Nations system, particularly UN-Habitat, to sustainable cities should continue to be a priority. There should be greater emphasis on the correlation between urbanization and natural resource management. If the seventh Millennium Development Goal was to be achieved, there must be an emphasis not only on financial and human capital, but also on natural capital, without which efforts to combat poverty and pursue sustainable development would be in vain.

As a rainforest nation, Indonesia welcomed the recent adoption at the seventh session of the United Nations Forum on Forests of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and a multi-year programme of work. However, their effective implementation was dependent on sustained high-level political commitment, particularly to strengthening the means of ensuring sustainable forest management, which included the mobilization of significantly increased new and additional financial resources to provide support for developing countries.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change had highlighted the economic and social repercussions of inaction in that area. Therefore, the international community must build on the latest scientific evidence to develop feasible options to address the problem. Taking into account the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, Governments, business and civil society must mobilize action and support. Developed countries should take the lead in implementing their commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Kyoto Protocol, and developing countries should implement programmes to mitigate and adapt to climate change with international support. As the host of the thirteenth Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC and the third meeting of the parties of the Kyoto Protocol, Indonesia attached great importance to the upcoming United Nations events on climate change.

Ms. BAQUERIZO (Observer for Ecuador) said that her country supported the efforts of the international community with regard to products harmful to health and the environment, based on the principles of precaution and protection. Taking account of the report of the Secretary-General on products harmful to health and the environment, she drew the Council's attention to the gravity of the aerial spraying of glyphosate by Colombia along the border with Ecuador since 2000. A recent study conducted by the Ecuadorian Scientific Commission had revealed, on sound scientific grounds, the serious effects of that spraying in such areas as organic and genetic health, forest ecosystems and aquatic systems.

Ecuador called on all countries to fulfil the obligations undertaken at the World Summit on Sustainable Development to ensure that chemicals and pesticides were used in a manner that was not harmful to health or the environment. Practices such as aerial spraying of glyphosates were contrary to the fundamental rights of humans and their natural habitat and to decisions adopted at various international forums.

Mr. ELISAIA (Samoa) said that it had been over a year since Samoa had been first recommended for graduation from the least developed countries category by the Committee for Development Policy. During that period, Samoa had consistently argued that it was not ready to graduate from the category due to its inherent vulnerabilities, and that a decision on the matter should be deferred until the next review in 2009, and that the economic vulnerability indicator should be one of the two criteria to be met before a country lost its least developed country status.

He drew the Council's attention to the three key elements in the draft resolution now being negotiated by the main parties with an interest in Samoa's graduation. Firstly, the Samoan Government had agreed, after lengthy reflection, to graduate from the least developed countries status; secondly, the three-year transitional period was critical for cultivating durable partnerships to ensure Samoa's resilience to endogenous shocks - a position fully supported by the least developed countries, the Group of 77 and the development partners; thirdly, the Committee was called upon to assess exhaustively the economic vulnerability indicator as a critical criterion in the inclusion and graduation of countries - an issue of principle on which Samoa's willingness to agree to graduate had been conditional. Samoa had always maintained

that the economic vulnerability index was uniquely relevant to small island developing States (SIDS), and even if it did not itself benefit from its application in the next review, it would at least have made a contribution to least developed countries issues. He noted the paradox that three Pacific SIDS - Vanuatu, Tuvalu and Kiribati - had been considered eligible to graduate, while the Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the programme of action for the least developed countries had singled out the Pacific SIDS as having slipped from slow to near zero growth during the period from 1995 to 2005 and faring the worst when compared to other least developed countries. He expressed the hope that by taking its stance, Samoa had succeeded in raising awareness in the Council and among the wider United Nations membership of the importance of the economic vulnerability criteria.

Mr. AYUB (Pakistan), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed his support for the statements made by the representatives of Samoa and Papua New Guinea. The issue of Samoa's graduation from the list of LDCs was critical and should be discussed in the substantive session of the Council. Samoa had proposed that the economic vulnerability index should be one of two criteria to be met before a country could graduate. The United Nations Committee for Development Policy should continue to refine and develop a consistent set of criteria, with a particular focus on the economic vulnerability index as a structural characteristic of the LDCs that could be applied to all recommendations on inclusion in and graduation from the list of LDCs. While no one wanted to live in poverty and all LDCs agreed on the concept of graduation, the criteria for graduation must be fair, and the country concerned must agree that the time was right. Samoa's willingness to graduate showed that it was not using the economic vulnerability index as a reason to continually defer its graduation. Development partners should be forthcoming in recognizing Samoa's vulnerabilities, and should continue to provide assistance in order to ensure its smooth transition and long-term development.

Ms. YANG Ningning (China) said that the international community must pay greater attention to the situation of the economic and social development of Pacific small island developing States. Samoa was suffering from climate change and other environmental problems, which were obstacles to sustainable development. Her delegation hoped that the Council would postpone the discussion of Samoa's graduation. Sustainable development was in the long-term interests of all countries, and all countries recognized the need for an integrated and consolidated approach to economic and social development and environmental protection.

Although the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development had conducted a comprehensive review of ways of ensuring respect for the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation, a consensus had not been reached, and the issue must therefore be given further objective consideration. That setback notwithstanding, the Commission on Sustainable Development continued to make a significant contribution to the discussion of economic, social and environmental issues, and to the promotion of sustainable development. The Commission's achievements over the years were widely recognized and it remained an important platform for active dialogue and exchanges of views and experiences. Its successful experiences should be developed and built on in future. Countries should make joint efforts to cultivate a positive and cooperative atmosphere to promote consensus.

While China was making efforts to develop its economy, it was also paying close attention to environmental protection, as a fundamental State strategy based on a comprehensive, coordinated and scientific approach to sustainable development. Practical measures were being taken to that end to reduce energy consumption, protect the ecology and promote harmony between people and the environment.

Mr. QIAN Jin (China) said that his delegation welcomed the results of the meeting of the UNEP Governing Council and supported the strengthened role of UNEP and the discussions on reform. It endorsed the inclusion of poverty reduction in urban areas in the UN-Habitat Sustainable Development Strategy. Sustainable urbanization must be coordinated with environment protection and the development of natural resources, and all countries must develop policies in that regard that were appropriate to their own context. China was willing to strengthen its cooperation with UN-Habitat and other countries in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and promote peace and environmental protection throughout the world.

Ms. OZKAYA (Observer for Turkey) said that, with the new millennium, there had been recognition of the need for international efforts to improve the lives of a large proportion of humanity excluded from increased global prosperity. The World Summit on Sustainable Development had been a benchmark, but the commitments made by the international community must be translated into action through measures that included technology transfer and capacity-building.

The challenges of environmental protection were more acute than ever, since ecological problems were major threats to human security, and people lacking the minimum living standards were the most vulnerable to the deterioration of natural ecosystems. Sustainable development could only be achieved through an integrated approach, bringing together industrial, agricultural and energy policies in a coherent manner, and embodying the principle of common but differentiated responsibility. Climate change, energy for sustainable development, industrial development and air pollution - the themes of the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development - were major challenges that were closely linked with the interests and progress of all countries. Energy issues were interconnected with climate change, industrial development and air pollution, as well as being the starting point for achieving the three pillars of sustainable development - economic growth, social welfare and environmental protection. Bearing in mind the importance of renewable energy sources and the development of energy efficient technologies, Turkey was implementing policies to increase its use of renewable resources, in particular hydroelectric power. Development policies that depended solely on economic growth and ignored impact on natural environment were doomed to failure.

Ms. HOUNGBEDJI (Benin) said that her delegation associated itself with the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and supported the positions of Samoa and Papua New Guinea with regard to the recommendations made by the Commission on Sustainable Development. The Commission played a very important role in enabling the international community to identify those countries that should be the main focus for its development assistance. Its efforts to improve its working methods were therefore to be welcomed. She congratulated Samoa on the progress it had made in increasing its level of economic and human development. Yet Samoa remained economically vulnerable, which posed a question as to the sustainability of its economic performance. The Commission should examine closely whether economic vulnerability should not be made a key criterion in deciding on the question of graduation, analysing what the consequences of such an approach would be on the list of LDCs.

Concerning recommendation 3 contained in document A/62/78-E/2007/62, she wondered whether States, particularly developing countries, had studied and were in favour of eliminating the Council's mandate for regularly updating the Consolidated List of products harmful to health and the environment.

Mr. MILLER (United States of America), referring to the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its fifteenth session (E/2007/29), said that while his delegation regretted that the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) had been unable to reach a consensus on a negotiated text at its most recent session, it noted that a Chairperson's decision text had met the expectations of most delegations including his own. Achieving negotiated texts should not be seen as the sole criterion of whether the Commission had been successful in its work. The important result was what the Commission actually accomplished; and its two-year energy cycle, marking an important step forward in promoting a culture of implementation, had been one of its greatest achievements in terms of specific actions for the promotion of sustainable development.

Concerning the report of the United Nations Committee for Development Policy (E/2007/33), he welcomed the Committee's clarification of the LDC graduation procedures to ensure that they were applied in an equitable and consistent manner. His delegation congratulated Samoa and Cape Verde on their achievements as they approached graduation from LDC status, as well as Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu and Equatorial Guinea on their recent eligibility for graduation. Those countries could maintain and advance their accomplishments by working with their development partners and the international development agencies to ensure their continued progress and development.

With regard to chapters 2 and 3 of that report, his delegation shared the concerns expressed by the Russian Federation, particularly in respect of the recommendations on climate change. The Council had failed to coordinate and give appropriate direction to its subordinate bodies on the areas on which it required contributions. The Commission on Sustainable Development had been tasked with dealing with climate change, and the establishment of another body to address that issue would therefore be unnecessary and inappropriate. The United Nations

General Assembly had decided that future work on climate change would be addressed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and his delegation supported that decision.

With reference to the potential designation of Papua New Guinea as an LDC, the United States congratulated the Government of Papua New Guinea on its exhaustive analysis of its own economic situation and supported its decision in the matter.

Mr. TORRINGTON (Guyana), endorsing the statement made on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that it was important with regard to the implementation of Agenda 21 to work together to overcome common obstacles and to intensify efforts to fulfil commitments. The role and function of the Commission on Sustainable Development should be strengthened to enable it to contribute to the joint pursuit of sustainable development.

Guyana had been heartened by the adoption of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests and the multi-year programme of work. With 80 per cent of its territory covered by rainforest, Guyana placed great emphasis on forest-related industries and its national forestry policy was based on the conservation, protection, management and utilization of the forest resources, while ensuring that the productive capacity of the nation's forests was maintained or increased. While Guyana had always adhered to the highest standards of sustainable forest management, the conclusion of the non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests would enhance the possibilities for future regional and international collaboration on forestry matters.

Action on recommendations contained in the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development (E/2007/29)

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider the two draft decisions contained in chapter 1 of the report of the Commission on Sustainable Development (E/2007/29).

Draft decision I: Dates of the meetings of the Commission on Sustainable Development during its 2008/2009 cycle

Draft decision I was adopted.

Draft decision II: Report of the Commission on Sustainable Development on its fifteenth session and provisional agenda for the sixteenth session of the Commission

Draft decision II was adopted.

Action on recommendations contained in document E/2007/53

The PRESIDENT invited the Council to consider the recommendations contained in the report on the work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (E/2007/53).

Draft resolution on the work of the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

The draft resolution was adopted.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.