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SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE: OFFICE OF THE  
UNITED NATIONS DISASTER RELIEF CO-ORDINATOR

JOINT INSPECTION UNIT

Evaluation of the Office of the United Nations  
Disaster Relief Co-ordinator

Comments of the Secretary-General



The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the members of the General Assembly his comments on the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (A/36/73).

\* A/36/50.

Comments of the Secretary-General

A. General observations

1. The Secretary-General attaches great importance to the work of the United Nations in the area of disaster relief and wishes to express his appreciation to the Joint Inspection Unit for having provided, through its report (A/36/73), a comprehensive assessment of the activities of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) and proposals for a new approach by organizations of the United Nations system to disaster relief co-ordination.
2. The Secretary-General has carefully considered the assessment of UNDRO's mandate, programme results, management, operations and co-ordination arrangements, together with the many substantive recommendations and proposals contained in the JIU report. The report of the Inspectors is timely, as it will be before United Nations intergovernmental bodies at the same time as the report requested of the Secretary-General on the ways and means by which the United Nations system has carried out, over the last decade, its role of co-ordinating and implementing humanitarian emergency assistance in cases other than those caused by natural disasters, pursuant to Economic and Social Council resolution 1980/43, 1/ and a report on the discussions of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) on the strengthening of the capacity of the United Nations system for responding to major emergencies of exceptional magnitude and complexity requiring the involvement of several organizations. An attempt has been made to take into account the conclusions of the latter reports in the preparation of the present comments.
3. A common premise underlies both the JIU evaluation report and the various initiatives referred to above: a reaffirmation of the need for a strong role by the United Nations system in disaster situations; and a new emphasis on the search for ways to make their contribution more effective and relevant. The actions required to "strengthen UNDRO for the future" (A/36/73, para. 139) - the stated purpose of the JIU evaluation report - must be set in this broad context. They must also take into account the important developments which have taken place within the United Nations system since UNDRO was established in 1972 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI).
4. As has been explained in the consultant report commissioned by the Secretary-General, E/1981/16, paras. 29-61, significant progress has been achieved in the decade since the adoption of resolution 2816 (XXVI) in improving the state of preparedness, at the level of the United Nations system as well as at the national level, to meet natural disasters and other emergency situations, and in strengthening the capacity of the system to respond to emergency needs. Firstly, new organizational units have been created within a number of organizations and existing ones strengthened. Second, there has been considerable growth in the volume of funds placed at the disposal of participating agencies, although this

1/ The consultant report entitled "International Efforts to Meet Humanitarian Needs in Emergency Situations", prepared pursuant to this request, is contained in document E/1981/16.

growth must be set against the correspondingly higher level of needs generated by the increasing number of large and complex humanitarian emergency situations that have taken place during that period. Third, steps have been taken to ensure a more timely availability of resources and more effective and flexible use of the very limited funds available to initiate the most urgent actions pending receipt of disaster relief supplies. Thus, for instance, the Secretary-General now has the authority to draw immediately upon the regular budget of the United Nations up to an amount of \$30,000 per disaster with an over-all limit of \$360,000 per year; and a like amount may be committed for the same purpose by the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

5. Fourth, the capacity of the system to assess needs has been substantially improved. In particular, joint assessment missions have come into frequent use - a practice which has been furthered by the establishment of UNDRO - and which the consultant report assesses as one of the most important advances in handling emergencies in the United Nations system over the past 10 years. The drawing up of collective inventories of needs has helped to establish a practice of co-ordination, *ab initio*, which has facilitated subsequent implementation of emergency assistance programmes.

6. Fifth, a large body of experience has been accumulated with regard to modalities of interagency co-ordination, ranging from the establishment of focal points, to the selection of lead agencies and the appointment of special representatives. The League of Red Cross Societies, in co-operation with UNDRO and with intergovernmental and voluntary bodies, has also established a Standing Committee on Disasters bringing together all the major voluntary and intergovernmental relief agencies. As a result of these developments, the way has been paved for a progressive evolution of interagency collaboration, from the traditional concept of co-ordination based on the avoidance of duplication and overlapping to a dynamic process of concerted action among functionally decentralized organizations.

7. During this period, UNDRO's direct assistance, in comparison with the total aid given, has remained limited. There can be little doubt, however, that UNDRO's activities have served to enhance international awareness of the need for co-ordinated action for relief assistance and, through the mobilization of efforts, have helped maximize the total value of resources reaching the place of actual need. These are, in the Secretary-General's view, the fundamental aims which the international community sought to meet through the establishment of UNDRO.

8. In addition to its contribution, noted above, to the development of the capacity of the system jointly to assess emergency needs, UNDRO has progressively acquired, in collaboration with other organizations concerned, valuable experience in data gathering and measurement techniques. Moreover, as the consultant report recognizes, its Memoranda of Understanding with other organizations, have helped to define the "ground rules for the co-ordination of their functions and activities on a bilateral basis", in disaster situations, within the framework of collective action. UNDRO's efforts and initiatives have also brought about an increasing

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awareness at the country level of the importance of developing preparedness plans and organizing domestic facilities and resources to deal effectively with future emergencies. The improvements in this respect that are indicated in paragraph 32 of the above-mentioned consultant report, though limited, are noteworthy.

9. Within the above framework, the Secretary-General views the JIU report, which provides a more specific evaluation of the programme of UNDRO itself, as a constructive contribution to the search for effective ways and means of enabling UNDRO to realize its full potential, drawing on the improved capabilities of the United Nations system as they have evolved over the past 10 years. The goal should be to identify the areas in which UNDRO can be of the greatest assistance to Member States and to consider, with that end in view, how its services could be best focused and managed; to mobilize the authority and resources of the United Nations in support of such activities; and, taking into account the increased capacities of other organizations, to develop the catalytic role of UNDRO to enhance the contribution of the organizations of the United Nations system as a whole in the field of disaster relief.

10. UNDRO's first few years of operation saw extensive progress in establishing the basic operational procedures for the co-ordination of international disaster relief. Through the experience gained in the co-ordination of relief for some 60 disasters which occurred during the first half of the last decade, mutually reinforcing relationships were developed with the principal United Nations organizations involved, with donor Governments, intergovernmental organizations and voluntary agencies. Important initiatives were also taken in the areas of preparedness and the mitigation of disaster damage. It was this progress, notwithstanding the very limited resources available, as well as a recognition of an unrealized potential, that led the international community to take measures for the strengthening of UNDRO. However, the arrangements made for the purpose largely took the form of a trust fund dependent on voluntary financial contributions to be made on a year-to-year basis. This created uncertainties, introduced an important constraint to effective long-term programming and planning, and reduced the possibilities for attracting and retaining experienced staff.

11. Moreover, it became increasingly apparent, as indicated in the consultant report, that there are significant limitations on the ability of the United Nations to affect matters largely falling within the realm of domestic jurisdiction. The full co-operation and support of both donor and recipient Governments is a necessary condition for effective international action for disaster relief in practically every aspect, from the rapid movement of supplies and personnel to the use of the necessary communications.

12. Nevertheless, the Secretary-General agrees that there is scope for a considerable enhancement of the performance of UNDRO, and of its contribution to the performance of the United Nations system as a whole; and that the necessary improvements should be introduced with the sense of urgency which corresponds to the needs of recipient countries and takes into account the concerns of donor countries. The Secretary-General is confident that the actions which the intergovernmental bodies concerned will take in the light of the JIU report and the present comments, together with the measures under way at the Secretariat

level, to which reference is made below, will contribute significantly to this goal.

B. Mandate

13. The JIU report contains an extensive analysis of the various components of the mandate of UNDR0. In this context the report, inter alia, refers to two specific problems. One is the uncertainty about UNDR0's responsibility, as defined in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), to deal not only with sudden natural disasters but also with "other disaster situations". The other relates to UNDR0's responsibility, as set out in the same resolution to "direct" the relief activities of the various organizations of the United Nations system, which, in the Inspectors' view, most organizations have resisted.

14. The Inspectors, therefore recommend, in paragraph 143 of the report, that the basic function of UNDR0 should be confined to "sudden" natural disasters so as to allow it to "focus its efforts and resources on that specific area and establish a reputation for efficient and reliable performance". They also outline a number of functions which, they recommend, should constitute the basis of a modified mandate for UNDR0, as follows:

(a) Serve as the principal recipient and communicator within the United Nations system of information on disaster situations, what appear to be the primary needs, and what assistance is being provided, as reported to UNDR0 by UNDP Resident Co-ordinators/Resident Representatives, the United Nations system, governmental and voluntary organizations, and make available information based on what it had received so that decisions could be made by relief contributors;

(b) Receive voluntary contributions for "earmarked" disaster relief assistance when contributors wish to channel such assistance through UNDR0;

(c) Provide up to a specified amount from United Nations funds for immediate relief assistance;

(d) Assist Governments and Resident Co-ordinators/Resident Representatives, when appropriate, in relation to current disasters.

With respect to preparedness and prevention in relation to sudden natural disasters the JIU recommends that UNDR0 should:

(e) Provide advice, information and assistance to Governments on request on pre-disaster planning and preparedness in consultation with organizations of the United Nations system and others;

(f) Serve as the executing agent for UNDP-funded projects on preparedness, which should emphasize the training of nationals in pre-disaster planning and relief management;

(g) Serve as a catalyst (i.e., a stimulator of action by others) and organizer of advice and information on disaster prevention when solicited by interested Governments;

(h) Promote greater recognition of the impact of disasters on economic development in the developing countries, and the importance of effective prevention and preparedness measures to further such development by mitigating disaster damage.

The JIU considers that the modified mandate should also stress, as did General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), the continued strong need for full support of and co-operation with UNDR0 by donor and recipient countries if it is to succeed in its work.

15. The Secretary-General considers that resolution 2816 (XXVI) provides a framework for UNDR0's activities which has stood the test of time. He also believes that it would be useful to elaborate the relative emphasis outlined in that resolution concerning the different aspects of the mandate of UNDR0, and would agree with the JIU concerning the need for a more focused approach to UNDR0's role and activities in order to enhance its impact and the quality of its services. This would in turn strengthen the standing of UNDR0 within the international relief community and, consequently, its ability to co-ordinate responses, which is a crucial aspect of the contribution expected of it by Member States. In the Secretary-General's view this can best be accomplished through a clear and well-defined approach to the implementation of the functions envisaged in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI), which would take into full account the intent of those provisions, as well as intervening developments as outlined above. This approach corresponds to the thrust of the recommendations of the Inspectors without necessarily calling for a modification of the mandate of UNDR0 as established by the General Assembly.

16. As the only organization in the United Nations system set up to deal exclusively with disasters, UNDR0 provides continuity of effort and a framework for collective action in the field of disaster relief which links sectoral capabilities in support of national efforts. In this context its role, envisaged in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) as the focal point in the United Nations system for disaster relief matters, remains essential for the full utilization of the potential of the United Nations system.

~~17. As already indicated, the development of the capacities of the various organizations of the United Nations system to deal with emergencies over the last decade have enhanced the contribution of the system as a whole and provided flexibility of response to new and changing circumstances. This multiplication of capacities need not lead to duplication of specialized resources or activities provided effective co-operative arrangements are made in areas of shared concern, and the expertise of each entity is focused on its primary functions.~~

18. The Secretary-General believes that the specific recommendation of the JIU to limit formally the mandate of UNDR0 to sudden natural disasters must be viewed in this context. In actual practice UNDR0 has indeed confined itself largely to such

disasters. Moreover, it is often impracticable to differentiate between the effects of natural and other disasters, particularly where the humanitarian requirements are the same. In addition, such a delimitation of UNDR0's mandate would risk leaving uncovered certain situations where no formal responsibility has been assigned to any entity (for example, the provision of assistance in cases of disasters resulting from accidents; or the provision of immediate relief assistance to displaced persons, other than refugees, within a country in a disaster situation. It would also reduce the flexibility available to the Secretary-General, under the arrangements recently agreed by the ACC for further strengthening the response of the system to exceptional and complex emergency situations, to give guidance as to the modalities of the system's response to national needs. Moreover, it would limit the application to other disaster situations, of the accumulated experience and capabilities of UNDR0 where they could be of benefit, irrespective of the causes of such disasters.

19. General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) provides for the possibility of pragmatic action, without clear-cut lines of demarcation. At the same time, it indicates areas of emphasis and concentration for UNDR0 which the Secretary-General considers should continue to guide the future activities of that office. These areas closely correspond to those identified by the JIU. The Secretary-General would note that UNDR0 has generally, as the JIU observes, given emphasis to natural disasters in its activities. Furthermore, the Secretary-General interprets the resolution as calling for a focus by UNDR0 on pre-disaster planning and preparedness and on the co-ordination of relief assistance when a disaster actually strikes, while providing for a degree of involvement by that Office in other phases of disaster assistance which interface with the elements just mentioned.

20. Within this framework, the following analysis might assist in placing the specific recommendations of the JIU in the perspective of the respective roles of UNDR0 and the rest of the United Nations system in respect of each phase of disaster assistance. 2/

21. Action in respect of "prediction" involves the promotion and co-ordination, as required, of scientific research aimed at foreseeing where disasters are likely to occur and estimating their magnitude, and at developing the scientific and technological capability for this purpose. These activities come within the purview of a number of specialized agencies, particularly UNESCO, WMO, FAO and WHO, and should be undertaken in the first instance by the agencies directly concerned. Research and information activities in this area no doubt call for interagency co-operation. The Secretary-General considers that UNDR0's role should be concentrated on the promotion of studies in this field rather than undertaking those activities itself, and the dissemination of information

2/ The definition in the subsequent paragraphs of the various phases of disaster assistance (prediction, prevention and control; pre-disaster planning and preparedness; disaster relief co-ordination; rehabilitation and reconstruction;) is based on the analysis contained in the report of the Secretary-General on "Assistance in cases of natural disasters" (E/4994 of 13 May 1971) which was implicitly endorsed by the General Assembly in several subsequent resolutions.

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concerning technological developments, and that this role is best pursued within the framework of interagency collaboration.

22. As far as the United Nations system is concerned, several organizations, notably FAO, WFP, WHO and WMO, have established early warning systems within their areas of competence to notify their respective headquarters of impending disasters. However, no over-all mechanisms exist to link where necessary these early warning networks, and this is a matter that might well be pursued, with the assistance of UNDR0, in the context of the further consideration within the ACC machinery of the arrangements for strengthening the capacity of the United Nations system in disaster situations.

23. A similar approach presents itself in relation to "prevention and control", involving measures such as land-zoning and use, and building regulations and techniques; approaches to watershed management, irrigation and afforestation, aimed at the prevention or mitigation of the disastrous effects of natural phenomena; and the review and appraisal from this vantage point of development plans and activities. The effectiveness of these activities greatly depends on their being pursued as a built-in component of development activities in the sectors concerned, and as an integral part of the assistance programmes of the competent organizations such as FAO and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat). The relevant organizations accordingly deserve every encouragement to strengthen their work programmes related to these concerns. UNDR0 can, by drawing on its first-hand knowledge of the effects of natural disasters, play a significant promotional and advisory role, utilizing the facilities and arrangements for programme co-ordination available within the United Nations and the ACC machinery. It could also provide, without duplicating the activities of the concerned organizations, an authoritative focal point for the collection of relevant information and develop an effective system for its dissemination.

24. "Pre-disaster planning and preparedness" involve the establishment of effective national disaster preparedness plans and related administrative arrangements at the country level. This is of direct concern to UNDR0 which should assist in providing advice and services to Governments in this field. Training is clearly to be an important component of these activities. Current training projects should, in the Secretary-General's view, be systematized in a co-ordinated and comprehensive programme aimed at covering relevant personnel in the largest possible number of countries within an established time-table. The organization and co-ordination of such a programme, including the maintenance of rosters of available expertise, should constitute one of the priorities in UNDR0 activities for the next biennium. The Secretary-General furthermore considers that the regional commissions could play an increasingly important role in the provision of such training. He intends, with UNDR0's assistance, to arrange for the executive secretaries of the commissions to give early consideration to a concerted action programme in this area.

25. Similarly, UNDR0 should continue to promote the development of contingency arrangements and the conclusion of stand-by agreements for the expeditious low-cost transport of essential supplies and personnel, and for the establishment of



effective emergency communication systems. As recognized by the General Assembly in its resolution 2816 (XXVI), the support and full co-operation of both donor and recipient countries are essential if UNDRO is to succeed in this work. In addition, executive secretaries of the regional commissions could assist in promoting positive responses by Governments in each region to UNDRO's ongoing activities in this area, including the conclusion of original agreements to complement and support international arrangements.

26. So far as "disaster relief co-ordination" is concerned, the Secretary-General agrees that action in this phase (together with assistance in pre-disaster planning and preparedness) should remain at the core of UNDRO's activities. UNDRO's central role during this phase relates to the collection, co-ordination and dissemination of information on relief requirements and available assistance, including on-site assessment of needs.

27. The Inspectors rightly consider that UNDRO's responsibilities in this context should be so exercised as to support, supplement and orient, but not duplicate, the work of the concerned United Nations organizations and to elicit the greatest possible co-operation from the competent voluntary organizations. The Secretary-General shares the view, furthermore, that UNDRO should be at the centre of a comprehensive network of information at various levels (national, regional and international) and from various sources, including Governments, voluntary bodies and United Nations organizations.

28. As far as on-site assessment and co-ordination is concerned, the contribution of UNDRO to the improvement of the assessment capability of the system through, inter alia, the promotion of joint assessment missions should be expanded in the future, as should the further strengthening of working relationships with the Resident Co-ordinators/UNDP Resident Representatives who are also the UNDRO representatives and who could provide co-ordination at the field level. The responsibilities of UNDRO officials despatched to countries stricken by disaster to assist in the country-based assessment of needs and the co-ordination of relief should be clearly specified, taking into account the nature of the request for assistance, the characteristics of each situation and the specific operations involved.

29. The Secretary-General also concurs in the view of the Inspectors that systematic evaluation procedures should be introduced within UNDRO to assess, after each disaster, the policies, procedures and practices followed and identify issues which, in the light of experience, may require attention in the future. UNDRO's assistance programme should reflect, and be adapted to, the outcome of these evaluation exercises. The Secretary-General intends to enable UNDRO to draw on the expertise and facilities currently available to the Secretariat in the field of evaluation to develop its capabilities in this sphere.

30. So far as the "rehabilitation and reconstruction phase" is concerned, the assistance required of the system is not qualitatively different from development co-operation, except that it cannot be programmed in advance; and should therefore be left to the competent development agencies of the system. For this purpose they

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need sufficient flexibility to respond to unprogrammed needs and sufficient resources to do so. In 1980 the Governing Council of UNDP established a limit of \$1 million per disaster, and \$2 million per country from the Programme Reserve for long-term post-disaster technical co-operation for rehabilitation purposes. The provisions of General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI) whereby the Co-ordinator should continue to "interest himself" in activities at this phase imply, in the Secretary-General's view, the promotion whenever possible of linkages between rehabilitation and reconstruction and disaster preparedness within the framework of existing interagency co-ordination arrangements, as part of a wider effort to integrate UNDR0's activities in a continuum of activities from disaster relief to development assistance to Member States. In this connexion, it is significant that, unlike the two previous International Development Strategies, the Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade includes provisions on disaster relief.

31. The above analysis supports the observations made by the Inspectors regarding the difficulty of establishing in precise terms the appropriate balance to be maintained in the mandate of UNDR0 between activities related to the various phases of disaster relief assistance. These phases (prediction, control and prevention; pre-disaster planning and preparedness; relief co-ordination; and rehabilitation and reconstruction) tend to flow into each other. As already indicated, assistance in these various phases should be viewed as a continuum and linked, to the extent possible, to development assistance being provided to the different countries.

32. The Secretary-General believes that a clear approach should be elaborated, and translated into programme terms, which would identify, in respect of each phase of assistance:

(a) Type of actions that UNDR0 should take itself and those which should be left to other entities;

(b) Main components of UNDR0's catalytic role;

(c) Whether the exercise of such a role requires facilities within UNDR0 or can best be exercised utilizing co-ordination arrangements already available within the system.

33. The Secretary-General has attempted in the preceding paragraphs to sketch the broad outlines of such an approach. If supported by appropriate arrangements and effective management practices, this approach can, in the Secretary-General's view, go a long way in meeting the concerns of the Inspectors - which the Secretary-General shares - to achieve a more distinctive role for UNDR0 and to focus better its contribution and expertise, without a change in UNDR0's mandate as set out in General Assembly resolution 2816 (XXVI). It would also help to avoid "the risk of raising hopes that cannot be fulfilled" which was noted in the 1971 report of the Secretary-General on assistance in the case of natural disasters (E/4994, para. 106).

C. Trust Fund

34. The Joint Inspection Unit notes that the Trust Fund available to UNDRO has always been provisional and recommends that it should be phased out, while leaving the possibility open for UNDRO to receive voluntary contributions for "earmarked" disaster relief assistance, when contributors wish to channel assistance through UNDRO. Apart from funds contributed for "earmarked" relief assistance, the Trust Fund comprises three components or subaccounts concerned, respectively, with emergency relief assistance (unearmarked); the strengthening of UNDRO and technical assistance in disaster prevention and pre-disaster planning. In justifying their recommendations on the Trust Fund, the Inspectors note that the strengthening account could be eliminated if their proposals on reduced and more effective staffing are enacted, and that the technical assistance subaccount would no longer be required if UNDRO were able, in consultation with Governments and UNDP, to develop well-designed preparedness projects for UNDP funding.

35. The Secretary-General would recall that the General Assembly, in its resolution 35/107 of 5 December 1980, has decided to maintain the Trust Fund for a further period of two years as from 1 January 1982 "in order to ensure that the financial resources available to UNDRO remain adequate to meet the tasks entrusted to that Office". In addition, under the financial rules, the Secretary-General is empowered to receive voluntary contributions for any purpose consonant with the aims and purposes of the United Nations.

36. As for the composition of the Trust Fund, however, the Secretary-General would generally agree with the Inspectors that the purpose of the Fund, as now constituted, lacks clarity and specificity. In particular, the absence of clear-cut differentiation between disaster relief, technical co-operation and operating costs is, in the Secretary-General's view, undesirable; it does not, as past experience shows, encourage additionality of resources for the affected countries and is generally not conducive to the most effective and rational use of resources. In the light of the views that will be expressed on the subject by the concerned intergovernmental bodies, the Secretary-General would therefore propose to take steps to ensure that the various components of the Trust Fund are rationalized and that the Fund's purposes and objectives are more sharply defined.

37. Turning to the component of the Trust Fund relating to "strengthening of UNDRO", the Secretary-General notes that the Inspectors have linked their recommendation for its elimination with an over-all reduction in staffing levels within UNDRO. As indicated in paragraph 48 below, the Secretary-General considers that the staffing needs of the Office can be best assessed following such decisions as the General Assembly may take concerning the substantive recommendations contained in the JIU report and the present comments. The possibility of eliminating the "strengthening account" can be considered only after a determination is made of the over-all requirements of the Office in the light of its mandate and functions.

38. As far as the technical assistance subaccount is concerned, the Secretary-General would note that contributions to it have fallen sharply in recent years. For this reason, and in view of the substantive considerations set

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forth by the Inspectors, the Secretary-General would concur with the JIU recommendation that increased effort should be made to develop sound project proposals for UNDP funding. He would note, however, that "disaster-preparedness" projects would appear to attract fewer resources than those more directly linked to development, and do not retain the same degree of national priority. At the present time there is little support for "preparedness" projects except through this subaccount. In any event, the Secretary-General considers that it would be desirable to specify more clearly the purpose of this subaccount in the context of the technical co-operation policy of UNDP, both in terms of its mandate and its collaboration with other organizations of the system.

39. The Secretary-General hopes that UNDP will also continue to receive directly, as suggested by the Joint Inspection Unit, voluntary contributions for "earmarked" disaster relief purposes.

40. In general, and subject to the views of the concerned intergovernmental bodies, the Secretary-General considers that the main emphasis should be placed on the availability of a general purpose fund for unearmarked emergency relief. The Secretary-General shares, in this connexion, the views expressed in the consultant's report on special economic, humanitarian and disaster relief (E/1981/16, para. 85) that a general purpose account has, in the case of disaster relief, a special value. It can play an important gap-filling role vis-à-vis the different agency programmes; and enables the United Nations to provide funds, over and above the very limited funds available from the regular budget, to launch operations expeditiously, pending the receipt of additional resources, and to ensure that relief operations are not interrupted at critical times.

#### D. Reporting procedures

##### 1. Intergovernmental reporting

41. The Inspectors recommend a pattern of intergovernmental reporting for UNDP similar to that of the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA), whereby UNDP would be under the general authority of the General Assembly, as at present, but the UNDP Governing Council would serve as its governing body and concern itself with its policies and programmes.

42. The Secretary-General agrees with the Inspectors as to the need for improved arrangements for intergovernmental oversight and guidance for UNDP's activities. The specific suggestion of the Inspectors, however, could raise certain jurisdictional issues, arising from the co-ordination responsibilities of UNDP which, *inter alia*, encompass relevant activities of UNDP itself. It may be relevant also to note that the current funding of UNDP's activities derives both from the regular budget and extrabudgetary sources, while extrabudgetary resources are the principal source of funding for entities coming within the purview of the Governing Council.

43. In general, the Secretary-General considers that the existing machinery (the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly, including the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (CPC) and the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions in respect of budgetary matters) will allow effective

direction of UNDR0 provided that discussions in these bodies are well prepared and based on more analytical documentation and reporting. In this connexion, the Secretary-General concurs with the JIU recommendation that the annual report of UNDR0 should contain less description of activities and more objective assessment, particularly through analysis of specific progress made and problems encountered in fulfilling the objectives established in the medium-term plan and programme budget. In addition, it would be useful if the Economic and Social Council were to consider specific organizational arrangements which would enable it to devote sufficient time and attention to the consideration of such reports. Arrangements could also be devised to strengthen the participation of the UNDP Governing Council in the review process through, inter alia, periodic reporting on UNDR0 activities supported by UNDP, and on UNDP/UNDR0 co-operation. This latter approach would be particularly useful in providing support for future technical co-operation activities in pre-disaster planning and preparedness.

## 2. Secretariat reporting

44. The Inspectors recommend that the Co-ordinator should report to the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation for day-to-day guidance and have set forth in paragraphs 149-151 of their report a number of considerations in support of this recommendation. It may here be noted that the responsibilities of the Director-General in relation to Secretariat entities in the economic and social fields are, generally speaking, of a policy-related character and do not at present include day-to-day oversight of the activities of those entities. For this reason, and provided that the functions of UNDR0 are defined in the manner proposed in the present report, it would not, in the Secretary-General's view, be necessary for the Director-General to be involved in the day-to-day operations of UNDR0. At the same time, the approach to disaster relief assistance outlined in the preceding sections of this report argue for an overview role for the Director-General in relation to the functioning of the whole network of concerned organizational entities, and in promoting the necessary continuum between relief and development assistance. It is suggested, therefore, subject to the decisions that the General Assembly might take concerning the recommendations contained in the JIU report, that the responsibilities of the Director-General with respect to UNDR0 should concentrate on those policy-related aspects of the operations of that Office that fall within his purview, including arrangements to ensure an effective integration of the activities of that Office with those of the system as a whole and the elaboration of relevant policy proposals for consideration by ACC, the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly.

### E. Operations

45. The Inspectors have expressed the view in their report that "much more effective management is required if UNDR0's performance is to improve". In chapter III and annex III of their report the Inspectors have presented a detailed analysis of UNDR0's programme objectives and performance for the period 1976-1981. They have also put forward a number of specific recommendations concerning UNDR0's operations, including: its programme budget; staffing needs; internal structures,

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particularly those relating to the information, communication and records units; the distribution of assignments; internal assessment and evaluation procedures; management data and operational procedures; and personnel practices, including staff management relations and staff training. The Inspectors further recommend that the Administrative Management Service of the Secretariat and, with respect to UNDR0 financial and management controls, the United Nations Internal Audit, could provide useful outside assistance in the introduction of management improvements within UNDR0.

46. The Secretary-General concurs with the emphasis placed by the Inspectors on the need for prompt action in each of the management areas involved. He wishes to report, in this connexion, that he has sought and received detailed comments on these issues from the Co-ordinator and that several steps have already been taken to review the internal management situation within UNDR0. Firstly, the Secretary-General has appointed a high level official to discuss with the Co-ordinator and with members of the office representations made to the Secretary-General by a number of UNDR0 staff, and to review a number of staff/management issues within that office, to which reference is made in the JIU report. Second, a proposal has been submitted by UNDR0 to the Secretary-General for an internal reorganization of UNDR0, and the Administrative Management Service has initiated, on that basis, a broad survey of management structures and practices within the Office. Pending the outcome of that survey, the utmost restraint is being exercised in the recruitment of staff to fill existing vacancies. The aim is to ensure that the professional qualifications of newly recruited staff are well adapted to the revised organizational structures being developed for that Office, and that UNDR0 retains the staffing flexibility required to comply with any decision the General Assembly might take in the light of the JIU report.

47. Third, as an extension of the management survey, an internal review has been initiated by UNDR0 of certain delayed programme activities, with a view to phasing them out or accelerating action in the light of emerging priorities, as recommended in paragraph 153 (a) of the Inspection report. An over-all assessment of programme performance is an integral part of the process of programme budget preparation, and it is on the basis of such an assessment that the submission relating to UNDR0 for the 1982-1983 programme budget has been prepared. At the same time, the submission was prepared in the light of existing legislative mandates and guidelines. Therefore, should the General Assembly take any decisions, in the light of the JIU report, requiring adjustment to the resources included in the 1982-1983 programme budget, a submission reflecting these modifications and adjustments will be put forward in accordance with established procedures.

48. Similarly, the staffing needs of the Office can best be considered in the context of the decisions that might be taken by the General Assembly concerning the functions and activities of UNDR0.

49. The modalities of implementation of other recommendations of the Inspectors, including those relating to the functioning of the Information, Communications and Records Unit, and the management data and operational procedures, are currently under active consideration in the context of the AMS review referred to above.

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Finally, recommendations concerning the introduction of evaluation procedures within UNDRO and the content of UNDRO's annual report have already been commented upon above.

50. The Secretary-General intends to keep the intergovernmental bodies concerned informed of the outcome of the management reviews referred to above during the course of this year.

F. New approach to United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordination Proposed by the JIU

51. The Inspectors recognize that issues related to UNDRO have broader implications for the United Nations system as a whole, and that co-ordination arrangements are more effective when those involved have participated in their formulation. To encourage a co-ordinated and unified approach by the organizations of the United Nations system, they propose that an interagency emergency assistance committee be created by ACC which would normally be chaired by the Co-ordinator of UNDRO and serviced by that Office. The committee would approve plans of action for specific relief efforts; help strengthen the modalities of the United Nations system to respond more effectively to disasters of all kinds, and further collaboration in technical co-operation projects in disaster preparedness and prevention.

52. The Secretary-General agrees that there is a need for a better articulated framework for interagency action which would optimize the contribution of UNDRO and draw fully upon the potential of the system. However, it is not clear whether this need would best be served by a formal standing body or by a combination of other arrangements.

53. References have been made above to the specific need for arrangements for improved interagency co-operation in the various phases of disaster relief. The Secretary-General therefore considers that it would be desirable for ACC to continue its examination of strengthening the capacity of the United Nations for responding to emergencies. The aim should be to design a system which would ensure prompt delivery of concerted relief, and enable regular contacts to be organized and maintained between the organizations concerned, without impeding the speed of action by each organization within its powers and resources. In this connexion, the ACC has recently adopted measures with respect to exceptional emergencies of a dimension or complexity which would require special arrangements. These measures, which will be put into effect through consultations between the Secretary-General and the executive heads concerned, involve the determination - based, inter alia, on information from UNDRO - whether an exceptional situation exists requiring the arrangements to be put into effect; the determination of over-all needs; the designation of a lead entity; and arrangements to ensure effective co-ordination at the country level, taking into account the responsibilities of the Resident Co-ordinator. Within the over-all effort co-ordinated by the lead entity, each organization would, in conformity with its mandate, be fully responsible for planning, mobilizing, implementing and co-ordinating assistance falling within its competence. The nature of any special appeal or appeals would be decided through ad hoc consultations between the Secretary-General and the Executive Heads concerned.

This approach would enable individual agencies, as suggested by the JIU, to respond directly, within their mandates, to national needs in exceptional emergency situations, while at the same time establishing a framework for interagency co-operation at both the international and country levels.

54. The Secretary-General considers that this approach should be further developed by defining the role and terms of reference of the lead entity and its relationship with other organizations and voluntary bodies. Consideration could also be given to the possibility of the Secretary-General convening, when necessary, an ad hoc interagency co-ordinating committee at the headquarters level, which could advise on joint assessment missions and provide support to relief operations in the field. In the field, experience with ad hoc interagency groups could be utilized to set up appropriate arrangements to ensure continuing collaboration at the country level. It may also be useful to explore the extension of the essentials of such a system to deal with emergencies which are of lesser dimension but which would benefit from a collective effort. Once such a framework is articulated, ACC could make arrangements to review periodically the working of the system in emergency situations, including its collaboration with voluntary organizations and the donor community.

55. The way forward is to build and encourage plural capacities of the organizations of the system without duplication of specialized services; to create a framework for continuing collaboration consistent with the need for flexibility and to create a habit of shared participatory action. In this framework the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator, on behalf of the Secretary-General, would play its due role, with particular responsibility for specific intersectoral functions, and serve as a flexible modality to fill the gaps in an evolving collective system for effective disaster relief.