



SUMMARY RECORDS

**OF THE PANEL DISCUSSION HELD DURING THE 129th ASSEMBLY IN GENEVA
(OCTOBER 2013)**

on the subject item

**"Towards risk-resilient development: Taking into consideration
demographic trends and natural constraints"**

chosen for debate by the Standing Committee on
Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

during the 130th Assembly in March 2014 in Geneva

Towards risk-resilient development: Taking into consideration demographic trends and natural constraints

Item 3(b) of the Agenda

Panel discussion on the subject item chosen for debate by the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade

Sitting of Monday, 7 October

(Afternoon)

The panel discussion was opened at 2.40 p.m., with Mr. R. León (Chile), President of the Standing Committee.

The PRESIDENT, introducing the panel discussion, said that the aim of the exercise was to elicit views from participants for input into the report and draft resolution to be prepared on the subject chosen by the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade for consideration at the 130th Assembly: Towards risk-resilient development: Taking into consideration demographic trends and natural constraints. He drew attention to the background paper, contained in document A/129/3(b)-R.1, which had been prepared by the co-Rapporteurs, whom he invited as lead speakers to set the scene for an interactive discussion on the subject.

Mr. S.H. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh), co-Rapporteur, emphasizing the non-prescriptive nature of the background paper, said that the task of combining the two powerful stand-alone themes encompassed in the chosen subject item had posed a considerable challenge. Of integral importance to the debate were the increasing impact and risk of disaster, the growth and concentration of populations, and the approach employed in addressing those issues from a sustainable development perspective, particularly given the alarming statistics showing that disaster losses now exceeded growth. The IPU was the ideal forum for promoting proactive parliamentary engagement in efforts to build resilient communities in order to reduce disaster impact, including through smart investment of scarce resources, on a risk-analysis basis, with a view to saving in the long term. The purpose of sustainable development would be defeated in the absence of such advance planning to protect vulnerable populations from the high-frequency high-impact disasters that were becoming the norm.

Mr. P. MAHOUX (Belgium), co-Rapporteur, agreeing on the importance of the parliamentary role in building disaster resilience, added that food security and self-sufficiency were affected by demographics and that climate change was also a vital consideration in the sustainable development context, as was the issue of maternal and child health in the light of its impact on population dynamics. Indeed, family planning in both the collective and individual interest had long been identified as a key element of sustainable development. Risk-resilient development was a topical theme on the international agenda and he looked forward to hearing views and incorporating them into the final report and draft resolution to be prepared on the subject. The objective was to develop an action plan for taking that agenda forward, most notably in the parliamentary setting, as it was through a political approach to building disaster resilience that solutions would best be found.

The PRESIDENT thanked the two co-Rapporteurs for their contributions and introduced the two panellists, inviting them to share their perspectives on the subject.

Ms. M. WAHLSTRÖM (United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction), Panellist, recalling that the theme "invest today for a safer tomorrow" had been launched some four years earlier in order to promote concrete actions for disaster reduction, said that progress had been hampered by the lack of a holistic approach, which could now be pursued through the opportunity provided by the post-2015 development agenda. Parliamentarians certainly had a crucial role to play in disaster risk

reduction, a key factor in which was the location of populations. Where and how they were located were often greater causes of disaster-related losses than disasters themselves. Indeed, as already mentioned, the statistics for those losses were not encouraging. In some countries, the introduction of disaster-reduction measures in various sectors had already proven its worth. The burgeoning urban populations across the globe justified the strength of the economic argument for the introduction of such measures, but social, moral and political arguments also obtained.

Outlining the factors and risks specific to different continents and citing the many millions annually affected by disasters and the billions incurred in disaster-related costs, which were heavily under-estimated, she remarked on the critical need for a sustainable development model that secured well-being while at the same time recognizing and planning for risk. In mapping out a more resilient future, parliamentarians should therefore seek to integrate into their national development plans such matters as the development of financial and other instruments, risk assessment, early warning systems, preparedness, land use, urban planning, and the setting of standards and principles.

Ms. M. TEMMERMANN (Director, Department of Reproductive Health and Research, World Health Organization), Panellist, illustrating her presentation with slides, recalled that the international community had, over two decades earlier, identified as critical to sustainable development the establishment of sustainable production and consumption patterns and measures to address population dynamics. More recently identified as similarly critical were reproductive and sexual health and the promotion and protection of related human rights, including access to family planning services. Over the past 50 years, the increasing human demand for resources had more rapidly and extensively affected ecosystems than ever before. Taking into account the projected increase of the world population to 9.6 billion and more by 2050, the new Family Planning 2020 initiative aimed to halve to 120 million the number of women seeking to delay or avoid pregnancy with a view to drastically reducing unintended pregnancies, early infant deaths and pregnancy- and child-related deaths. Countries such as Kenya were taking the lead in slowing population growth through family planning programmes, which also achieved wider gains, including reductions in gender-based violence, abortion and poverty, in addition to women's overall empowerment and the promotion of more sustainable development pathways. Contraceptives were moreover cost-effective and delivered substantial cost savings in health care. Meriting further exploration, however, was the absence of any linear equation between a decrease in population growth and the ecological footprint.

Parliamentarians could play a crucial role in influencing population growth through policy-making; maintaining current per capita spending on health and education; reinforcing national commitments to gender equality and protection of women's rights; and ensuring the capacity of health systems to provide information and services relating to women's sexual and reproductive health.

Mr. F. Bustamante (Ecuador), substitute Vice-President of the Standing Committee on Sustainable Development, Finance and Trade, took the Chair as Moderator.

The MODERATOR thanked the panellists for their presentations and invited comments and questions from the floor.

Mr. J. AL-OMAR (Kuwait) said that sustainable development programmes must be based on relevant data and the allocation of resources for implementation must be within a set time frame. Planning for improvements in all spheres of life must be people-centred and also include environmental protection measures, which were an individual and collective responsibility and must aim to strike a balance between environment and development with a primary view to achieving the environmental security needed to guarantee the universal right

to a decent and healthy life. Population growth was a two-edged sword, promising either to stimulate national income through increased demand for goods and services or to impede economic growth by exhausting financial and natural resources. Demographics thus had a significant impact on development and compounded the need for sound planning to ensure environmental and socio-economic stability. Realistic and flexible goals must then be set for the expected outputs and desired outcomes in order to promote the implementation of a more effective policy for meeting the challenge of sustainability.

Ms. M. DE BOER (Netherlands), noting that the interesting linkage between population and disaster risk brought a new perspective to the debate on reproductive rights, asked about the pros and cons of ensuring that those rights were instrumental to such goals as risk resilience.

Ms. S. BONEVA (The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) reported that her country, inspired by the Hyogo Framework for Action (HFA), was actively building disaster risk reduction capacities and promoting the risk reduction agenda at all levels, including by contributing substantially to regional and international efforts for constructing a safer world and achieving risk-resilient development. Globally appreciated and recognized, the national risk reduction model was founded on a holistic approach incorporating the resources and capacities available at all administrative levels and bringing together all sectors of society. Striking results had already been accomplished in reducing vulnerability to the natural hazards from which the country was most at risk, namely earthquakes, floods and forest fires. It shared a worrying downward population trend with other countries, however, in the light of its low birth rate and ageing profile, which portended grave socio-economic and other consequences. Population growth measures being implemented as part of a wider demographic strategy included financial incentives and education subsidies for larger families.

Mr. G. VARNAVA (Cyprus) said that the importance of sustainable development for island countries such as Cyprus was inestimable, especially given the ability of natural disasters to instantly destroy development gains. Disaster reduction saved lives and secured economic benefits that were also measurable in terms of family planning, improved health conditions, social cohesion and poverty alleviation. Natural hazards were not isolated incidents to be addressed through humanitarian aid or relief response alone and the new focus was therefore on dealing with the multidimensional aspects of disaster risk from the development perspective, with international commitments made to approach the issue in relation to its impact on people and development and more precisely to population growth and family planning. The HFA provided vital guidance for international cooperation in building disaster risk reduction and resilience, taking into account sustainable development, the link with which had been recognized as crucial by stakeholders. In progressing to action, the first priority was to incorporate disaster risk reduction and resilience into development policies and plans in all sectors and to ensure that they were at the core of the post-2015 development agenda and the post-2015 disaster risk reduction framework. Political will and determination were essential to achieving those goals.

Mr. T. FUKUYAMA (Japan) expressed appreciation for the tremendous international support offered to his country in the wake of the earthquake, tsunami and nuclear accident it had suffered in 2011, which had caused thousands of deaths and untold destruction, in addition to reputational damage fuelled by rumour. The difficult struggle to decommission the reactors in the affected nuclear power station persisted and new problems were constantly emerging, such as water contamination and the delivery of health monitoring and support for the area's residents. Japan would continue to benefit from the wisdom and technology of the international community as it faced those challenges. The lesson learned, however, was that disaster risk reduction plans for individual events were inadequate to address the multiple

issues triggered by such a complex emergency. It was therefore vital to devise countermeasures for every imaginable situation by prioritizing effective disaster risk reduction and securing the requisite investment, including for capacity-building in disaster-prone developing countries. Special provision must also be made for the vulnerable groups in society. International cooperation on action to address climate change and reduce greenhouse gas emissions must likewise be promoted, with parliamentarians leading the discussion in their home countries.

Mr. L. RAMATLAKANE (South Africa) said that vulnerable groups in developing countries invariably bore the brunt of the adverse consequences of natural disasters, which were steadily rising. Economic recovery was slow in disaster-affected areas, with inhabitants experiencing a corresponding decline in their quality of life. Coming as it did before the 2015 deadline for attainment of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the present discussion was timely, especially given the uneven response to the link between disaster risk reduction and population dynamics recognized at various international gatherings over the past 20 years. The Africa Regional Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction was designed to mobilize political commitment, improve disaster risk identification and assessment, enhance knowledge management, increase public awareness, improve governance and integrate disaster risk reduction into emergency response management. South Africa had its own well-developed disaster management policy and legislation for the integration and coordination of disaster preparedness, rapid response and post-disaster recovery. Vulnerability to disaster and the magnitude of disaster impacts were conditioned by the size of population activities and growth and by lack of economic progress, which a new national development plan had been designed to address. Additional support must be mobilized for research into key disaster risk reduction issues, taking into account the factors highlighted.

Mr. S.N. QAMAR (Pakistan) remarked that the dissemination of relevant information, such as satellite weather forecasts, to populations in disaster-prone areas could help to save lives and attenuate other impacts in the event of natural disaster. Legislation should be enacted to ensure that communities benefited from available data and knowledge.

The MODERATOR invited the lead speakers and panellists to react to the comments made.

Mr. S.H. CHOWDHURY, co-Rapporteur, agreed that the dissemination of accurate disaster-related information was an important measure; early warning systems had already proved their worth in his own flood-prone country. Transboundary cooperation was similarly important, as was the interplay between science, policy and action for driving the required changes. The opportunity provided by the review of key components of the development architecture in 2015 must also be seized to ensure that disaster risk resilience featured prominently in the post-2015 agenda, bearing in mind that a single disaster could erase 10 years of development progress. The enactment of relevant legislation was also an absolute must and model legislation drawing on best practices was therefore likely to be included for guidance as part of the draft resolution to be developed for consideration by the Standing Committee. The IPU's Advocacy Kit for Parliamentarians on the theme of disaster risk reduction was another useful tool. As to reproductive rights, they were undoubtedly important but care must be taken to maintain focus on the central issue of disaster risk resilience and the extent to which population and demographics played a role therein. Lastly, a vital point had been raised about the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; failure to address that issue would be tantamount to treating the symptoms of the disease and not the cause, bearing in mind that the minimization of risks had limits.

Ms. M. WAHLSTRÖM, Panellist, concurred that access to disaster-related information was critical. Equally critical, however, was the need to train populations in how to respond to such information, the presentation of which must be clear enough to prompt that response. She likewise concurred that reproductive rights were not the issue insofar as it was the link between population dynamics and disaster risk that would essentially determine the appropriate risk management systems. Furthermore, the demographic trend was increasingly downward on account of the high proportion of countries with ageing populations. Concerning disaster-related legislation, it tended to concentrate on response rather than on prevention and reduction. A more integrated and inclusive legislative approach should therefore be explored.

Ms. M. TEMMERMANN, Panellist, joined in emphasizing the importance of the new global infrastructure to be built under the post-2015 architecture with a view to achieving new social and sustainable development goals. While the reproductive rights issue was part of a different work stream, efforts must nonetheless be made to identify and bring in links with added value.

Mr. P. MAHOUX, co-Rapporteur, referring to the question of reproductive rights in the context of population growth, said that an individual's freedom to choose pregnancy, without constraint, was fundamental. Access to family planning services must therefore be increased in order to offer that unconstrained choice. Socio-economic measures must also be developed in tandem with those services to ensure that women and children were not left behind in the drive for sustainable development and the attendant slowdown in population growth. Demographic problems clearly varied as a function of such factors as the age pyramid, population density, adequacy of natural resources and exposure to natural disaster risk, and population policies were formulated accordingly. Steps must be taken, however, to build strategies for risk resilience and disaster avoidance into those policies. In short, parliaments must include all such issues on their agenda with a view to exerting a robust influence on decision-makers and achieving positive outcomes.

Mr. LI YANG (China) remarked that sustainable development demanded a balance between economic progress and population, resources and environmental protection in the interests of increased production, improved living standards and a sound ecological environment. China was committed to concrete action for addressing the root causes of such problems as growing resource constraints, severe environmental pollution and deteriorating ecosystems in order to reverse the downward trend, create a healthy environment and contribute to global ecological security, while at the same time working to assist other developing countries in their quest for sustainable development. As a responsible country with a large population, it had taken effective measures to implement both the Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development and the MDGs, which had in turn boosted socio-economic development, improved public health and helped to stabilize the global population. Sustainable development must also be energetically pursued at the international level, with a focus on developing-country access to capital and technology. China was thus intent on actively engaging in the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+ 20) in an open and results-oriented manner in order to promote global environmental protection and sustainable development for the benefit of future generations.

Mr. V. SENKO (Belarus) said that the role of parliaments in addressing the issue of sustainable consumption and production patterns and population dynamics could not be overestimated. The HFA had proved to be an efficient vehicle for addressing the challenges of disaster risk reduction and the Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was a vital and practical tool for countries, including Belarus, which now had a national body cooperating

actively with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR). Notwithstanding the success and efficacy of multilateral efforts, significant room for the improvement of hazard responses remained. He therefore called on parliamentarians to ensure that risk reduction was a priority goal at both the national and global levels. The next essential step would be to endorse the HFA2 in 2015. The United Nations role in addressing sustainable development issues and developing risk resilience should be significantly enhanced. His suggestion was that the impact of such important factors as food production, access to energy resources and world population growth should be addressed in the agenda of the Global Partnership for Development.

Mr. K. SITTHEEAMORN (Thailand) reported that the issue of population dynamics in Thailand was less severe and more predictable than elsewhere, whereas production and consumption patterns were frequently disrupted by natural disasters. The hard lesson learned from the major tsunami and flood disasters of the past decade was that politicians were too busy protecting their constituencies to become involved in disaster management, creating more problems than they solved. In building its response capacities, Thailand had established local and national mechanisms, amended existing legislation, enacted new legislation and installed monitoring and early-warning systems. Legislation relating to disaster prevention still required improvement, however, and the implementation of major projects was hampered by such factors as shifting weather patterns and unreliable data. Measures to minimize risk to the production supply chain had been established, as had regional frameworks for disaster management and emergency response, which included transboundary issues and the timely delivery of humanitarian assistance. Planning difficulties posed by the unpredictability of shifting weather patterns were among the remaining challenges. Another significant problem was that the popular vote was frequently attracted by quick-fix solutions that tended to be costly and unsustainable, which was a barrier to politicians campaigning to win in elections on the strength of more sustainable policies.

Mr. Z. SANDUKA (Palestine) related that the disasters suffered by Palestine were man-made but had the same grave impact as natural disasters. The Zionist occupation of Palestinian territories since 1948 was tantamount to a never-ending earthquake that caused homelessness, destroyed land, wrecked livelihoods and led to poverty. The constant influx of settlers with no connection to Palestine or the Mediterranean region disrupted security and depleted Palestinian natural resources, particularly water, which was moreover contaminated, together with the soil, by chemical and other hazardous wastes produced by Israel. Measures could be taken to mitigate the consequences of natural disasters and restore normality, whereas there was no end in sight to the man-made disaster in Palestine, given the persistent failure to find and implement a peaceful solution. Freedom of trade and movement was severely curtailed as a result of the embargo, road closures and checkpoints to which Palestinians were subjected daily. All those who believed in freedom, democracy and justice must join in the efforts to end the occupation of Palestinian territories, which was hampering development.

Ms. R. MAKRI (Greece) said it was apparent from the arguments clearly articulated in the background paper that risk-resilient development, taking into account demographic trends and natural constraints, was a prerequisite for sustainable development in the eyes of the international community. There was a two-way connection, however, between government policies in time of economic crisis and both those forms of development. In her country, unnecessary budget restrictions had led to full-blown recession and also disrupted the State's ability to design and implement policies for preventing the devastating effects of risks from climate change and disaster which, combined with such demographic trends as urbanization, posed a huge challenge to the achievement of sustainable development. In that context, horizontal reduction and market deregulation represented a serious impediment to

development. Risk management should be approached from a holistic viewpoint focused on the interaction between different types of risk and risk management strategies, with parliamentarians playing a crucial role in the light of their direct knowledge of people's needs and their ability to make recommendations accordingly. Ongoing dialogue on the subject would conceivably promote that more holistic approach to development and the role of socio-economic and environmental factors in economic expansion.

Mr. A. ALGHAMDI (Saudi Arabia), observing that the highest losses from natural disasters occurred in developing countries, stated the key question: how could those countries, with their limited resources, attain their development goals while also building their risk management capacity? Obstacles to those goals included lack of infrastructure and technology and dependency on a single income source and external assistance. His country had extended over US\$ 100 billion in non-refundable assistance to disaster-affected countries in the past 40 years, thereby exceeding the annual target for the allocation of 0.7 per cent of gross national product (GNP) to official development assistance (ODA). Risk-resilient development called for changes in institutional, cultural and political attitudes and commitment to good governance. In developing countries, parliamentarians across the political spectrum must act on their responsibility to improve well-being, especially during times of crisis; play a stronger role in the development of reconstruction plans; and work to enhance transparency, promote human rights, prevent abuses of power, minimize corruption, increase accountability and strengthen public trust in institutions and government. Foreign aid dependency must also be reduced through expansion of free trade between developed and developing countries. Political stability and living conditions in the latter could also be improved through the promotion of world peace.

Mr. A. CARDELLI (San Marino) said that the choices made by his country, the world's oldest republic, were testimony to the importance of a small State within the international community. In the matter of sustainable growth, San Marino was keen to play the role of protagonist, believing in the possibility of a more inclusive form of development based on a country's specificities and regardless of its size. A member of the international community since the early 1990s, San Marino was a signatory to Agenda 21, the global action plan on sustainable development, and its Parliament had recently approved a national petition for stronger integration of Agenda 21 projects with a view to fighting poverty, disease and illiteracy in developing countries. It pledged to stand by the international community in that fight and in the efforts to promote growth in order to improve living standards and narrow existing gaps. As a young politician, he had a vision of a different future in which new generations could chart a new world order. He therefore looked forward to ongoing fruitful dialogue between those exercising a political mandate and young persons seeking active political engagement. Concerted efforts to achieve shared objectives could change the future of the planet.

Mr. S.-H. KIM (Republic of Korea) expressed the opinion that accurate projection and response preparation were instrumental to risk-resilient development, which also demanded a focus on variances in population dynamics at national and regional levels. Lack of access to contraceptives in developing countries led to unwanted pregnancies, exposing children consequently growing up in an unsupportive environment to socio-economic risks. Countries must therefore strive to maintain a size of population in line with their carrying capacities, also bearing in mind the benefits accruing to maternal and child health as a result of fewer unintended pregnancies. Notwithstanding the upward global trend in population growth, his country was among those with rapidly ageing populations and low fertility rates, which it was addressing through tax incentives and other measures to promote childbirth and support parents. Appropriate objective and consistent national policies must be devised and implemented, without political interference, for promoting sustainable development in the light

of threats posed by rising or declining populations. Parliaments must also exercise oversight to ensure uniform implementation of those policies and further ensure that related legislation was based on fair and accurate projections. On that score, the simulation model being developed by his own Parliament for forecasting demographic changes and resulting resource demands could be useful.

Mr. A. DJELLOUT (Algeria) remarked that the growing number, frequency and impact of recent disasters served as a reminder of the potentially devastating human and economic consequences of such events, with the result that increasing attention was devoted to disaster management at global environmental meetings. Vulnerable as it was to disaster risks from multiple hazards, such as flooding, drought and desertification, Algeria worked constantly to adapt its legal framework for disaster prevention and to strengthen its disaster action plan. Measures taken included the enactment of a risk management and prevention law, pursuant to which the National Delegation for Major Risks had been established to prevent and manage disasters and improve the coordination of stakeholder activities. In fulfilment of its international obligations, Algeria had also earlier in 2013 submitted its third national progress report on implementation of the HFA. Concerning the post-2015 risk reduction agenda, priority must be given to the financing of special funds by developed countries and to real technology transfer as part of North-South and South-South cooperation.

Mr. J.M. GALÁN PACHÓN (Colombia), referring to the development of reproductive and sexual health programmes in the context of population management, agreed with the view that trainer training was a vital part of the equation. The holistic approach was another important element. In Latin American countries, there were dichotomies between their extractive economies and environment, as in the case of Colombia. How should it balance its wealth of strategic water resources with the use of strategic energy resources needed in the short term for economic growth? The holistic approach also related to Colombia's problem of organized crime. Cocaine production and exports had decreased dramatically in the past two years and, on the evidence of digital images revealing new gaps in the forests, the fear was that drug traffickers had shifted their attention to illegal mining. Those forest clearances were a matter of serious concern, given the damage to the topography already caused by flood damage in the country's worst natural disaster only a few years earlier. Landslides and illegal construction were among the many challenges facing Colombia.

Mr. B.P. BAISHYA (India) said that risk-resilient development was possible only when those responsible for initiating development were accountable for the associated risks and potential consequences. Survival and success demanded risk resilience, adaptation to anticipated change, and the ability to recover from risk events and seize opportunities hidden within those events. The impact of hazards was largely determined by the level and quality of development. Given the growing intensity and frequency of extreme climate-related events, it was imperative to minimize risks and build resilience to disasters through tangible and focused actions, including with respect to policy framework, institutional capability, basic infrastructure, technology transfer and access to finance. Preservation of the ecological components of the environment was also critical, as was the evaluation of demographic trends to policy-making for risk-resilient development and to taking timely corrective measures, where needed. Fully engaged in pursuing its environmental and climate-change strategies, India was also actively involved in environmental protection through its participation in numerous international instruments. Its voluntary mitigation goal was to reduce the emission intensity of its gross domestic product and it was committed to the principles of equity and common but differentiated responsibility, as well as to the HFA 2005-2015.

Mr. A. SNAID (Jordan) stated that the worst of all disasters were inflicted on human beings by dictatorships, which set back a country's development, denied its people the right to a decent livelihood and subjected them to a backward culture. As to natural disasters, they were transient. The absence of development in some countries was attributable to the undemocratic and unrepresentative nature of their regimes and the lack of transparency and oversight that fuelled corruption, leading to waste and misuse of resources, not to mention political instability and disturbances, all of which deterred foreign investment. Legal restrictions on the transfer of capital, barriers to globalization and failure to benefit from others' experiences posed further obstacles to development, as did the failure to prioritize the creation of an enabling infrastructure. Public rights and freedoms were also compromised in undemocratic systems, where the people were hostage to circumstance and driven closer to rebellion by the experience of ever more sharply declining living standards. Local culture was another factor influencing socially acceptable action and the climate of freedom. In summary, a transition from dictatorship to democracy was essential to triggering the development that would improve the lives of millions by lifting them out of hardship and suffering.

Mr. F. MEZA (Chile), recalling his teenage experience of a violent earthquake in Chile, said that the beauties of nature were sometimes tempered by the havoc wreaked from its disasters. His country's more recent earthquake, in 2010, was another reminder of human fragility and the need for technological advances to avoid the high death tolls and economic consequences of natural disasters. Aware as it already was of the implications of climate change for the planet, the international community should assist in educating the world's people in how to cope with those disasters. Regional offices for coordinating such education and disaster response should be established. Chile was taking legislative and other measures for dealing with emergencies, but technological assistance was needed to foresee and prevent natural disasters, wherever possible. Through technological transfer and international cooperation to act on the present discussion, human lives could be saved and the economic impact of disasters could be minimized.

Mr. A. SALIMI (Islamic Republic of Iran), recalling the function of the MDGs as a global compact, noted that they had not fully addressed the intricate complexities of some aspects of development but were nonetheless seen, from the developing-country perspective, as crucial to international cooperation. The failure of developed countries to deliver on their commitments under the compact, notably with respect to the ODA target of 0.7 per cent of GNP, was thus regrettable. Insofar as there was no one-size-fits-all policy for development goals, an enabling international environment was vital to assisting their pursuit in accordance with national priorities. For developing countries, the primary objective of sustainable development was economic development, with a built-in social component. Stronger international cooperation in such areas as environment, technology transfer and knowledge-sharing was crucial to addressing the related challenges. Developed countries must therefore adopt measures to promote sustainable development in developing countries; lend their support for progress in all economic, financial and trade matters; and provide the financial and technological resources needed for the implementation of development programmes.

Mr. M. AMWEELO (Namibia) remarked that the myriad challenges confronting millions of people in countries such as his included the problem of natural hazards and disasters, which caused devastating losses and had significant consequences for communities and the economy. Annual flooding in Namibia had led to substantial infrastructural damage, which could be mitigated if experts took the trouble to consult with local communities concerning appropriate measures. A disaster management policy was in place, but three important elements were lacking, namely financial resources, technology transfer and capacity-building, which must be provided in order to resolve the problems faced.

Mr. T. BARAMO TESSEMA (Ethiopia) said that if humanity was to survive in the face of current trends in population growth and natural resources depletion, alternative development models must be found to cater for the production modes and consumption patterns responsible for creating pressure on those limited resources. In Ethiopia, the hope was that such dividends as improved rural living standards would soon be reaped from the demographic transition under way, signalled in particular by the falling rates for under-fives mortality and total fertility. In positioning the country's capacity to harness those dividends, the Government would continue to set policies and strategies to promote well-being. Indeed, absolute poverty had already declined as a result of its focus on income generation and employment. Policies to address the interaction between population and sustainable development included a climate-resilient green economy strategy designed to achieve the fundamental objective of an environmentally-friendly structural transformation through forest protection and re-establishment and the expansion of renewable energy sources. Ethiopia's contribution to global climate change mitigation efforts was embodied in its target of zero carbon emissions by 2030, while its plans for accelerated sustainable development, growth and transformation attested to its progress towards risk-resilient development in the light of demographic trends and natural constraints.

Mr. J.F. MUDENDA (Zimbabwe) recounted that his country had an institutional and legal framework in place for disaster management and robust provisions in its new Constitution to ensure respect for environmental rights in the interest of environmental sustainability. An environmental management authority was responsible for dealing with day-to-day environmental issues. Concerning prevention and cure, humankind had failed to curb the causes of climate change that were the main trigger of natural disasters. The balance of nature's flora and fauna must be respected and the unevenness of development across the world must also be addressed. Global warming, rising sea levels and shifting weather patterns were all indicative of climate change. Socio-economic rights must be observed in matters of human development, particularly where extractive industries were concerned. Lastly, it was critical to climate management for the international community to speak with one voice in dealing with disaster-related matters and to work on that score for prevention rather than cure.

Mr. R. MOHAMED (United Republic of Tanzania), observing that all countries had experienced some form of natural disaster, said that parliaments and the global community must be mindful of the fact that failure to address problems in a timely and proactive manner would lead to much more serious and costly problems in future. They must work to strengthen democratic institutions, fight corruption and increase the transparency of financial management, in addition to ensuring that budgets for risk reduction topped their agendas. Risk-resilient development demanded increased financial investment and political commitment, which should be taken into account in the post-2015 agenda, with an added focus on family planning and population issues. It must not be forgotten, however, that countries such as his lacked financial, human and technological resources. Support would therefore be welcome from the multinationals operating in those countries, where they were not only largely responsible for the destruction of ecosystems but also adept at evading taxation. The international community must also deliver on its pledges of assistance.

Ms. C. NABWALA (Kenya) said that the biggest driver of the increasing disaster risk was the substantial growth of population and assets in at-risk areas, which exposed them to natural hazards. Migration to coastal areas and the expansion of cities in flood plains, coupled with inappropriate and poorly enforced building standards, were key examples. The risk was further increased by the degradation of such ecosystem barriers as mangrove swamps. Hydro-meteorological disasters were responsible for almost 80 per cent of adverse natural events and 75 per cent of losses. Certain areas of Kenya, for instance, were annually exposed to flooding. Disaster risk-resilient development was not only about protecting people's lives and livelihoods

but also about social, economic and environmental sustainability, the aim being to reduce socio-economic vulnerabilities to natural hazards. Disasters took countries on a backward path, a situation compounded by the losses of tourism revenue suffered by many disaster-affected countries, which in turn had implications for livelihoods. Climate change was another of the identified challenges to sustainable development facing the global community.

Mr. J.R. LEÓN RIVERA (Peru) reported that a civil defence system, regulated by law, was in operation throughout Peru to mitigate disaster damage, primarily from flooding. Construction was also prohibited within 50 metres of the coastline as a disaster risk reduction and prevention measure. Incentives were provided for private investment in reforestation and operations to tackle illegal deforestation were overseen by the police and armed forces. Such strategies had worked well in helping Peru to forestall disaster and pre-empt unsustainable growth.

Mr. A. BUDIMANTA (Indonesia) said that sustainable development could be substantially boosted if parliaments formulated constructive regulations, monitored their implementation and also ensured their continuity in order to overcome the food and energy crisis that loomed particularly large in the technologically-challenged least developed countries. Together with natural resources and agricultural development, demographic change was an indispensable consideration in the quest for sustainability. While such change might indicate health and prosperity, population growth should be stabilized. His country's efforts on that score therefore underlined the importance of family planning and also included a national transmigration programme for distributing population growth and balancing the consumption of national resources. Rural development was also visible as a result of decentralization, an important measure for slowing the pace of urbanization. In maximizing the benefits of sustainable development through the enactment of favourable laws and regulations, the integration of adaptation and development strategies was essential to achieving a better understanding of financing requirements and more effective implementation of measures adopted. Lastly, the post-2015 development goals must be more ambitious than the MDGs and also have a core focus on sustainability issues, based on a transformative people-centred and planet-sensitive agenda to be realized through the equal partnership of all stakeholders.

Ms. G. REQUENA (Venezuela), noting the common thread of predatory capitalism, commented that consideration must be given to the socio-economic model of development. The challenges of development were being tackled in her country, where the risks of disaster had been exacerbated in the past by poor housing and living standards. Immense housing construction projects were therefore being implemented to redress that situation. A law on civil protection, disaster management and development was in place, the subject of disaster prevention and mitigation was included in education programmes, and a national socio-economic plan with strategic goals was soon to be adopted. The fact was that disasters were not isolated events; they were linked to the development model. Efforts must therefore be directed towards halting the damage caused by the capitalist model and its adverse impacts, including climate change.

Mr. J. FAKHRO (Bahrain) expressed the view that the background paper should address the lack of family planning in greater depth and consider radical solutions to the problem, bearing in mind that it frequently involved underdeveloped, impoverished and uneducated communities, possibly including followers of religions that prohibited contraception. While natural disaster prevention was an impossibility, options were available for halting disasters precipitated by lack of family planning, which had enormous socio-economic and political consequences that could be rectified only in the long term. The background paper also lacked emphasis on the need for spending on education and health, which was a vital issue, and it should furthermore underscore the key role to be undertaken in disaster protection by international funds and developed countries in terms of providing

assistance to developing countries. It was additionally true to say that disasters and their worst impacts could be averted through international cooperation for global security and stability to prohibit the proliferation of nuclear weapons and the construction of nuclear reactors in earthquake zones. Lastly, the background paper should focus more clearly on the part played by parliamentarians in all such issues, whether through legislation or oversight of government action.

Mr. G. MONDE (Zambia), agreeing that demographic trends and natural constraints were cardinal to any development agenda, said that there were clear implications for decision-makers in the fact that resilience, the central goal of disaster risk reduction, was now a guiding concept for the post-2015 agenda. Considering the increase in disasters with socio-economic impacts that deepened poverty and even political instability, policymakers had recognized the need for a paradigm shift to a risk-sensitive development model, with disaster risk assessment as a prerequisite for planning to reduce vulnerabilities and build resilience. Risk-informed decision-making could also safeguard socio-economic gains through such measures as investment in new engineering and architectural designs, the introduction of appropriate land-use methods and the use of incentives for those living in disaster-prone areas to relocate or take up new occupations. In short, action on disaster risk-resilient development must be prioritized to avoid dire humanitarian, economic and environmental consequences from natural constraints, which demanded political commitment and the scaling up of investment in disaster-risk measures. An encouraging fact was that such measures were not only feasible and cost-effective but also often inherent in national governance and economic agendas.

Mr. R.M. AL SHURAIQI (United Arab Emirates) remarked that sustainable development was threatened by the growth in population and urban construction that increased vulnerability to disaster and natural hazards, which had caused millions of deaths and were in themselves a major cause of demographic and socio-economic change. Drought- and famine-prone areas were expanding, as were both youth unemployment and underpaid work as a corollary of rapid population growth, while 1.2 billion continued to live in extreme poverty. Parliaments bore the primary responsibility for countering natural and environmental hazards by prioritizing increased budget allocations for the environmental and demographic components intrinsic to sustainable development programmes; establishing policy committees to make recommendations on matters relating to population and sustainable production and consumption; calling for IPU cooperation with the United Nations to establish an international fund to combat climate change and natural disasters; organizing an international parliamentary review, through the IPU, of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action adopted by the International Conference on Development and Population, with an emphasis on reproductive rights and women's rights; and developing a mechanism for enabling national parliaments to gauge the effectiveness of their oversight of government efforts towards sustainable development.

The delegate from ALGERIA said that his country recognized the need to balance the duty of environmental protection with the demands of sustainable development and risk reduction through sound resources management and measures to counter the challenges of desertification, expanding construction on agricultural land and worsening pollution. Its risk-reduction tools included pollution mapping and tax incentives to discourage hazardous waste storage, while its national sustainable development and risk reduction strategy addressed four main areas of concern: economic development for prosperity and poverty alleviation; conservation of limited natural resources such as water and farming land; improvement of the living environment through better waste management; and creation of the legal architecture to those ends. The government had allocated substantial funding in support of sustainable development and risk reduction through projects for coastal protection, biodiversity protection and household waste recycling. It was thus engaged in determined efforts to achieve

sustainable development, not least for the benefit of future generations. In the light of technological progress enabling such advances as three-month weather forecasts, he nonetheless wondered if the outlook on disasters and natural hazards was not overly pessimistic. The problem was in fact more one of politics than of resources or population growth.

Mr. J.-W. KIL (Republic of Korea) observed that the first lesson to be learned in confronting natural disasters concerned the effectiveness of regional cooperation. In March 2013, the Korean Parliament had thus hosted a regional workshop, in conjunction with the UNISDR, at which participants had shared their knowledge and expertise and discussed the role of legislators in addressing the challenges posed by disasters. The second lesson concerned climate change-related disasters and the fact that preventive and pre-emptive measures were more important than mitigation and adaptation. In the context of such measures, the Korean-founded Global Green Growth Institute had been transformed into an international organization at Rio+ 20 and the Green Climate Fund had also been launched in the Korea at the same time. The two bodies would share professional expertise and allocate funding to promote green growth in least developed and developing countries. The related educational programmes and projects would emphasize pre-emptive measures for tackling natural disasters with a view to risk reduction.

The MODERATOR invited concluding remarks from the co-Rapporteurs and panellists.

Mr. S.H. CHOWDHURY, co-Rapporteur, indicated that parliamentarians were clearly in a position to engage in the issue at all levels through their major role in policy articulation, legislation, oversight and representation. Taking into account the current paradigm shift to a proactive approach for dealing with problems in general, the core factor in disaster reduction and resilience was to identify means of fortifying development while at the same time protecting past gains from future threat. Population and demographics were important elements, but it was essentially faulty planning choices that brought adverse consequences from natural hazards insofar as an inadequate response turned them into man-made disasters. Risk-resilience development was therefore a matter of governance, priority-setting and also identifying the drivers of risk, bearing in mind that an account of historical losses was vital to garnering additional resources for disaster reduction purposes. In short, risk-informed decisions were the key to moving the agenda forward. Every effort would be made to incorporate the points made during the discussion into the resolution to be drafted and to recommend model legislation based on successful disaster-related laws already in place in various countries.

Mr. P. MAHOUX, co-Rapporteur, concurred on the parliamentary role and the need for efficiency and action-oriented outcomes and re-emphasized the importance of education and of trainer training in particular. Another fundamental prerequisite to sustainable development was the establishment of peace and democracy. Disaster prevention was crucial and without compare as a highly effective tool for reducing the cost of disaster in terms of human lives and reconstruction. Concerning climate change and environmental degradation, multinationals and countries responsible for the biggest emissions must indeed offset the resulting damage by contributing a greater share towards the cost of disaster prevention measures. As to optimism for the future, the potential solutions called for a change in attitudes and, crucially, the transfer of technology for dealing with issues relating to population as well as to natural disasters. Of critical importance overall was the need for international solidarity.

Ms. M. WAHLSTRÖM, Panellist, observed that the evident knowledge, passion and engagement of participants formed a solid basis for progress and highlighted key areas that should ideally feature in future policy-making, specifically: risk governance; local governance; transboundary mechanisms; public safety and well-being; holistic development interventions; vulnerability to extreme events; public and informal education; knowledge transfer; and political leadership by parliaments on the issue.

Ms. M. TEMMERMANN, Panellist, endorsing the view that prevention was better than cure and also more cost-effective, urged parliamentarians to take the lead in ensuring that the new post-2015 development architecture was expanded to include emphasis on such matters as energy, resources and social development. Drawing inspiration from the example of smoking and tobacco use, means of changing public attitudes must also be explored with a view to conserving energy and resources and reducing waste. In conclusion, she underlined the long-recognized and inextricable link between the two huge environmental problems of population growth and climate change; to discuss one while ignoring the other was irrational.

The MODERATOR thanked all participants for their contributions to a highly fruitful discussion.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.