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President: Mr. Ali (Vice-President) (Malaysia)

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In the absence of Ms. Lucas (Luxembourg), President, Mr. Ali (Malaysia), Vice-President, took the Chair.

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

Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations
(A/64/62, A/64/78-E/2009/66 and E/2009/69)

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Economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/64/77-E/2009/13)

The President invited the Council to begin its consideration of agenda items 9, 10 and 11.

Mr. Richardson (Saint Kitts and Nevis), speaking on behalf of the United Nations Special Committee on Decolonization, said the fullest possible implementation of the resolutions concerning the Non-Self-Governing Territories adopted by the Council and the General Assembly would assist the Territories across a wide spectrum of their development agenda. He acknowledged with appreciation those United Nations organizations and other international institutions that allowed for the participation in their work of Non-Self-Governing Territories, including the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), the African Union (AU), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) and the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF). Assistance to the Non-Self-Governing Territories had also been provided over the past year by other United Nations specialized agencies, funds and programmes, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO). During 2009 the Special

Committee had called upon the specialized agencies and other organization of the United Nations system to step up their involvement with its work.

He welcomed the continued dissemination, by the Decolonization Unit of the Department of Political Affairs, of the United Nations leaflet on assistance programmes available to Non Self-Governing Territories. The Council had supported the mandate for such a publication, and the leaflet had recently been updated and placed on the United Nations decolonization website.

Mr. Nour (Regional Commissions New York Office) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields (E/2009/15) and its addendum, as well as the Note by the Secretary-General transmitting to the Council the report by the Executive Secretaries of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) and the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) on the activities carried out in the framework of the project for a Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar (E/2009/63).

During their presentations to the Council earlier in the session on regional perspectives on the global economic and financial crisis, including the impact on global public health, the Executive Secretaries had provided an overview of the socio-economic situation in their regions, and especially the impact of the recent food and energy crises on the social development agenda. All the regions were experiencing enormous challenges, owing to the sharp decline in economic growth, trade and commodity prices, and decreased capital flows, including foreign direct investment, remittances and revenues from tourism. The economic and social progress achieved in recent years, particularly on internationally agreed development goals and the MDGs, was now under threat, especially in the least developed countries. Action at the regional level would be an important part of efforts by the international community to address those challenges. The regional commissions had advocated some specific regional responses, and had made policy recommendations to mitigate the impact of the crisis. The recent United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and Its Impact on Development had encouraged enhanced regional and subregional cooperation, including through regional and subregional development banks, currency arrangements and other regional initiatives. The Doha

Review Conference on Financing for Development had also recognized regional integration and enhanced cooperation on trade, investments, currency reserves and financial flows as important contributions to those efforts at the domestic and international levels. Three of the regional commissions (ECE, ESCAP and ECA) had adopted regionally-agreed policies, reflected in the addendum to the report of the Secretary-General (E/2009/15/Add.1). The regional commissions had actively pursued their role of promoting coherent United Nations inter-agency policy responses at the regional and subregional levels through their chairmanship of the Regional Coordination Mechanism (RCM). The RCM focused on policy and analysis at the regional and subregional levels, while the regional directors' teams provided operational support to the United Nations country teams in a coherent and timely manner. Through a linkage between the RCM and the CEB High-Level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) the work of the latter on global issues with important regional dimensions could be addressed through the RCM, so further promoting system-wide coherence. The regional commissions were continuing to strengthen their interregional cooperation and exchange of best practice, focusing on statistics, energy security and efficiency, transport infrastructure, aid for trade, disaster risk reduction and social policy. The outcome of such cooperation was largely translated into specific interregional projects funded through the United Nations.

The report produced by the Executive Secretaries of the Economic Commission for Europe and the Economic Commission for Africa on the project for a Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar (E/2009/63) emphasized that further studies would be carried out within a programme focusing on the response to outstanding questions about the configuration of the site and other aspects of the project.

Mr. Heidt (United States of America) commended the Council and the regional commissions on their extensive research and analysis of global economic trends, and their informative reporting on the measures taken by individual countries to combat the global economic downturn. Sound economic policy and responsible financial stewardship were of fundamental importance. The emphasis in the reports before the Council on sharing lessons learned between countries was especially useful. At the sixty-fifth

session of ESCAP, ministers had shared experiences in dealing with the effects of the financial crisis, including fiscal stimulus packages, initiatives to promote intraregional trade, and credit facilities. International and regional cooperation were also vital to success. He welcomed the Council's efforts to improve coherence and programme delivery within the United Nations system at the regional level, and the action taken to find synergies between the regional coordination mechanisms and the regional directors' teams. He also acknowledged the work of the regional commissions in supporting regional cooperation and regional development efforts.

Mr. Nour (Regional Commissions New York Office) introduced the Note by the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan (A/64/77-E/2009/13). The occupation of the Palestinian territory by Israel was continuing to deepen the economic and social hardship suffered by Palestinians. The Israeli mobility restrictions and closure system remained a primary cause of poverty, restricting Palestinian access to land, basic social services, including health and education, employment, markets and social and religious networks.

The Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip, culminating in "Operation Cast Lead", had further exacerbated the situation. The Secretary General's report revealed that between January 2008 and 19 January 2009 close on 1,766 Palestinians had been killed, including 1,715 in the Gaza Strip, 469 of them children. There had been 7,164 injuries of Palestinians over the same period, 5,814 occurring in the Gaza Strip and at least 1,886 of those among children. In the same period, the destruction of Palestinian-owned structures had resulted in the displacement of over 400 Palestinians. In the West Bank, some 28,000 Palestinians had been displaced as a result of the ongoing construction of the Barrier, which had also entailed the confiscation of 49,291 dunums of land, mostly in the northern and most fertile part of the West Bank. By the end of 2007 Israel had established 120 settlements in the West Bank, and 40 per cent of the West Bank was now taken up by Israeli infrastructures, including roads, barriers, buffer zones and military bases. By the end of 2008 an estimated 193,700 Israeli settlers were living in occupied East

Jerusalem, and approximately 289,600 in the West Bank. By mid September 2008, almost three-quarters of the main routes leading to the 18 most populated Palestinian cities and towns in the West Bank, and almost half the alternative routes, were either blocked or controlled by Israeli checkpoints. Many of the 918 incidents of delayed or denied access reported by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in 2008 affected the delivery of emergency humanitarian assistance, including food aid, medicine, mobile health teams and food distribution teams. Every year, an estimated 2,500 expectant mothers faced difficulty in obtaining access to a delivery facility.

The blockade on Gaza had caused a widespread erosion of livelihoods and deterioration of infrastructure and essential services. During Operation Cast Lead, 60 per cent of the population had been without electricity; at the height of the operation 500,000 residents had no running water and a further 500,000 had water for only a few hours each week. By April 2009 the United Nations had still been unable to implement much of its humanitarian appeal launched on 5 February, owing to the Israeli refusal to allow the entry to Gaza of the necessary goods and personnel. The poverty level in the Gaza Strip in 2008 was expected to have worsened further from the 80 per cent level in 2007. In the fourth quarter of 2008, unemployment among Palestinians was running at 33.4 per cent, with 48.8 per cent unemployed in the Gaza Strip compared with 26 per cent in the West Bank. Food insecurity affected 38 per cent of Palestinians, and infant and maternal mortality rates were high.

The Syrian population in the occupied Golan continued to suffer from restrictions on land cultivation and farming, confiscation of land, the uprooting and destruction of trees and seedlings, and discrimination concerning access to water and construction. The five occupied Syrian villages suffered from a shortage of health facilities. An estimated 2 million mines and 76 minefields continued to pose a threat to the population, among whom 531 victims had been reported.

In his message of 10 March 2009 to the United Nations Seminar on Assistance to the Palestinian People, the Secretary-General had noted the intolerable situation at the crossings in the Occupied Territory, which was preventing Palestinian economic recovery. Only a permanent negotiated political settlement,

putting an end to the occupation, could provide a sustainable solution. The United Nations would continue to do its part towards realizing the vision of two States, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security.

Mr. St. Aimee (Saint Lucia) invited further collaboration and assistance from the Council to enhance the work of the various institutions and agencies dealing with the Non Self Governing Territories. The work of FAO and WHO in the Territories was mentioned in the report of the President (E/2009/69), but other organizations and agencies might well not be aware of their potential for providing technical assistance. As for regional cooperation, the subregional office of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC) in Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, did not have its fair share of the resources of that regional commission. In spite of the need for technical assistance in the key areas of food and energy supplies and science and technology, it had lost all the posts relevant to those areas. The regional commissions did sterling work on statistical and policy analysis, and in technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC). However, in some areas they could be more active. In particular, the subregional office in Port of Spain could be strengthened to deal more adequately with the problems he had mentioned, and the Commission itself could develop projects in new areas such as renewable energy.

Mr. Gao Mingbo (China) said that the international community had responded to the worst crisis since the Great Depression by taking immediate steps to strengthen regional cooperation. Regional responses should, however, be tailored to each region's particular circumstances. National Governments should also play the primary role in framing their countries' development path. China participated actively in several regional cooperation mechanisms, including the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and various regional trade arrangements.

Despite the concerted efforts of several countries in the region, the compounded crises had dimmed prospects of attaining the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015. However, there was now a unique opportunity to reorient economic growth towards a long-term development path that was more inclusive and sustainable, as stated in the Summary of the Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the

Pacific 2009 (E/2009/18). Over the years, ESCAP had made a significant contribution to regional prosperity and progress; China would continue to support cooperation efforts to that end.

Mr. Khabbaz-Hamoui (Observer for the Syrian Arab Republic) said that the 500,000 million citizens displaced from the occupied Syrian Golan in 1967 were still awaiting a return to their homeland. The occupying Power continued to act in flagrant violation of hundreds of United Nations resolutions, destroying 200 farms and thousands of homes. Only 5 of the original 150 Arab villages remained, inhabited by some 20,000 Syrians and surrounded by ever expanding Israeli settlements, minefields and military installations. Israel was also still burying nuclear waste in the area in violation of humanitarian law. It continued its attempts to alter the demographic characteristics of the occupied Syrian Golan, illegally imposing Israeli identity cards on Syrian citizens. Lengthy prison sentences were meted out to individuals who objected. He wished it to be recorded that Mr. Hayel Abu Zaid had died of leukaemia in an Israeli prison without receiving medical attention, while Bashir Elmeket continued to be denied basic health care and family visits. Mr. Yusef Shams, a farmer, and Mr. Ata Farhat, a journalist, had been given a sham trial and subjected to harsh imprisonment merely for speaking out against the Israeli occupation.

Meanwhile, Syrian farmers in the occupied Syrian Golan were denied water for irrigation and market access for their products, and other workers were refused the right to work. As was well known, Israel's inhuman practices were also being applied in occupied Palestinian territory, including the West Bank and the city of Jerusalem, and the barrier continued to be constructed in violation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

In December 2008, the occupying Power's military operations in the Gaza Strip had killed 1,500 people and caused widespread destruction to housing, infrastructure and mosques. Israeli soldiers had recently admitted to the press that they had been ordered to kill civilians, including children.

A fair and just solution to the conflict, within the Madrid Framework, depended on respect for international legitimacy. However, certain countries were always too quick to justify Israel's barbarism against the Palestinian people.

Mr. Rastam (Malaysia) said that the reports before the Council highlighted the strengthened coherence and coordination achieved by the regional commissions. Malaysia supported the proposal to move the agenda item on regional cooperation to the Council's coordination segment, since the regional commissions were, after all, being encouraged to focus on policy coordination. A main objective of coordinating the system's activities at the regional level was also to facilitate coherence in pursuit of national goals and priorities.

The regional perspective should be given more prominence in ongoing discussions on system-wide coherence, as should the issue of synergies with regional directors. The report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation in the economic, social and related fields and Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific would benefit from deeper analysis of obstacles and challenges faced by the regional commissions in their efforts to promote coordination despite the multiple crises. ESCAP might also provide information on the evolution of its relationship with ASEAN since the adoption of the ASEAN Charter. Regional commissions might also usefully contribute to the High-Level Committee on South-South Cooperation.

Ms. Atout (Observer for Palestine) said that implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations had represented a cornerstone for freedom movements, in Africa and Asia especially. She rejoiced that most former colonies were now fully-fledged members of the United Nations, but the continuing occupation of Palestine remained a dark spot on the decolonization movement. Certain parties attempted to downgrade the question of Palestine to a humanitarian issue that might be resolved with humanitarian assistance. Clearly, however, it was a people's legitimate struggle for independence that was at stake.

Her delegation welcomed the report of the Secretary-General on the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation on the living conditions of the Palestinian people (A/64/77-E/2009/13), but took issue with paragraph 7.

Mr. Isnomo (Indonesia) expressed concern at the deteriorating economic and social situation in Palestine

and other occupied Arab territories. In December 2008, while the world had marked the sixtieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Israel had launched its lethal, 22-day assault on the Gaza Strip. The occupying Power continued to deny the social and economic rights of Palestinian and other Arab civilians and to prevent the flow of food, medicine and other vital supplies from entering the occupied Syrian Golan.

The international community must act decisively to end the suffering, and Israel must be reminded of its obligations under the 1949 Geneva Convention. An end to the Israeli occupation was the only viable solution to the crisis.

Mr. Qudah (Observer for Jordan) said that the report provided an in-depth analysis of the economic and social repercussions of the Israeli occupation. Israel had been continuing its policies of settlement expansion, land confiscation and community displacement. Its illegal barrier restricted mobility, further weakened an already dependent economy, and reduced the production capacity of Palestine. Mass unemployment had plunged families further into poverty, causing them to sell their assets, reduce spending on essential needs and remove their children from school. Human capital would be affected for years to come.

The United Nations must do its utmost to end the suffering. Israel, for its part, should cease its illegal occupation, its policies of closure and all other practices that only aggravated the humanitarian situation of the Palestinians.

Mr. Adams (Observer for Israel) said that the draft resolution being circulated informally was yet another attempt to deal with the conflict between Israel and Palestine in a biased manner. If the Council, which was not mandated to examine conflict situations, chose to do so, then it should conduct those examinations fairly. Adopting draft resolutions that favoured one side over another was not the way for the United Nations to promote its goals.

He quoted from a recent article in the International Herald Tribune which affirmed that the situation in the West Bank had improved, as the Palestinian Authority's security forces entered their second year of consolidating order in the territory. The International Monetary Fund was about to issue a report forecasting a 7 per cent growth rate for the West Bank in 2009. With regard to the economic situation in

the West Bank and Gaza, the average per capita gross domestic product in 2008 in those two regions combined was greater than the average per capita GDP in the least developed countries.

The next step was to bring about a political solution. By seeking to assign blame, resolutions such as that before the Council undermined efforts to promote dialogue between Israel and Palestine. In a speech made in 2006, Kofi Annan, the former Secretary General of the United Nations, had posed two pertinent questions: Had the adoption of General Assembly resolutions condemning Israel's behaviour done anything to bring tangible relief to the Palestinians? Had it had any effect other than to strengthen the belief in Israel that the United Nations was too one-sided to be allowed to play a significant role in the Middle East peace process?

Mr. Adhan (Saudi Arabia) said that he wished to stress the negative impact of Israeli policies on the living conditions of the Palestinian people in the occupied Palestinian territory. In particular, the blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip was hindering the delivery of humanitarian assistance, leading to a further deterioration of the situation in that area. There was an urgent need to alleviate the suffering and to meet the basic needs of the Palestinian people. Yet mobility restrictions, checkpoints, blockades, land confiscation, destruction of homes and other actions made it virtually impossible to satisfy those needs. Israel was continuing to expand its settlements, displacing and expelling people from their land, despite the fact that such expansion had been condemned by international organizations and was in violation of international conventions. Calling on the Council to put a stop to the building of illegal settlements, he said that Israel's expansionist aims violated the rights of the Palestinian people and were hindering efforts to achieve peace and establish a Palestinian State.

The Council should likewise pursue its efforts to assist the populations in the occupied Syrian Golan and to ensure that humanitarian assistance reached those in need.

Mr. Kniazev (Belarus) said that Belarus attached particular significance to strengthened multilateral cooperation in Europe. The Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) implemented balanced policies in the interests of all its members, helping to construct a

Europe without borders. For Belarus, the most important areas of regional cooperation in Europe were: sustainable energy, including innovative, environmentally clean technologies; transport, especially road and rail; and the facilitation of trade. In that context, priority should be accorded to countries with economies in transition.

Belarus would welcome a further strengthening of dialogue between UNECE and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). The visit to Belarus in 2008 of the Executive Secretary of UNECE, and his participation in the summit of CIS heads of State, had paved the way for a new model of regional cooperation that would take account of new challenges arising from the social and economic transformations of recent decades. Belarus remained committed to common efforts to enhance the peace and prosperity of all countries in the region.

Mr. Sammis (United States of America) said that his delegation was deeply concerned about the impact of the current humanitarian crisis on the Palestinian population. While appreciating certain aspects of the draft resolution being circulated informally, in particular its emphasis on the importance of good governance and ensuring the safety and well being of civilians, he considered the resolution to be fundamentally unbalanced in that it criticized Israel while ignoring terrorism. In that connection, he regretted the violent loss of lives of both Palestinian and Israeli citizens.

President Obama was determined to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process with a view to moving towards a goal of two States living side by side in peace and security. The international community should focus on helping the parties involved in the Middle East conflict to maintain their progress towards that shared objective. One-sided resolutions such as the one currently in circulation did nothing to advance the peace process and ultimately undermined the credibility of the United Nations.

Mr. Mellouh (Algeria) said that the Report of the President of the Council on consultations with the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (document E/2009/69) made no mention of the assistance provided by the World Food Programme to Saharan refugees living in Algeria, even though the

Programme had been meeting the food needs of that population since 1986. He requested the President of the Council to ask the World Food Programme why it had not submitted a report on its activities to the Council.

He expressed his deep concern about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, which was mainly the result of the Israeli occupation. The unjust Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip had destroyed the infrastructure, displaced thousands of Palestinian citizens, depriving them of food, health services and education, and had hindered the delivery of humanitarian assistance, already impeded by the blockade in place since 2007. Various Israeli practices, including land confiscation, the expansion of settlements and the construction of a wall in the occupied Palestinian territory, were worsening the already difficult situation of the Palestinian people and were depriving them of their right to benefit from their own natural resources. Similar practices by Israel in the occupied Syrian Golan were deepening the economic and social crisis in that region.

The only way to solve the economic and humanitarian problems of the Palestinian people was through a negotiated political settlement that would put an end to the Israeli occupation.

Mr. Hilale (Morocco) said his delegation was concerned about the deterioration of the socio-economic conditions and the worsening humanitarian crisis in the occupied Palestinian territory, resulting from the illegal blockade and other Israeli measures imposed on the Palestinian people. Six months after Israeli's offensive in the Gaza Strip, which had done massive damage to the infrastructure there, conditions in the region were alarming. Unemployment was on the rise, poverty was increasing and there was a general deterioration in health conditions, owing to Israel's deliberate blockade of the flow of food, medical supplies and fuel.

The international community should focus greater attention on Israel's obligations under international law and should work together to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people. His country had launched several initiatives to that end. It had provided humanitarian assistance immediately after the military operations in Gaza and had been one of the first countries to offer financial support for the

reconstruction of that territory. It had also financed projects in the health, education and housing sectors as well as a heritage restoration project in the holy city of Al-Quds Acharif with a view to preserving the city's cultural identity. A special fund had been set up for contributions from Moroccan citizens wishing to support the reconstruction effort in Gaza.

The United Nations system had an ongoing responsibility to search for rapid and effective solutions to the precarious socio-economic situation in Palestine and to the Palestinian question in general. If the international system were to work, there must be a collective commitment by States, United Nations organizations and civil society to respect and ensure respect for international law. Peace and security in the Middle East could only be attained by restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, within the framework of an independent State, with Al-Quds Acharif as its capital, coexisting in harmony with the State of Israel.

Mr. Patriota (Brazil), referring to the report of the Secretary-General on regional cooperation, said that while the world financial and economic crisis had had an impact on all countries, the social and economic implications for developing countries were potentially much more severe and long-lasting. Developing countries would, for example, have to curtail social spending at a time when they should be increasing it. In that connection, he welcomed the commitment made at the G-20 Summit in April 2009 to make \$1.1 trillion available to help revitalize the world economy and to earmark \$50 billion for low-income countries.

There was a need to improve coordination between the United Nations and multilateral intergovernmental institutions working in the area of international finance, development and trade. It was time to move away from the "bunker mentality" of previous decades when institutions attempted to shield themselves from the influence of their institutions. One way of achieving greater international cooperation was reform in the area of governance, taking into consideration the differing mandates of the institutions involved. The methods used to ensure inter-institutional coordination, which thus far had been unproductive, should be revamped.

The global economic transformations under way in response to the crisis provided an opportunity for reinvigorating cross-institutional policy cooperation

and coherence. That was perhaps the only way to make progress on the major issues facing the international community, including reform of the global financial architecture, establishing a new development paradigm, ensuring greater participation of developing countries in global agricultural and commodities trade, reform of global governance structures, and measures relating to climate change and sustainable development. Setting up a General Assembly working group, as provided for in the declaration issued at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on the World Financial and Economic Crisis and its Impact on Development, would help to ensure progress on those issues.

He agreed with Malaysia that the item on regional cooperation should in future be placed elsewhere on the Council's agenda. Regional commissions should participate more actively in discussions on the global economic situation and should be more involved in efforts to strengthen the follow-up to the International Conference on Financing for Development. The commissions had a great deal to contribute to the general debate on governance, to discussions in the area of finance and macroeconomics, and to the debate on how to improve coordination between the United Nations system and its partners.

Mr. Ngei Mule (Observer for Kenya) underscored the importance of regional cooperation in promoting the implementation of United Nations programmes at the regional level. States participated in regional cooperation arrangements as a means of promoting peace and security. Kenya benefited greatly from its cooperation with numerous regional arrangements, including the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development and the African Union.

The recent crises had required the Organization's regional mechanisms to develop innovative mechanisms to deal with the varying challenges they faced. The Regional Coordination Mechanisms played a valuable role in promoting coordination and consensus; their work should however be better aligned with regional priorities. Additional resources must likewise be mobilized for regional projects, and appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems should be put into place.

He endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (E/2009/15), in

particular with regard to establishing regional surveillance systems that focused on emerging risks, strengthening of interregional and intraregional trade and investment in particular through South-South cooperation, and increasing the participation of developing countries in the Bretton Woods institutions and other policymaking bodies.

In order to meet development goals the resource potential of each region must be harnessed through targeted programmes. For example, although food security in Africa was fragile, as noted in the report of the Secretary-General, there was great potential to harness water and land resources to significantly increase food production for the regional and even international markets. He called for the support of the international community in promoting agricultural diversification, research and marketing and for the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme.

Every effort must be made to promote regional cooperation at the South-South, North South and triangular levels. United Nations entities working in the area of regional cooperation had an important role to play in that regard and must therefore be strengthened.

Mr. Murakami (Japan) said that the Asian region had the greatest potential for growth and must contribute to the world economy in the twenty-first century as a centre for growth open to the world. The current global economic and financial crises were however hitting the region hard. In response, his Government, while working to get its own economy back on track, was stepping up support to the region. It would provide up to 20 billion dollars in official development assistance to the countries of the region, for budget support, infrastructure, low carbon initiatives and the establishment of safety nets. It was likewise ready to provide up to 22 billion dollars for two years to facilitate trade finance, especially in developing countries.

Concerted efforts by the countries of the Asia-Pacific region would be necessary to overcome the current crises and further develop the region. His Government believed that the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had a vital role to play in that regard and had worked with ESCAP in promoting a number of human security

initiatives. The increased efficiency that would result from the current reform process within the Organization, including by stressing such upstream activities as policymaking and advocacy based on ESCAP's comparative advantage, would ensure that the Commission would make a vital contribution to realizing the region's potential.

Mr. Nour (Officer-in-Charge, Regional Commissions New York Office) said that he had taken due note of delegations' remarks and would convey them to the appropriate Executive Secretaries. In response to the representative of Saint Lucia, he recalled that the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) subregional headquarters in Port of Spain had been strengthened recently by the General Assembly; he would transmit the specific issue relating to posts to the Executive Secretary. As for the question of the role of the Regional Coordination Mechanism and links with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) raised by the representative of Malaysia, he said that the Mechanism's efforts to work with ASEAN and ensure that United Nations agencies supported regional priorities provided a textbook example of what could be done in that regard. A handbook describing those arrangements had been prepared by the Regional Coordination Mechanism and could be made available to delegations. He welcomed the suggestion to move the agenda item on regional coordination to the coordination segment; that would be given due consideration.

He reassured delegations that the regional commissions would maintain and strengthen their efforts to promote South-South cooperation. In response to the representative of Kenya, he said that the Regional Coordination Mechanism worked closely with the secretariats of both the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Union (AU), which had representatives on and co-chaired the Mechanism, to identify and support regional priorities.

Draft resolution E/2009/L.26: Support to Non-Self-Governing Territories by the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations

Mr. Richardson (Saint Kitts and Nevis), introducing the draft resolution, recalled the Organization's long-standing mandate to support the Non-Self-Governing Territories in their development

process in cooperation with the administering Powers, and the role played by the Special Committee in that regard.

The global economic crisis had highlighted the interconnectedness of the international community. Stressing that the United Nations worked to assist all peoples, in consultation with their Governments, he said that the draft resolution sought to ensure a partnership approach between the Organization's specialized agencies and the administering Powers of the Non Self Governing Territories to meeting the development needs of the Territories in many areas, including health, adaptation to climate change and response to natural disasters.

He announced that Bolivia, Namibia and Saint Lucia had joined the sponsors and expressed the hope that the Council would once again adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

Draft resolution E/2009/L.21: Europe-Africa fixed link through the Strait of Gibraltar

Mr. Aparicio (Observer for Spain), speaking also on behalf of Morocco, said that the technical, environmental, socio-economic and financial studies relating to the fixed link project begun in 2006 had been completed, as had the comprehensive review aimed at proposing possible next steps and management models for implementation of the project. The review had concluded that in a context of increased trade and international mobility and further growth in the services sector a fixed Europe-Africa link would bring benefits to the immediate region and Africa and Europe as a whole.

Taking into account the uniqueness of the project, for example its geographic symbolism and sheer size, the implications of such a link went far beyond those of a mere transport route across a sea boundary and acquired a geostrategic dimension, linking two continents and strengthening ties in the Mediterranean region. The link would be a world-class logistical platform and permanent transit point between transportation systems that would greatly increase development potential.

Construction of a fixed link was in keeping with the western Mediterranean transport development strategy agreed by Euro-Mediterranean partners, including the Regional Transport Action Plan for the Mediterranean Region 2007-2013 of the Euro-

Mediterranean Transport Forum. The Joint Declaration of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean of July 2008 had likewise stressed the importance of developing transport infrastructure in the region.

A fixed link would accelerate the development of high-speed rail lines and road networks in Spain and Morocco and improving reliability, in all weather conditions. His Government and the Government of Morocco had long been committed to making the region in question a transport nexus through the building of a fixed link, as evidenced for example by the bilateral cooperation agreements of 1980 and 1989 and the commitment reiterated by the President of Spain and the Prime Minister of Morocco in Madrid in December 2008.

Within the broader context of regional development, at the local level, the fixed link would increase the capacity of the ports of Tangiers and Algeciras and make them strategic ports in the international transport network. It would increase the attractiveness and complementarity of both ports and stimulate local development. The link could stimulate new economic growth in Morocco while Spain would likewise be able to take advantage of the development opportunities provided by the project, for example in the area of strategic support measures.

The symbolic, geostrategic and development aspects of the fixed link project argued strongly for its implementation and the involvement of the international community, in particular with regard to financing. Such a vast and costly project was beyond the resources of the two sponsoring countries. The resolutions of the Council had ensured participation by relevant institutions in the fixed link process; that participation should be complemented by participation in implementation of the project, especially in the area of financing. He noted that potential users and beneficiaries of a fixed link included the many people from the Maghreb who lived and paid taxes in Europe. The European Union should therefore make a significant contribution to the project and its financing.

The draft resolution requested the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic Commission for Europe to take an active part in follow-up to the project and report thereon to the Council at its substantive session of 2011. He urged delegations to once again adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

The President announced that the draft resolution contained no programme budget implications. He took it that the Council wished to adopt the draft resolution by consensus.

It was so decided.

Draft decision contained in document E/2009/15/Add.1, Chapter I, Section A: Venue of the sixty-sixth session of the Economic and Social Commission of Asia and the Pacific

The President announced that the draft decision contained no programme budget implications. He took it that the Council wished to adopt the draft decision by consensus.

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 12.30 p.m.