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President: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)

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

COORDINATION, PROGRAMME AND OTHER QUESTIONS (E/1998/83)

- (a) REPORTS OF COORDINATION BODIES (E/1998/21)
- (b) MALARIA AND DIARRHOEAL DISEASES, IN PARTICULAR CHOLERA (E/1998/20)
- (c) PROPOSED REVISIONS TO THE MEDIUM-TERM PLAN FOR THE PERIOD 1998-2001 (A/53/6, A/53/16 (Part I) and Corr.1)
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The PRESIDENT invited the Council to begin consideration of the item. He drew its attention to document A/53/6, entitled "Proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001", and to the associated programme documents 5, 7, 8, 13 to 18, 20, 27, and 28.

Mr. CIVILI (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs), introducing the annual overview report of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) for 1997 (E/1998/21), said that the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) attached great importance to ensuring that its new coordination structures would strengthen and improve its substantive support to the Council. He stressed that the report alone provided only a partial picture of the Committee's work and of its growing contribution to the policy coordination and programme coordination functions of the intergovernmental machinery system-wide.

There was a growing realization within the system that the challenges of globalization and technological revolution were beyond the capacity of any given individual organization to address alone. Accordingly, ACC was increasingly seen as a forum in which common responses to a growing range of shared problems could be worked out. Several reforms were being introduced in its functional structure to reflect that new dynamic, such as bimonthly meetings of executive heads via teleconferencing, the installation of an interactive information system geared to the needs of the executive heads and the strengthening of

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Secretariat support for the Committee through the secondment of personnel for specific tasks. The Committee was also beginning to review the impact of agency-level policy and programme reform initiatives on the effectiveness of the system as a whole and to renew its search for overarching themes that would enhance the system's functioning and potential contributions.

Mr. ASADI (Chairman, Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC)), introducing the Committee's report (A/53/16 (Part I) and Corr.1), said that in Chapter II, section B, the Committee had recommended that the Council and the competent Main Committees of the General Assembly should stress the consideration of the proposed revisions to the medium-term plan for the period 1998-2001 which had not been submitted to the attention of sectoral and regional bodies, contained in programmes 1, 3, 13, 18, 20, 24, 26 and 28. In connection with programme 14, "Economic and social development in Africa", the Committee had decided to request the Secretary-General to update programme 6: "Africa: New Agenda for Development" and would consider the proposed revisions at the second part of its thirty-eighth session.

The Committee had noted that the revisions proposed to programme 13, "International drug control", did not yet reflect the outcome of the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, and that the Secretariat would undertake a review of the effect of the outcome of the special session on programme 13 as well as on the programme of work for the biennium 1998-1999. The Committee considered that in view of the priority given to the programme and the importance of the special session, revisions reflecting the outcome of the special session should be submitted to the Committee during the second part of its thirty-eighth session.

In connection with programme 28, "Economic and social affairs", the Committee had recommended that the Council and the General Assembly should consider possible arrangements for the establishment in the medium-term plan of a programme and/or sub-programme on post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction as well as on the transition from relief to development. The Committee had also recommended the deletion of programmes 5, 7 and 8, since they had been consolidated in the new programme 28.

Concerning the new narrative for section 7A of the 1998-1999 programme budget, the Committee had recommended, inter alia, that the Council and the General Assembly should consider paragraphs 7A-22, 7A-23, and 7A-24 on the

Committee for Development Planning, the Committee on Natural Resources and the Committee on New and Renewable Sources of Energy and on Energy for Development respectively, in the light of the ongoing reform process under General Assembly resolution 52/12 B of 19 December 1997.

The Committee had made a number of recommendations on the in-depth evaluation of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and had emphasized that the realignment of the Centre for International Crime Prevention with the Programme should result in better coordination between those entities, while safeguarding the multidisciplinary aspects of drug control policy and full implementation of its comprehensive programme in accordance with the medium-term plan.

In connection with Section E (1), on strengthening the role of evaluation findings in programme design, delivery and policy directives, the Committee had recommended that the General Assembly should approve the addition of programmes on policy coordination and on sustainable development and population to the schedule of in-depth evaluations for submission to the Committee at its forty-first session.

The Committee was of the view that the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should fully implement the recommendations made by the Committee at its thirty-fifth session on the evaluation of the programme on the environment. It had also recommended to the General Assembly that the triennial review should be forwarded to the Governing Council of UNEP for its consideration.

In chapter III relating to coordination questions, the Committee had requested that future reports of ACC should be more analytical and should highlight problems encountered. It had reiterated that ACC should focus on the strategic objectives established in the Charter, by the General Assembly and the Council and in the medium-term plans of the organizations of the United Nations system. It had further recommended that ways should be found to analyse and bring to its attention, through the annual overview report of ACC, the results of the work of the Council and its functional commissions, on issues dealt with by the Committee. It has also emphasized the need for frequent briefings by ACC of relevant intergovernmental bodies, with a view to greater interaction between ACC and Member States.

The Committee had endorsed the recommendations contained in the mid-term review on the implementation of the system-wide medium-term plan for the

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advancement of women, 1996-2001 (E/CN.6/1998/3, para. 52) and had recommended that the Council should approve them. In recalling Council agreed conclusions 1997/2, the Committee had recommended that all entities should designate focal points to facilitate and monitor the implementation of the system-wide plan and the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in the work of their respective entities. It had agreed to consider the new draft system-wide medium-term plan for the advancement of women for the period 2002-2005, to be prepared by the Secretary-General in his capacity as Chairman of ACC in 2000.

The Committee had considered that, while the results of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for the Implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s were interesting and constituted some progress, they were nonetheless insufficient in terms of the number of countries and the limited areas covered to date. Accordingly, it made a number of recommendations on the subject.

In conclusion, he expressed the hope that greater emphasis would be placed on the Committee's conclusions and recommendations in order to ensure their active and appropriate follow-up, and he drew attention to the provisional agenda for the Committee's thirty-ninth session in chapter VI of the report.

Mr. HENDERSON (World Health Organization (WHO)), introducing the report on preventive action and intensification of the struggle against malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, in particular cholera (E/1998/20), drew attention to the conclusions in paragraph 91 and said that the new Director-General of WHO was making the malaria control initiative known as "Roll Back Malaria" a major priority. That initiative provided assistance to national health systems and was to be implemented through a new health sector-wide approach to combat the disease. Moreover, it would serve as a pattern for WHO in developing initiatives directed at other health and development problems. Within WHO, the initiative was being managed as a cross-programme and multi-sectoral project. Outside WHO, it was being pursued with other partners, including the United Nations family, bilateral development agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

Africa would be the focus of the global strategy, which built on the Multilateral Initiative on Malaria in Africa (MIM), launched in partnership with the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, bilateral development organizations and nongovernmental organizations. A considerable amount of work had already taken

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place within the region, including the provision of WHO technical support and special investments for accelerated implementation of malaria control in 24 African countries.

While diarrhoeal diseases, including cholera, were not the target of any single initiative, a similar cross-programme, multi-sectoral approach emphasizing disease control as a component of health services development would be applied to them as well.

Mr. BLINDER (Information Technology Services Division), introducing the Secretary General's report on international cooperation in the field of informatics (E/1998/44), said that the report summarized actions taken by the United Nations Secretariat and UNDP as participants in the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics during the past year.

The principal vehicle for delivery of information products at the United Nations would continue to be the Internet. The Secretariat, together with UNDP, continued to operate dedicated help desk facilities for permanent and observer missions to support database services provided by the United Nations. Electronic connectivity for all 185 permanent and observer missions in New York had been achieved in July 1997, six months ahead of schedule, and support services were currently being transferred from UNDP to the United Nations Secretariat. The International Telecommunication Union was providing similar services for permanent and observer missions located in Geneva.

At the country level, the United Nations and UNDP were pursuing five objectives in the information and communications technology area: helping to develop a shared vision among policy and decision makers and to frame requisite policies; promoting connectivity and access; building capacity and skills among governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society at large, the private sector and individuals; developing content in local languages to give expression to cultural diversity and make use of local and grassroots knowledge in the realm of sustainable human development; and supporting pilot projects in various sectors, including the establishment of electronic community centres.

The United Nations home page had been designed to allow for expansion to include almost all areas of interest relating to the United Nations, with links to the Web sites of other organizations of the United Nations system and its specialized agencies. Additional links had been established directly from the home page to the documentation of the General Assembly and Security Council and

to the Secretary-General's speeches, and the range and scope of information on the multilingual Web site had been significantly enhanced. Efforts to make full use of the opportunities provided by the Internet were continuing across a broad range, including enhancement of outreach for the traditional channels of communication.

Since the establishment of the Optical Disk System (ODS) in 1993, there had been an exponential growth in the number of users, first among the permanent and observer missions at United Nations Headquarters and then in Government capitals. The United Nations Office at Vienna had been added to the ODS network in 1997 and had been inputting documents daily since April of that year. A similar project to integrate offices away from Headquarters was under way. The ODS network could also be accessed via the Internet.

In order to assist Member States to utilize Internet services to disseminate their own information, the Working Group had requested that the United Nations Secretariat should continue to provide training courses on Internet use for permanent and observer mission staff. Courses on Web page programming, design and management as well as Internet information retrieval were also available to them.

The Working Group was considering a number of steps to build awareness among Member States and permanent and observer missions in New York regarding the seriousness of the year 2000 problem. Internally, an expert consulting firm was being contracted to study the year 2000 situation at the Secretariat, prepare an impact analysis and make specific recommendations. All application development areas in the Secretariat were being made aware of the need to review application software containing date-sensitive functions and to remedy potential problems through reprogramming or replacement. Infrastructure components, including computer hardware and operating systems, were being replaced with new equipment and software certified to be compliant with the date change. All major administrative applications had already been replaced or were in the process of being replaced by the Integrated Management Information System (IMIS), which was fully year 2000 compliant.

The Secretariat expected that expansion of electronic information services to the Member States would continue during the 1998-1999 biennium. With universal access for missions now a reality, the focus of development of services to Member States in 1998 and 1999 was expected to shift to content and

to include significantly more information.

Mr. KAMAL (Pakistan), speaking as Chairman of the Working Group on Informatics, said that the Group had been established to enable Member States and the United Nations system to benefit from the opportunities offered by the revolution in the field of information technology. Initially, the objectives of connectivity, training and unimpeded access to the growing United Nations databases had been identified, and to those had been added the launching and improvement of the Web pages of the United Nations and permanent missions, availability of documents on the Optical Disk System, and electronic dissemination of material to permanent missions. The success of the efforts to achieve those objectives had exceeded expectations.

Over the past year, the Working Group had turned its attention to a number of new areas. For example, all permanent missions had access to on-line information services, and there had been a significant improvement in the content of the United Nations Web page. More than 64 permanent missions also had their own Web sites, and e-mail list servers had allowed regional groups to correspond quickly and economically. Currently, eight computers in the General Assembly building provided Internet access to delegates; an additional eight would be added in the near future. A successful pilot project had led to the migration of e-mail for permanent missions from UNDP to a server within the United Nations itself. The use of video-conferencing had increased dramatically, as well.

The problem of the millennium bug had been given focused attention over the past few months, and the Council was expected to lay down guidelines for action at the current session. At the previous session, the Council had assigned to the Working Group the task of developing an information management strategy. Efforts were well under way, and a full report should be ready by the 1999 substantive session. Three informatics symposia had been held over the past year, and more were planned. Finally, surplus computers and printers were in the process of being distributed to over 130 developing Member States. In closing, it was important to note that all those activities had been carried out strictly from within existing resources.

Mr. RUFFING (Officer-in-Charge, Division for Sustainable Development), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the proclamation of an international year of mountains (E/1998/68), said that the Commission on

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Sustainable Development had considered sustainable mountain development in the context of chapter 13 of Agenda 21, and that the ACC Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) had requested input from the relevant organizations of the United Nations system. On the basis of that input and the replies received from Governments, the proposal had been made to proclaim an international year of mountains in 2002, which would give sufficient lead time to organize special events and thus ensure substantive results. The report also suggested ways and means of ensuring the sustainable development of mountain countries through awareness, coordination and exchange of information and experience.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) introducing the report on the International Year for the Culture of Peace, 2000 (E/1998/52), said that pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/13, a draft declaration and programme of action on a culture of peace based on system-wide consultation conducted by UNESCO would be submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-third session. It had also been proposed that an open-ended working group of the whole should be established to discuss those draft texts, with the aim of adopting the final versions by the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, on the very eve of the Millennium.

Mr. WEDENIG (Observer for Austria), speaking on behalf of the European Union and the associated countries of Bulgaria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and, in addition, Iceland and Norway, said that his comments concerned the annual overview report of ACC (E/1998/21). The European Union shared the Secretary-General's view as reflected in the report that AC had only begun to exploit its potential and that an enhanced role for ACC should be accompanied by increased transparency in its deliberations and better interaction with the Council. Briefings such as those provided at the organizational session and the special session were highly useful and should be held on a regular basis.

Turning to specific coordination issues, he said that more detailed information on the establishment of the Executive Committees and how they related to the work of ACC would be welcome. It would also be interesting to learn if the problems and issues surrounding regional coordination had been discussed in that forum. With regard to inter-agency task forces, the emphasis must be placed on implementation and the development of common indicators. The

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particular attention paid to the system-wide follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action, ensuring the integration of human rights into all United Nations activities, was most welcome.

The European Union was glad that the issue of the relationship between civil society, including the private sector, and the United Nations system, had been discussed by ACC. It noted with interest the idea of establishing an inter-agency enterprise liaison service as a clearing-house mechanism for cooperation with the business community and looked forward to further discussions on that subject. The Union had followed with interest the work undertaken to improve the capability of the Organization in the area of peace-building and agreed with ACC that political efforts for conflict resolution and the consolidation of peace must be supported by an integrated and coordinated effort throughout the system, including a clearance common understanding of the respective roles of the various actors within the system, both at headquarters and in the field. It also fully supported efforts to improve staff safety and security.

Finally, concerning the programme of work for 1998, the European Union welcomed the focus on designing a common framework for action to combat poverty and the emphasis placed on empowerment and participation as the means for such action.

Mr. ATIYANTO (Observer for Indonesia) said that his delegation fully agreed with the Chairman of CPC regarding the improved working atmosphere and dialogue mentioned in the report (A/53/16, Part I) and supported the recommendations and conclusions beginning in its paragraph 362. With regard to proposed revisions to the medium-term plan 1998-2001, his delegation welcomed the conclusions of CPC that priorities for action should continue to be established in the Plan and that the budget should be revised in accordance with General Assembly resolution 52/213. It agreed that only the General Assembly should take the final decision on changes in priority. It appreciated the commitment of DESA to the strengthening of coordination throughout the United Nations system and endorsed the conclusions and recommendations presented in the annual overview report of ACC (E/1998/21).

Mr. SURYO-DI-PURO (Observer for Indonesia) said that he welcomed the report submitted by the Secretary-General under agenda item 7 (d) (E/1998/44). The request concerning the design of an overall information management strategy

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for the United Nations system, contained in paragraph 7 of Council resolution 1997/1, reflected a desire to harmonize and improve the information management system for the benefit of all States. While the Secretariat's efforts in developing and maintaining the United Nations Web site were commendable, all documents and information should be posted in a timely manner, considering that the Web site was used not only by delegations, but also by a global audience. The author of each posting should be specified, since it was not always clear whether a given posting was a formal document of the Secretariat, a statement by the Secretary-General or the opinion of a member of the Secretariat. He looked forward to the significant expansion of the level of electronic information services provided to Member States.

Mr. KHARE (India) said that he fully supported the statements made by the Indonesian delegation. With respect to agenda item 7 (b), he shared most of the concerns expressed in the report on the struggle against malaria and diarrhoeal diseases (E/1998/20). Although malaria was probably the most crucial tropical parasitic disease, other communicable diseases also seriously affected health and development in developing countries. In India's case, such diseases included tuberculosis, leprosy and human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS). WHO should continue to focus on all those diseases. He agreed that efforts to combat malaria and diarrhoeal diseases and efforts to combat poverty were mutually reinforcing, as indicated in paragraph 88 of the report, but felt that the same was true in the case of other communicable diseases.

Mr. ENRICO (Argentina) said that his delegation had been one of the sponsors of Council resolution 1997/45 on the proclamation of an international year of mountains. The adoption of the draft resolution to be submitted at the current session would help to alert the international community to the fragility of mountain ecosystems and to the need to promote a multidisciplinary approach to their sustainable development. Pursuant to General Assembly resolution 52/16 proclaiming the year 2000 as the International Year of Thanksgiving, his Government had decided to establish an inter-ministerial commission, in which civil society and the academic community would be represented, to disseminate the purposes of the Year, especially among educational, religious and social institutions. Lastly, he supported the conclusions contained in the CPC report (A/53/16 (Part I)). In particular, he welcomed the inclusion of the agenda item

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on improving the working methods and procedures of the Committee within the framework of its mandate.

Ms. ESHMAMBETOVA (Observer for Kyrgyzstan) said that the idea of proclaiming an international year of mountains had originated at the international conference on mountain research held in Kyrgyzstan in 1996, and that the President of Kyrgyzstan had expressed support for the idea in a letter to the Secretary-General (E/1997/3, annex II). The Council's 1997 resolution on the subject had recognized the importance of protecting mountain ecosystems and promoting the sustainable development of mountain regions. The proclamation of an international year of mountains could provide an impetus for efforts in those areas, in pursuit of the objectives of chapter 13 of Agenda 21. The relevant report of the Secretary-General (E/1998/68) indicated that wide support had been expressed for such an observance. The eighth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development could serve as a preparatory meeting for the international year of mountains. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), as task manager for chapter 13 of Agenda 21, should be designated as focal point for the year. Activities related to the year would have no programme budget implications, as they would be financed within existing resources and through voluntary contributions. Over 100 countries were sponsoring the draft resolution to be submitted at the current session, and she hoped that more delegations would join the list.

Mr. WINNICK (United States of America) said that he strongly supported the work of ACC in enhancing the effectiveness of the United Nations system through improved coordination. The Council's interaction with the Committee in May 1998 had demonstrated the value of increased contact between the Committee and intergovernmental machinery. With respect to the CPC report, which had only just become available, he asked that delegations should be given more time to review the documentation.

The United Nations had made major strides in meeting the challenge of keeping up with the growth of information technology, which was a core reform issue. Success in that area would benefit the Organization by resulting in significant savings, increased public support and improved effectiveness. The electronic information produced by the Organization would affect how it was perceived throughout the world. He supported the efforts of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics to develop an overall information management

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strategy for the United Nations system, including its proposal to establish a task force for that purpose, since such a strategy could enhance the effectiveness of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief and development programmes in the field. He appreciated the guidelines prepared by the Working Group in connection with the year 2000 date conversion problem of computers (E/1998/85, annex), and he trusted that the Council would adopt them at its current session. His Government had recently contributed \$12 million to the special trust fund established by the World Bank to help developing countries deal with that problem.

Ms. SIBAL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that UNESCO intended to use the suggested guidelines for addressing the year 2000 problem, which undoubtedly would inspire general contingency plans and back-up arrangements at the national and international levels. UNESCO participated actively in joint endeavours in the field of informatics, such as the Information Systems Coordinating Committee (ISCC), and sought to develop common policies with other United Nations agencies.

Permanent delegations to UNESCO were connected, through a network, to the databases and the Intranet of UNESCO, and could have their own Web sites on the Intranet; field and regional offices, as well as some national commissions, had been linked to the global UNESCO network; videoconferencing facilities had been installed; the UNESCO Internet Web site had become a dynamic means of interaction with partners all over the world; all documents of the governing bodies of UNESCO were posted on the Internet either before or at the time they were distributed in printed form; and a dozen different UNESCO databases were being distributed, in CD-ROM format, to libraries and other institutions in member States. Although UNESCO followed with interest the activities of the Ad Hoc open-ended Working Group on Informatics, it felt that the design of an overall information management strategy for the United Nations system was not a very realistic objective for the short term.

Mr. VAHER (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that UNICEF supported malaria control programmes in 32 countries, 27 of which were in Africa, and that its Executive Board had supported the allocation of more funding for malaria prevention and control. The objective of implementing, by 1997, malaria control programmes in at least 90 per cent of the countries affected, which had been identified at the 1992 International Conference on

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Malaria, had been largely achieved. Other welcome developments included the WHO Roll Back Malaria initiative, which promised to revitalize inter-agency cooperation in that area, and the increased financial support for malaria control programmes from a number of governmental and non-governmental sources.

Malaria control had been hampered by the legacy of earlier failed programmes and by the emerging drug resistance to commonly used anti-malarial drugs. However, child mortality in Africa had declined by 25 per cent in areas where insecticide-treated mosquito nets had been used. Social mobilization and health education efforts were needed to create long-term consumer demand for such nets and to make them accessible and affordable. Currently, the efforts of UNICEF focused on advocacy and cooperation with Governments in developing rational drug policies and persuading them to allow the tax-free import of mosquito netting materials and insecticides; improving the availability of anti-malarial drugs and patient compliance; mosquito net distribution and re-treatment programmes; government capacity-building for the implementation of malaria control programmes with community participation; integration of malaria control into other primary health care programmes; and monitoring and evaluation. Those measures, which were implemented in collaboration with WHO and other partners, were achievable and affordable, and were a key component of efforts to honour the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Mr. SCHMIDT (United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)) said he supported the conclusion of the Secretary-General's report (E/1998/68) on the desirability of proclaiming an international year of mountains. The priorities of UNDP in mountain regions reflected its four focus areas of poverty, environment, gender and governance. Poverty in many mountain communities was acute owing to factors such as isolation, vulnerability to natural disasters and lack of access to basic services. UNDP was conducting a strategic review of how unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation in mountain areas had contributed to environmental degradation and increased poverty, the results of which would provide an important input for the ministerial meeting to be held during the next session of the Commission on Sustainable Development. In addition, UNDP was one of the partners in the African Highlands Initiative, an eco-regional research programme for sustainable resource management to improve food security in the Eastern and Central African highlands. It also supported a programme for community management of watershed resources in the Central

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American and Andean highlands.

Mining, timber and other natural resource extraction operations in mountain areas should improve environmental practices and distribute their earnings more fairly. UNDP natural resource management programmes focused on energy, food security, sustainable forest management and water resources management, all of which were critical for the sustainable development of mountain areas. As task manager for capacity-building under Agenda 21, UNDP worked with Governments, non-governmental organizations and local communities to devise innovative means by which mountain communities could take control of their future, such as by developing small-scale employment opportunities that did not depend so heavily on resource extraction.

Women in mountain communities often lacked access to basic services and were left to manage their households as men migrated to other areas in search of employment. At the same time, women's limited access to formal decision-making power constrained their ability to improve their living conditions. All UNDP programme activities took gender concerns into account.

Mr. YU Qingtai (China) said that the Council should continue to support the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics for its highly valuable contribution to the Council and the Organization as a whole. His delegation had co-sponsored the draft resolution on the proclamation of an international year of mountains, convinced that mountain areas were an important resource whose sustainable development merited full protection and promotion.

Ms. GUSTAVA (Mozambique) said that UNICEF, other agencies and governmental and non-governmental bodies had made a significant contribution to the struggle against malaria and diarrhoeal diseases, which had a particularly devastating impact on Africa's social and economic development. The Group of African States was preparing a draft resolution on the subject and hoped that it would be adopted by consensus at the current session.

Mr. Young-seok KIM (Republic of Korea) said that malaria, diarrhoeal and other preventable diseases accounted for over 80 percent of deaths among children under 5 years of age worldwide. Commercial producers were reluctant to develop the necessary vaccines, because of potential lawsuits and low selling prices. Few States had sufficient research facilities and funding to develop the necessary vaccines alone. The World Summit for Children in 1990 had striven to address the problem, launching a global campaign, known as the Children's

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Vaccine Initiative, for the development of children's vaccines. In support of the campaign, UNDP had established the International Vaccine Institute (IVI), a non-profit organization, which had been inaugurated in Seoul in October 1997. It represented a model for international cooperation in the field of vaccines.

The biotechnology for vaccine production did not come cheap. Neither developing countries nor international organizations could finance such work alone. IVI would work in close cooperation with WHO to facilitate regional and international cooperation in vaccine development and improved vaccine safety. The Institute had received broad-based international support and looked forward to additional support from other countries and international organizations, in partnership with the private sector, to help save children from the scourge of infectious diseases.

Mr. MARTINEZ AGUILAR (Mexico) said that his delegation very much appreciated the work done to develop the United Nations informatics system and encouraged the relevant Working Group to examine ways of harmonizing the information systems in a manner that was acceptable to all delegations. The guidelines on information problems relating to the year 2000 were very useful and should receive the Council's endorsement. In addition, the proposed draft resolution on harmonization and improvement of information in the United Nations reflected the importance of implementation measures in the field.

Given that both the United Nations International Drug Control Programme and the United Nations Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Programme were equally important, no effort should be made to fuse those entities either structurally or under the regular budget. Rather, their autonomy should be safeguarded and enhanced.

Mr. ÖZÜRGERGIN (Turkey) said that his delegation fully endorsed the proposal for the proclamation of an international year of mountains. The relevant authorities in his country would be ready to organize conferences, seminars and field activities in its mountain areas should the proposal be adopted.

His mission very much appreciated the direct support it had received from the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group on Informatics, helping it to improve its efficiency and gain easier access to United Nations information. The symposia organized with leaders in the electronics industry had also proved extremely valuable. His delegation looked forward to receiving the Group's guidelines on

the year 2000 date conversion problem for computers and believed that the Council should convene the Working Group for a further year.

Mr. CASTELLON DUARTE (Nicaragua) said that, having emerged from the shadow of rightist dictatorship, totalitarian rule and two terrible civil wars, the people of Nicaragua were currently working to establish sustainable peace in their country, based on the rule of law. The rule of law was the prerequisite for development and the establishment of a culture of peace.

In the past, the people of Nicaragua had taken an almost fatalistic attitude to war and despotism, believing that the only peace possible was that imposed by a benevolent dictator under force of arms. The philosophy of the dominant class had been to seek peace by preparing for war, while the least privileged had paid the price. The idealists and the pragmatists in the ensuing wars had both forgotten that a culture of peace could not be imposed from the outside but was the result of an internal balance of social forces. Moreover, previous despotic governments had viewed social and economic development solely in terms of power politics. Their promises about development had quickly come to naught.

In order to overcome the evils of the past, Nicaragua's Government of National Reconciliation was working to establish a culture of peace through the promotion and balancing of the factors of production. All citizens of all social classes were included in that effort, with full respect for human rights, freedom and social justice. With regard to sustainable development, the State viewed its role as creating the necessary structures to safeguard the political and economic rights of the people, who were the only source of political power.

While the culture of peace would ultimately depend on the political will of all Nicaraguans, the Government of National Reconciliation was examining the complex issue of property in light of political change. The Government was trying to elaborate a definition of private property within the parameters of social conscience and the common good. Unemployment, health and livelihood issues were being addressed through modernization of the State and improved governability. The eradication of corruption and the supremacy of the law and justice were indispensable conditions for lasting and sustainable development and a culture of peace in Nicaragua.

The transition from a culture of war to a culture of peace was a historic event that deserved celebration with the proclamation of the year 2000 as the

International Year for the Culture of Peace. Nicaragua had enthusiastically co-sponsored the relevant draft resolution and hoped that the proposed Millennium Assembly would be include among the activities of that Year.

Mr. RUDENSKY (Russian Federation) said that his delegation welcomed the work over the past year of the Working Group on Informatics, and particularly its Task Force. That work had been enhanced by the participation of representatives of information technology and provider firms, which had made it possible to take into account the market conditions for information goods and services when formulating recommendations and decisions.

His delegation felt that the information management strategy for the United Nations system should consist of three basic elements: conceptual principles for providing information about the United Nations system; organizational and coordinating principles and mechanisms; and ways of implementing the strategy. The information should cover the basic areas of United Nations system activities, and the objective should be to establish functional information subsystems on the Internet, rather than a motley collection of Web sites of different organs and organizations. The participants in the sub-systems should be not only the United Nations system itself, but also interested governmental bodies, non-governmental organizations and businesses.

With regard to the preparation of guidelines to help Governments overcome the year 2000 problem, his delegation believed that the basic principle should be to take into account the interdependence of national and global computer systems in various sectors of the economy integrated into world information structures. An important element was for Governments to conduct assessments of the year 2000 problem, particularly in the context of the provision of assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition by the World Bank, UNDP and other organizations of the United Nations system, as envisaged in General Assembly resolution 52/233.

Mr. KITAZAWA (Japan) said that it was vital for the United Nations to use information technology to enhance the effectiveness of the Organization, raise public awareness about its activities and establish more points of contact with civil society. However, the harnessing of technology must be done in such a way as to avoid duplication of activities. The first step should be to define concepts and objectives clearly. Proposals to establish new posts within the Secretariat to act as information focal points would have budgetary

implications, even if the cost was met from existing funds. The Council should therefore consider the matter carefully before taking any action.

Mr. ESPINOZA (Observer for Peru), associating his delegation with the comments made by Indonesia, said he hoped that consideration would be given to establishing experimental electronic information centres in Latin America, as part of a drive to provide greater access to information in that region.

Mr. MEROUANE (Algeria) said that his delegation would like to see the electronic information services provided by the Secretariat extended to users of other languages, so that they could benefit from such systems as the Internet. As a co-sponsor of the draft resolution for the proclamation of an international year of mountains, Algeria hoped that the year would help raise awareness about the importance of sustainable mountain development.

Ms. VON ROEMER (International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)) said that ICFTU welcomed the recommendation in the ACC report (E/1998/21) for more systematic consultations with non-State actors in the preparation of substantive and coordination reports, particularly on follow-up to recent conferences. Closer cooperation between the United Nations system and the business sector needed to be balanced by enhanced cooperation with trade unions. The majority of the world's population were workers and their voices needed to be heard in the elaboration of development policies and programmes. The Confederation had participated in seminars on follow-up to the Copenhagen Conference and had been invited to participate in the launch of the new Human Development Report. It sought to contribute to the work of the Bretton Woods and other financial institutions by emphasizing the social dimension.

The Asian crisis made such efforts all the more urgent. ICFTU had proposed the creation of a large international reconstruction fund to work with private creditors and Asian enterprises for the financial and social restructuring of the productive base of Asian enterprise. It had also proposed the establishment of an international commission to analyse the causes of the crisis and suggest reforms to the international financial system, including the Bretton Woods institutions. It was emphasizing that, at such a critical time, States should not revert to protectionism.

The Confederation's proposals on core labour standards and trade aimed at preventing human rights abuses in the work place and thereby strengthening the world trade system. ICFTU welcomed the adoption of the ILO Declaration on

Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and hoped that follow-up would be effective. That issue required attention if the new trade round was to make progress.

ICFTU would be pleased to work more closely with the Council to dispel some misconceptions about core labour standards and discuss employment quality and quantity issues. It looked forward to continuing the dialogue on those issues and on a possible mechanism for interface between the United Nations and the social partners.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.