

STATEMENT BY SOEDJATMOKO
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BEFORE THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY
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Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates,

It is a pleasure and honor for me to have this opportunity to present to the Second Committee the annual Report of the Council of the United Nations University for 1985. Please allow me first to congratulate Ambassador Abdalla Saleh Al-Ashtal on his election as Chairman of this Committee. I feel sure that the Committee will benefit greatly from his guidance, and I would like to assure him of the full cooperation of the United Nations University.

The 1985 Report was prepared at the 26th session of the UNU Council in December 1985, and presents a full account of the University's activities for that year. It is the first annual Report of the Council that conforms to the full calendar year, and thus brings the University's reporting period into conformity with the recommendation of ECOSOC, which was accepted by the UNU Council in 1984. I believe that this will make it easier to follow the progress of the UNU through the annual reports. It has the slight disadvantage of placing before this Committee an annual report that is now more than nine months old. A great deal has happened at the UNU since the close of the period covered by the 1985 report, and this presentation will endeavor to bring to the Committee's attention some of the more recent activities that have followed upon the achievements of 1985.

The year 1985 marked the tenth anniversary of the establishment of the United Nations University. I would like to devote some of my remarks here to the position the University has achieved after ten years of effort. Thus, I have divided my statement into two parts. The first gives some highlights of the 1985 report and cites a few activities that have taken place since the report was written. The second part briefly reviews the University's progress during the past ten years and indicates how the distinctive institutional identity of the University has evolved.

The programme activities of the UNU proceeded at a rapid pace during 1985. Three seminars on Regional Peace and Security were held, a fourth having met earlier, in late 1984. Planned in conjunction with the United Nations Secretariat for the International Year of Peace, the seminars were designed to provide scholarly background information for the regional intergovernmental meetings organized by the United Nations in preparation for the International Year of Peace in 1986. The rapporteurs from all four seminars participate in the intergovernmental meetings as experts, and four volumes of papers from the seminars are in the process of publication. In addition, the Vice-Rector of the UNU in charge of this programme was subsequently asked to chair the United Nations panel of experts appointed by the Secretary-General on the preparation of societies for life in peace.

In February 1985, the UNU convened a conference on Climatic, Biotic and Human Interactions in the Humid Tropics at the Institute for Space Research in Sao José dos Campos, Brazil. It brought together the leading tropical climatologists, soil scientists, biologists, limnologists, and so forth, to present scientific papers and exchange information on the state of current knowledge and the research that still needs to be done. The papers from that conference will be published early next year.

A closely related conference on the theoretical level met in Switzerland in November to develop the definition and concept of geophysiology, a new systems science for the integrative study of living things and their physical support systems. It is the first step toward what we hope will be an important theoretical advance. The task force prepared a position paper outlining both the concept of geophysiology and the potential applications of it.

UNU work in this extremely important field of natural resources continued in 1986 with, among other activities, a conference on the developing environmental crisis in the Himalayan-Ganges region. Scholars from mountain research centres from around the world met with administrators and local practitioners concerned with mountain development and conservation in Bhutan, China, India, Nepal and Pakistan. The conference was chaired by Maurice Strong, the Executive Co-ordinator of the United Nations Office for Emergency Operations in Africa. It has led to the development of a new concept of trans-border ecological zones in particularly fragile areas, in the application of which the countries of the Himalayan region are showing serious interest.

In November 1985, an expert group reviewed the results of a pilot study which was designed to apply to specific problem areas the concepts and methodologies developed in the University's project on complexity. The purpose was to generate new insights and devise new methods for better management of complex systems. The pilot study took one complex system as a case study, namely, the North Atlantic fishery off the coast of Nova Scotia. A book entitled The Science and Praxis of Complexity, based on a theoretical seminar held by UNU, was published in 1985.

The Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues, of which I am a member, met at the UNU in June, for a three-day session whose main theme was the protection of vulnerable groups, particularly displaced persons. At the subsequent plenary session of the Commission, in December 1985, I was asked to prepare, with the help of UNU staff, the introductory chapter of the final report of the Commission, which will be presented to the General Assembly next year.

The UNU also provided inputs to the work of the Palme Commission on Disarmament and Security issues, in the form of background papers for a Commission meeting on regional security issues which took place in January 1986. The death of Olof Palme in February came as a most profound shock. As a member of the Palme Commission, I attended his funeral in Stockholm. In May, I was again in Stockholm and gave a speech in his memory, on non-violence.

The second of a series of regional training colleges in micro-processor technology was held in Bogotá, Colombia in June 1985. The first such college took place in Sri Lanka in 1984. These five-week courses complement the training programmes at the International Center for Theoretical Physics in Trieste and Trinity College, Dublin. In addition, we have just started a joint project in this field with Tunku Abdul Rahman College and the University of Malaya, and are discussing joint projects with the University of Addis Ababa and the University of Yaounde. So far, more than 700 scholars from Africa, Asia and Latin America have participated in UNU microprocessor programmes - and this is outside of the regular fellowship programme of the University, to which I will refer later. The microprocessor training is not simply in the use of equipment, but is aimed at the mastery of microprocessor techniques, so that those trained can adapt and creatively apply the technology to locally defined development problems.

Some time before Africa hit the headlines as a continent in crisis, the United Nations University had brought together a group of senior African scholars as the Special Committee on Africa. For two years, the group engaged in collaborative research and reflection to map a more stable future for the continent defined by and for the aspirations of Africans. The activities of the Special Committee on Africa drew to a close in 1985, the Committee having held a series of symposia on major issues such as science and technology in relation to African development. It is a matter of considerable gratification to us that as the Special Committee's period under UNU sponsorship came to a close, the scholars involved concluded that the effort we initiated was important enough to keep alive. The Special Committee has been adopted by the newly formed African Academy of Sciences, and will continue its work under the sponsorship of the Academy as the Commission for the African Crisis.

A UNU project on African Regional Perspectives, which involves 250 researchers from 35 nations, moved toward completion in 1985, with a series of workshops in Senegal, Tanzania and Tunisia. The results of the studies on the crisis of African agriculture, industrial strategies in Africa and Arab-African relations, among others, are in the process of publication.

In July 1985, a meeting was held jointly with UNICEF to bring together the final reports of a project on the effects of nutrition and primary health care programmes on the health-seeking behaviour of families. A monograph reflecting the work of social scientists in 16 developing countries is in preparation, and three topical books are in press with commercial publishers.

In October, a UNU workshop met to formulate guidelines for studying the effects of chronic dietary deficiency. The report of that workshop is undergoing final editing for publication. The University has initiated research on the social and economic effects of chronic calory deficiency in seven countries of Asia and Latin America.

As a result of its work in this area, the UNU has accepted lead-agency responsibility, with support from the Sub-committee on Nutrition of the Administrative Co-ordinating Committee, for the organization of a Consultative Group on Dietary Energy Deficiency. This group will summarize available information about human adaptation to chronic energy deficiency and its social and economic consequences, identify gaps in knowledge, and encourage awareness in policy makers of these issues.

In August, a workshop on food composition data was organized by the secretariat of the UNU INFOODS project in conjunction with the International Congress of Nutrition. Most of the regional sub-groups of the project met during the year. Working groups on Food Analysis Guidelines and Users' Needs completed their reports in 1985, and work on other aspects of food composition data continued. This work has drawn substantial external financial support.

UNU work in biotechnology continued to expand in scope and coverage. In August 1985, a meeting of policy-makers in this field was held, which discussed the need to strengthen research capacity in biotechnology and also to strengthen implementation of research results so that the potential benefits of biotechnology can be realized. In October, a workshop in Cameroon brought together scientists from food research institutes and universities in 14 African countries to review the role and status of traditional fermented foods in Africa. They made plans for scientific co-operation in research to upgrade the most important or promising traditional fermented foods.

A research network on brucellosis (undulant fever) met in November to discuss research priorities and the establishment of computerized communications links. A computer link-up among the participating scientists has now been implemented, and is proving to be a valuable tool for data retrieval and communication. It is a great asset for scientists in consulting distant colleagues and gathering information in the absence of adequate library facilities.

In July 1985, the UNU began the implementation phase of a project that is working to introduce biogas technology developed in China to Guyana. President Desmond Hoyte of Guyana, who was at that time Prime Minister, inaugurated a demonstration biogas digester at a guyanese farm. Ten farms have been selected to co-operate in the implementation, with the farmers contributing their labor and money to build digesters while the project provides training and technical assistance.

One of the novel and successful aspects of this project has been the use of a videotape made in China about the construction and use of digesters. A product of the UNU "Village Video Network", it was shown first to decision makers, then to dairy and pig farmers, in both cases supported by detailed written material and technical advice. At the inauguration of the pilot digester, Prime Minister Hoyte emphasized the importance attached by his government to technology that can increase the self-reliance of Guyana and decrease its need for foreign exchange. A similar project has now been launched in Jamaica, which will benefit from the experience gained in the guyanese project.

Seven Japanese universities collaborated with the UNU in organizing a six-day seminar in September 1985, on the theme of International Organization. The theme was chosen partly in observance of the 40th anniversary of the United Nations. The lecturers included staff of the UNU, the United Nations headquarters, UNDP, ESCAP, and UNFICYP in addition to professors from other universities. This seminar is one of an annual series to be held in Japan, and is one of the activities being undertaken by the UNU in preparation for the eventual establishment of a research and training center in Japan.

The dissemination activities of United Nations University continued to develop in 1985, making use of an expanding variety of techniques. Nineteen books were published or co-published by the University along with 21 issues of three scientific journals: the Food and Nutrition Bulletin, ASSET and Mountain Research and Development. Many other titles resulting from UNU research projects were published by co-operating institutions. Internal publications of the University include a bulletin called Update and a newsletter called Work in Progress. In addition, the University continued as co-publisher of Development Forum. A number of audio-visual activities were initiated in connection with UNU research projects.

At the end of 1985, there were 125 UNU fellows in training programmes. Eighty-two fellows completed their training in 1985. The fellowships awarded in 1985 were related to seven of the nine UNU programme areas, and the results of UNU research projects were increasingly related to the training activities. Progress was made during the year in developing new kinds of training, and in formulating new guidelines for implementing this part of the University's mandate. A new University-wide training unit was established, and a senior training officer was appointed to direct it. As of 30 September 1986, seven hundred and two scholars had completed UNU fellowships: 197 from Africa, 320 from Asia, 177 from Latin America and the Caribbean, and 8 from Europe and North America. One hundred and seventy-six additional fellows are currently in UNU training programmes: 47 from Africa, 74 from Asia and 55 from Latin America and the Caribbean.

The first research and training centre to be established by the United Nations University, the World Institute for Development Economics Research, known as WIDER, began its operations in 1985 in Helsinki, Finland. Dr. Lal Jayawardena was appointed Director and took up his post in Helsinki in April. The first Board meeting was held in May under the Chairmanship of Dr. Saburo Okita. The Board adopted three research themes for the initial programme of WIDER. They are: i) Hunger and Poverty: the Poorest Billion; ii) Money, Trade and Finance: Reforms for World Development; and iii) Development and Technological Transformation: The Management of Change. For each of these themes, advisory committees were formed and have met. On the basis of their recommendations, research papers were commissioned, leading up to a series of research conferences in 1986 which have brought together outstanding groups of academics and policy makers.

WIDER has also been host to a number of other significant meetings. At one of these, held in March 1986, twenty senior officials of member States and organizations of the United Nations system met to review issues affecting the coherence, responsiveness and effectiveness of the UN system's development activities. I think it is fair to say that WIDER has established itself in an exceptionally short time as an important contributor to the international development debate.

Further progress was made in 1985 toward the second research and training centre that the UNU hopes to establish, the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa (INRA). The Government of France pledged twenty million francs to the endowment fund for INRA in 1985. The OPEC Fund approved a grant of one hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars (\$175,000) for the proposed mineral resources unit of INRA to be located in Zambia. You may recall that the Government of the Côte d'Ivoire and Zambia led the way in funding for INRA with pledges of five million dollars and two million dollars, respectively. Both governments have also offered to provide premises and facilities for the Institute.

The concept of INRA responds in a very practical manner to the long-term needs of the African continent, which were articulated at the Special Session on Africa of the General Assembly. INRA addresses particularly the need for scientific institutions capable of leading the break away from relief and recovery to independent, self-sustaining development. Despite the heightened awareness created by the Special Session, it has been difficult to assemble the core funding necessary to sustain this sorely-needed institution. The UNU Council has resolved that it will make a decision on the practicability of establishing the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa at its next session, in December 1986. By then, it is hoped and expected that the existing and potential donors to INRA will have made additional substantial pledges to the endowment fund for the Institute.

In 1985, with the co-operation of the Government of the Netherlands, the United Nations University started work on a feasibility study to assess the viability of a programme of research and training on new technologies, mobility and regional development. With full funding from the Government of the Netherlands, a study group at the University of Limburg and four country teams in Brazil, China, India and the Republic of Korea are doing research on the applications and impact of new technologies such as microelectronics and biotechnology, under the direction of Dr. Charles Cooper. Successful conclusion of this study is expected to lead to the establishment of a UNU research and training center in the Netherlands. As with all of the proposed UNU research and training centres, this institute would operate on the basis of an earmarked endowment, so as not to divert resources from the central endowment fund of the University.

The UNU took a step forward toward the establishment of a research and training centre in Japan, envisaged as an institute for advanced studies, with the convening of a Japanese Scientific Advisory Panel. This group of eminent scholars will advise the Rector on strengthening the programme activities of the UNU in Japan.

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I am pleased to report that the planning of the permanent headquarters building of the United Nations University is making substantial progress. The basic design is being prepared by the internationally renowned architectural firm of Kenzo Tange and Associates. The Government of Japan is funding the design and will fund the construction of the building, on land which has been donated by the Metropolitan Government of Tokyo. A standing committee of all the parties involved has met throughout 1985 and continues to meet on a regular basis to implement this major development of the UNU.

During 1985, the University has received new pledges of one point seven million US dollars (US\$1,652,727) from seven governments. During the year we actually received payments on previous and current pledges amounting to ten point three million US dollars (US\$10,289,429) from twelve governments. As of 5 December 1985, pledges to the endowment and operating Funds of the University totalled one hundred and seventy-seven point two million US dollars (US\$177.2 million), of which one hundred and forty-seven point two million (US\$147.2 million) had been received.

The University also continues to receive substantial programme and project support from various official and private funding sources. The bulk of this support is received as extra-budgetary support in cash and in kind. In most instances, the funds are not, technically, received by the UNU, but are allocated directly to members of our networks for activities they undertake as part of our programme. For example, the National Cancer Institute of the United States' National Institutes of Health has donated two point one million dollars (US\$2.1 million) to the secretariat of the UNU INFOODS project. Similarly, in January 1986, the European Development Fund under the Lome Convention has provided approximately one point five million dollars (\$1.5 million) to the Association for African Universities for a project with the UNU on food and nutrition in Africa. Sometimes, of course, the external project funds do come onto the books of the UNU, as in the case of the grant of one hundred and twenty-five thousand Canadian dollars to the Brucellosis computer network.

Extra-budgetary resources greatly augment the total income of the University. For the biennium 1984-85, for example, the programme and project support made available in this manner for the University's work came to approximately two point seven million US dollars (US\$2.7 million). We would have needed an additional thirteen million dollars of endowment fund capital to generate this much income in the biennium.

In order to achieve the optimal management of the funds we have, I established, as was decided by the Council at its last session, an ad hoc investment advisory committee, and it held its first meeting in November 1985. The Treasurer of the United Nations participates in this Committee.

The very great political and economic uncertainties of the current period, which affect the entire UN system, call for a high degree of caution in our plans for the future development of the UN University. As you are well aware, the final months of 1985 brought a dramatic strengthening of the Japanese yen, which has continued throughout 1986. The UNU's endowment investments which provide the bulk of income are held in dollars, but roughly half of its expenditures are in yen owing to the headquarters location in Tokyo. Therefore,

the effect of the strong yen on the future income of the University is very severe. The University's programme and budget for 1986-87 have been somewhat protected by administrative steps which we took early in 1985. Subsequently, we have taken a number of cost-cutting measures to compensate for the higher value of the yen. Nonetheless, the maintenance of the University programme in the future will require substantial new additions of income.

In December 1985, the Council of the UNU decided to initiate a comprehensive external evaluation of the first ten years' work of the University. According to the terms of reference adopted by the Council, the purpose of the evaluation is to assess the extent to which the University since its establishment has fulfilled the objectives of its Charter, with a view to strengthening its future performance and to contributing significantly to the preparation of its future plans. An independent committee of five eminent scholars has been named by the Council to carry out the evaluation, and it has already begun its work. It will deliver its final report to the Council in July 1987. In addition, several individual projects and activities were selected for external evaluation in 1985; these reports are scheduled for completion in 1986. We will continue, in the meantime, the process of internal evaluation of projects that we have completed, and closely monitor those that are ongoing.

The specific nature of the UNU gives it very particular staffing needs. There is a need in any institution for continuity in the basic supporting staff. The UNU also requires flexibility. These two requirements are only superficially contradictory in the case of the UNU. On the one hand, we have to bear in mind the need for institutional stability, especially in administrative matters. On the other hand, we need to make systematic the turnover of professional, particularly academic, staff. The programme of the University must continually alter its thrust, and different combinations of skills and expertise will be needed to keep pace with these changes. We should also insure turnover in our networks. In addition, we should continue to devise flexible arrangements for visiting scholars, fellows and/or interns to spend time at the Centre. For academic personnel, I believe that the UNU should follow the kind of recommendation offered by the Group of 18 that no senior official should serve for more than ten years.

I would like to comment now on the specificity and identity of the United Nations University. After ten years of existence, I think it is possible to say that the University has developed a distinctive institutional identity within the United Nations system and the international academic community.

Over the past ten years, the University has moved closer to becoming a world wide community of scholars, but one without a permanent membership of either institutions or individual persons. Experience has shown the importance of pluralism and flexibility in forming our networks because the elements of the UNU community of scholars must constantly shift in response to new, emerging issues and needs. While the University is a creation of and a part of the United Nations, it is not an intergovernmental body. It is an organization made up of scholars and academic institutions and governed by individual acting in their own right.

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The UNU is not a place, though it has a Centre, in Tokyo. It is disembodied in the same sense that international financial and trading systems are disembodied, involving many actors and having multiple centres of activity at any one time.

The UN University does research, training and dissemination of knowledge on pressing global problems that are parallel to the concerns of the United Nations. The major thrust of its programme is directed toward achieving a better understanding of the dynamics of development -- development in the largest sense of the term, which encompasses issues of human welfare and survival as well as improved material standards of living.

This concept of development involves all regions of the world, not just the Third World, and it is articulated in the context of a world that is continually changing, and changing at a very rapid pace. Therefore, the concerns of the UNU must evolve in order to respond to -- and ideally to anticipate -- the mutations in the shape of existing problems, the emergence of new problems, the changing perspectives on and perceptions of problems and the shifts in the intellectual climate prevailing in different cultural settings.

The problems that the UNU must address are complex and closely interlinked. It is no longer possible to look at development as an independent variable within the stable environment of a single state. Rather, the most critical issues arise at the intersections of traditional disciplines and fields of study: security and development; environment and population; hunger and poverty; interdependence and autonomy; integration and tolerance of diversity. The United Nations University addresses its work to practical problems, but also seeks to illuminate the basic relationships underlying them rather than merely to prescribe short-term responses.

The United Nations University does its work through programmes and institutions. Programmatically, the work of the University is arranged under five broad themes and nine programme areas. Its methodology is collaborative research, training that is closely related to the research topics, and the use of both traditional and innovative learning materials and techniques to disseminate knowledge widely.

UNU research takes place through networks that span ideological, cultural and geographical divisions. It is multi-disciplinary and multi-leveled, addressing issues in their local, national, regional and global manifestations.

UNU training takes place largely through institutions, which participate in defining their own needs and capabilities. Fellowships for post-graduate training are designed not just to enhance the skills of individuals, but rather to strengthen the institutions to which the fellows belong.

The dissemination activities of the UNU are aimed at diverse constituencies. These include decision-makers and academics, of course, but also include the poor, the illiterate, the uneducated. Part of the University's task is to try to reach the less privileged with scientific knowledge that will be useful to

them in their daily lives, and also to provide channels for the expression of their needs, their concerns and their considerable stock of commonsensical wisdom.

In positioning itself, the UNU has had to learn to live with certain internal tensions arising from the varied needs, demands and perspectives of its multiple constituencies. How, for example, is it possible to reconcile the different interests of the developing countries, which have a special status among the constituencies of the UNU, with the interests of the industrialized countries, which are the major actual and potential donors to the University? How can the UNU retain academic credibility and relevance in the eyes of both?

The UNU also must constantly weigh the emphasis to be given to "cutting edge" research as opposed to research on the persistent, mundane problems that continue to afflict the vast majority of people. There is a constant tension between the need for a sharp focus and the obligation to maintain a global presence. Flexibility and responsiveness pull the institution in one direction, while the desire for stability and continuity pull it in another.

The question of standards is a difficult one to resolve in a multi-cultural setting such as the UNU, particularly when the most important modality is collaborative research in international networks. The UNU must maintain high academic standards according to some widely accepted yardsticks, but it must also remain pluralistic, and operate on the recognition that standards are different, in different cultural settings..

It is extremely important that the United Nations University acts as, and is perceived as a global institution. This means that, although its primary concern is with development, in the broadest sense, it needs to develop constituencies, comprehension and support in the North. In fact, the UNU is well placed to assist scholars from North and South to work together to develop a common language and shared perceptions. In this way, it can help to decrease the continuing gap between theories of development in the North and the realities of the South. In this sense particularly, the UNU has avoided and must continue to avoid the trap of acting as if only the South is in need of further knowledge.

The first Medium Term Perspective, which has guided the University's work since 1982, was designed to broaden the University's focus on development, to involve it more deeply in the other areas mandated by the UNU Charter, namely survival and welfare. UNU activities over the last five years have raised a whole set of second-generation questions and have made obvious the linkages among issues. The problems addressed under the nine programme areas have begun to coalesce into a relatively few, critically important trans-sectoral and trans-disciplinary clusters.

Among these are the issues arising from the evolution of a unified global economy, which will be the subjects of research and training at WIDER; the inter-relationship among bio-physical and social forces that are transforming the human habitat everywhere; the search for new rural-urban configurations to cope with the demands of increased population density and a rapidly growing

labor force; the relationship between security and development at both national and international levels; the problems of governance that arise in a complex and rapidly changing system. These clusters have evolved almost organically out of the broad research front established by the first Medium-Term Perspective, and they indicate the direction that the second Medium-Term Perspective should take starting in 1988.

This process of coalescence will enable the UNU, over the next biennium and beyond, to reduce the number of discrete activities and to consolidate its efforts. The institution needs to move at a deliberate pace into newly defined problem areas -- areas defined in large part by the findings of its previous efforts.

The United Nations University must keep sight of the fact that the nature and shape of global problems continually change. The University must, therefore, maintain a constant watch on whether or not it is studying salient issues. Its effectiveness will be measured by the quality and relevance of its work, and by its intellectual and physical presence in various parts of the world.

At this time, when the United Nations system as a whole is faced with great difficulties, it is the responsibility of each member organization of the system to contribute its utmost to the collective effort to attain the goals of the United Nations Charter in a turbulent and rapidly changing world. At the same time, each member must also focus on its own specific capabilities in such an effort, recognizing that the complexity of many problems facing the world calls for different but complementary approaches. Thus it is important for the United Nations system to maintain its own research capacity so that it can analyze issues independently of the interested parties. It is equally important that the United Nations maintain the capacity to mobilize and tap scholarly resources outside of its own system, so that it can understand and benefit from the multiple analyses that shape the worldview of its global constituencies. As we have seen in a number of recent events, it is not always possible to predict the problems that will arise to plague the world. I believe it is the task of the United Nations University to concentrate on building, through the instruments of scholarship, the capacity to meet unforeseen challenges with confidence and courage.