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SPECIAL ECONOMIC, HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE

Draft agreed conclusions submitted by the Vice-President of the Council,  
H.E. Mr. Alyaksandr Sychoy (Belarus)

1. The Economic and Social Council is addressing the theme of "International cooperation and coordinated responses to the humanitarian emergencies, in particular in the transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development" in its second humanitarian segment. In this context, the Council reaffirms the guiding principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182 of 19 December 1991 and also reaffirms the agreed conclusions of the 1998 humanitarian segment of the Council. These documents and other relevant resolutions of the General Assembly provide the basis for these conclusions.
2. The Council takes note of the report of the Secretary-General on strengthening of the coordination of emergency humanitarian assistance of the United Nations (A/54/154-E/1999/94) and the reports addressing progress made in the relief, rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts for those countries affected by hurricanes Mitch and Georges (A/54/130-E/1999/72 and A/54/129-E/1999/73) and on the assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti (A/54/153-E/1999/93). The report of the inter-agency needs assessment mission dispatched by the Secretary-General of the United Nations to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia contained in the annex to document E/1999/82 was also made available to the Council. The Council

welcomes the efforts being made by the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) in order to fully implement the recommendations of last year's agreed conclusions and to enhance the coordination of humanitarian assistance of the United Nations. The Council recognizes that further efforts are needed, including to ensure a coherent approach to relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development, as well as in enhancing disaster preparedness and local capacities for disaster response.

3. The Council reaffirms that humanitarian assistance should be provided in accordance with and with due respect for the guiding principles contained in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182.

4. The Council expresses its concern, in the year of the fiftieth anniversary of the adoption of the Geneva Conventions, about the continuous erosion, in many cases, in the respect for international humanitarian and human rights law and principles, both in terms of denial of safe and unimpeded access to people in need and through deliberate violence against all those protected under international humanitarian law, especially women and children. The Council therefore calls upon all parties to conflicts to respect international humanitarian and human rights law and stresses the importance for all Governments, relevant United Nations system actors, non-governmental organizations and other partners to further promote and diffuse such laws and integrate them into their activities. The Council also calls upon all parties to take measures to ensure the safety and security of international and local humanitarian personnel. Furthermore, the Council calls upon all States to consider signing and ratifying the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

5. The Council welcomes the progress made in strengthening the Consolidated Appeal Process, particularly the joint launch of 1999 Consolidated Appeals. The Council notes that there is substantial further work to be done to strengthen the Consolidated Appeal Process, especially in the area of prioritization within and among various sectors of activity, and to ensure an effective system for strategic monitoring and evaluation. The Council also notes the importance of including security requirements of humanitarian personnel in the Consolidated Appeals. The Council expresses concern at the lack of adequate resources and response for addressing humanitarian emergencies and the transition from relief to development and regrets the

persistent trend of low and uneven funding of the Consolidated Appeals. The Council underlines that failure to provide adequate resources and balanced distributions, both in geographic and in sectoral terms, weakens the ability of humanitarian organizations to respond in a coherent and timely manner to emergencies. The Council therefore calls upon the international community, particularly donor countries, to increase their contributions to all Consolidated Appeals.

6. The Council requests the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to place the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on a sound financial basis. In this context, the Council welcomes the Secretary-General's recommendation, within the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001, to allocate increased funding and staffing from the United Nations regular budget to the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

7. The Council takes note of the proposals to enhance the functioning of the Central Emergency Revolving Fund, and particularly welcomes that the Fund should also be utilized actively for natural disasters. The Council recommends that the proposed changes be reviewed at the fifty-fourth session of the General Assembly, with a view to adopting a relevant decision.

8. The Council calls upon all States to undertake joint efforts to create an enabling environment for the promotion of economic growth and sustainable development, and to ensure respect for all human rights, including the right to development, in order to contribute to durable peace and to the prevention and mitigation of humanitarian emergencies.

9. The Council encourages the important contribution civil society, particularly non-governmental organizations, has been making in the context of global responses to serious situations resulting from humanitarian emergencies. Its timely action to respond to such emergencies has demonstrated that this sector of society, through non-governmental organizations, plays an important role in mobilizing international action.

10. In relation to transitions, the Council reiterates that relief, rehabilitation, reconstruction and development are generally not consecutive but often overlap and occur simultaneously. The Council therefore recognizes that a comprehensive approach to both natural disasters and complex emergencies is needed. In this regard, the Council stresses the need for early joint planning and prioritization, the central role of

capacity-building, the importance of a clearly agreed division of labour through inter-agency collaboration, as well as the need for more flexible financing systems for transitional programming. The Council emphasizes that the planning for rehabilitation should begin at a very early stage, local actors should be involved, existing local capacities should be integrated, and the assessment of needs should be demand-driven rather than agency-driven, with a view to ensuring effective response. The Council notes the role of developing countries not only as recipients, but also as active contributors to the solution of these problems. The Council welcomes the efforts of the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs to enhance inter-agency coordination of transitional activities. The Council further emphasizes that a more systematic evaluation is needed and that lessons learned from previous experience should be more systematically taken into account. The Council affirms the view of the Secretary-General that contingency planning for both sudden reversals and unexpected opportunities is to be undertaken. The Council also recognizes the need to give proper consideration to the issue of the humanitarian impact of sanctions, in particular on women and children, with a view to minimizing the humanitarian effects of sanctions.

11. The Council notes that studies are under way regarding the transition from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development for IASC, as well as by the World Bank and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

12. The Council expresses its deep concern at the increasing number and scale of natural disasters in recent years that often strike countries which lack the resources to cope adequately with them. These disasters have led to massive loss of life and damage to economies and physical infrastructure. The Council emphasizes the need for further concrete measures to reduce the vulnerability of societies to natural hazards, particularly in developing countries, small island developing States and landlocked countries. In this context, the Council reaffirms that disaster reduction forms an integral part of sustainable development strategies and needs to be considered in development plans of all vulnerable countries and communities. The Council also reaffirms that within such preventive strategies, disaster preparedness and early warning systems must be further strengthened at country and regional levels, inter alia, through better coordination among relevant United Nations bodies and cooperation with Governments of affected countries and regional and

other relevant organizations. The aim of this strengthening is to maximize the effectiveness of natural disaster response and reduce the impact of natural disasters, particularly in developing countries. These strategies should take into account a gender perspective. Particular efforts should be undertaken in developing countries to enhance local capacity in disaster response and to utilize existing in-country capacities, which may be available closer to the site of a disaster and at lower cost.

13. As a highly relevant, contemporary example in relation to transitions, the Council recalls the devastating effects of hurricanes Mitch and Georges which struck Central America and the Caribbean in 1998. The Council underlines the need for further support for the rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts of the affected countries. In the context of the aftermath of hurricane Mitch, the Council welcomes the innovative approaches used to link the various phases of international assistance, coordinated through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to launch a United Nations inter-agency transitional appeal for voluntary contributions for relief and immediate rehabilitation, while forging links with longer-term rehabilitation. The Council also welcomes the efforts of the joint Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, United Nations Development Programme, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and World Health Organization/Pan American Health Organization Disaster Response and Recovery Mission undertaken in all countries affected by hurricane Mitch. The Council stresses the need to ensure adequate assessment of and follow-up to these innovative approaches and to draw the appropriate lessons for improving preparedness and response capacities and the integration of disaster-reduction components into future development planning. The Council recognizes that these experiences could be developed and adapted to other situations that may arise in any country or region.

14. The Council expresses its deep concern at the severe impact of the El Niño phenomenon on several regions of the world during 1997/98. In this context, the Council welcomes the efforts of the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on El Niño to implement General Assembly resolutions 52/200 of 18 December 1997 and 53/185 of 15 December 1998 and takes note that the Secretary-General will report to the Council on the outcome and conclusions of the first intergovernmental meeting of experts held in Guayaquil, Ecuador, in November 1998.

15. The Council notes that the transition phase after natural disasters and other emergencies is often excessively long and characterized by a number of gaps, and that relief agencies in planning for meeting immediate needs should place these needs in a perspective of sustainable development whenever such an approach is possible. At the field level, the Council calls on the Resident Coordinator and relevant agencies to improve response preparedness and capacity-building, including by maintaining a dialogue with all major actors before, during and after disasters, especially the Governments of disaster-prone countries. At the inter-agency level, the Council encourages the Emergency Relief Coordinator, IASC members and other members of the United Nations system to expand their efforts to promote response preparedness for natural disasters and other emergencies at the international, regional and national levels. In this context, the Council commends the efforts of the Emergency Relief Coordinator to expand the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC) teams to include more representatives from countries of Africa, Asia and the Pacific and Latin America and the Caribbean.

16. The Council recognizes that more rapid access to resources for international emergency relief is a key factor for strengthening response: of particular value are measures aiming at increasing the availability of funds immediately after a disaster. In this context, the Council stresses that rehabilitation funds should be rapidly released so as to avoid dependence on relief funding.

17. With regard to transitions from complex humanitarian emergencies, the Council affirms that early reconstruction and development activities can complement and support political stabilization and the implementation of peace agreements. The Council emphasizes that relief-development linkages cannot wait for the arrival of a full-fledged peace, but must be planned at the earliest possible moment. In this regard, the Council stresses that while development agencies must become involved early in a crisis, humanitarian agencies, within their respective mandates, must also integrate a development perspective in their planning. The Council also recognizes the importance of maintaining throughout the emergency, wherever possible, a certain degree of developmental functions, such as education and health care. In this regard the Council welcomes UNICEF's recently adopted rights-based programming, which provides a framework in which relief, recovery, rehabilitation and development are programmatically linked. The Council also acknowledges the importance of

all efforts, conducted in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law, including peace-building measures such as confidence-building, which are relevant in transitions from complex emergencies.

18. In this context, the Council stresses the need for a coordinated and comprehensive approach by the United Nations and other interested partners in planning the transition from humanitarian emergency assistance to rehabilitation and reconstruction in the Balkans. The Council underlines the importance of an adequate and effective United Nations presence in all affected Balkan countries. The Council notes the establishment of the Office of the United Nations Regional Coordinator for the Balkans and stresses the importance of a coherent regional strategy. The Council requests the Secretary-General to ensure that updated information relating to strengthening coordination of the transition process in the Balkans is made available to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session.

19. While acknowledging that different planning and programming frameworks will be relevant in different contexts, the Council stresses the importance of strategic and inclusive approaches, including strategic frameworks to countries in crisis. The Council notes the decision to launch a Strategic Framework for the Republic of Sierra Leone. The Council encourages the further development of the strategic framework concept and in that context requests the Secretary-General to submit recommendations on the preparation, scope and applicability of strategic frameworks, taking also into account lessons learned and the views of concerned Governments. It calls upon the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ensure a high degree of coherence between the assistance, political and human rights aspects of the United Nations response while maintaining their separate and mutually reinforcing nature. The Council notes the number of tools at the disposal of the United Nations for relief management and emphasizes that these should not be developed in isolation. The Council in particular encourages enhanced inter-linkages between the Consolidated Appeal Process and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework and requests the Emergency Relief Coordinator, in collaboration with the United Nations development agencies, to intensify efforts in this respect at the country as well as the headquarters

level. To this end, the Council underlines that cooperation between all actors, including United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, should be strengthened.

20. With respect to the financial mechanisms available for transitional activities, the Council recognizes that while some Governments and intergovernmental funding bodies have introduced flexibility into their funding mechanisms, considerable rigidities and difficulties still exist. The Council calls on donor countries to ensure that their funding systems facilitate early, integrated approaches for recovery. Furthermore, the Council calls on donor countries to ensure continuity in and adequacy of funding from humanitarian assistance through transition activities to development cooperation, and reaffirms that contributions made for humanitarian assistance should not be to the detriment of resources made available for international cooperation for development.

21. The Council recognizes that demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation are some of the major areas where gaps between relief and development occur. The Council also stresses that demobilization, reintegration and rehabilitation be designed and implemented taking into account a gender perspective. The Council stresses therefore that sustainable reintegration strategies, including comprehensive mine action programmes, wherever required, are a substantial prerequisite for stabilization in post-conflict situations. The Council urges the Secretary-General and the Emergency Relief Coordinator to ensure that priority attention be given to effective programming in this field. The Council stresses the importance of addressing the needs of returning refugees.

22. The Council recognizes that all humanitarian emergencies have a direct and particular impact on children. The Council underlines the need to respect and ensure every child's rights as contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child\* and calls for efforts to enhance international standards for the rights of the child. Violation of these rights often results in irreparable damage. The Council also calls for systematic, concerted and comprehensive inter-agency efforts on behalf of children, as well as adequate and sustainable resource allocation to provide both immediate emergency assistance and long-term measures to children, throughout all phases of an emergency.

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\* General Assembly resolution 44/25, annex.



The Council underlines the importance of recognizing and addressing the specific vulnerabilities of children and adolescents in armed conflict. Given the long-term consequences for society, the Council underlines the importance of including specific provisions for children in peace agreements and in arrangements negotiated by parties to conflicts as well as in transitions from relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and development. The Council particularly recognizes the importance of earliest efforts to demobilize, reintegrate and rehabilitate children who have been used in armed conflict. The Council welcomes the continued efforts of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and encourages follow-up to his recommendations by all concerned parties.

23. The Council acknowledges the specific needs of internally displaced persons in the transition from conflict to peace. The Council calls on all States to apply internationally recognized norms with regard to internally displaced persons. It also calls for further strengthening and coordinating of international efforts for those persons in this regard. The Council takes note of the fact that IASC is using the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement. The Council welcomes the efforts of the Representative of the Secretary-General for internally displaced persons, the Emergency Relief Coordinator and the members of IASC.

24. The Council recognizes that all humanitarian emergencies have gender-specific impacts. In this context, the Council recognizes that such emergencies have direct and particular impact on women. At the same time, the Council recognizes the positive role women can play in post-conflict peace-building and reconciliation. The Council stresses the need to integrate a gender perspective in the planning and implementation of activities and recommends that such a perspective be further promoted, and in this regard notes the IASC policy statement on the integration of a gender perspective in humanitarian assistance.

25. The Council recognizes the specific vulnerabilities of older persons in humanitarian emergencies and requests the Secretary-General to include in his report to the Council at its next humanitarian segment measures taken by the United Nations to respond to the needs of older persons in humanitarian emergencies.

26. The Council also recognizes the need to address the question of persons with disabilities in situations of humanitarian emergencies.

27. The Council emphasizes the importance of discussion of humanitarian policies and activities in the General Assembly and in the Council. In this context, the Council takes note of document E/1999/45, the views contained therein and the holding of discussions thereon, and decides to hold further consultations on ways and means to strengthen the role of the Council by enhancing its work in the humanitarian field, and to report thereon to the Council at its substantive session of 2000.

28. The Council requests the Secretary-General to report to the Council at its next humanitarian segment on the implementation of and follow-up to these agreed conclusions.

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