

Statement by Mr. Soedjatmoko,
Rector of the United Nations University,
Before the Second Committee of the United Nations General Assembly
25 September 1981

Mr. Chairman:

On behalf of the United Nations University, it is my honour and pleasure to make a statement before this Committee of the United Nations General Assembly. Let me first congratulate Ambassador on your election as Chairman of this body. I am certain that, under your courteous and skilled guidance, the work of the Committee during this session will be productive and most beneficial.

When I spoke before this committee one year ago, it was barely one month after I had assumed office as Rector of the United Nations University. I could therefore only discuss with you in broad terms my ideas and thoughts for the future direction of the University. I would like to report today on how -- with the benefit of insights and perspectives of many concerned with the goals of the United Nations University -- these ideas have crystallized. I believe that we now have a realistic, workable medium-term perspective that will enable the University to address more effectively a wider range of pressing global problems as well as emerging global crises. In addition, we also believe that the reorientation of the University along the lines we are now proposing will stimulate increased collaboration with and greater contribution to the United Nations system, and as such constitutes a response to the General Assembly Resolution of December 1980 (A/35/54) which urged that efforts to intensify the

University's collaborative relationships with appropriate agencies and programmes of the UN system should be continued vigorously.

Before discussing the future orientation of the University, Mr. Chairman, let me report on its activities over the past year. The Report of the Council of the United Nations University (A/ /) set out in some detail the work of the University over the past year. To summarize the main points of the Council's Report, it noted that the year had been one marked by both continuity and change. The University had engaged in a broad review and rethinking of its aims and activities in preparing to move into its next stage, while continuing its efforts in research, advanced training and dissemination of knowledge efforts.

The Council reports that during the year under review two new associated institutions joined the University networks, the University of the West Indies, in Jamaica and Barbados, and the University of Bern, Switzerland. The University now has 28 associated institutions and 112 research and training units carrying out its work in more than 60 countries.

It was further noted that 85 UNU Fellows were in training and another 75 had been identified and were waiting to begin training. Some 72 workshops, seminars, symposia, and meetings were organized by the University during the year under review.

During the year, paid contributions to the University Endowment Fund and Operating Fund increased by over US\$4.3 million. These contributions, for the most part, reflected payments on endowment pledges made in previous years of the continuation of annual contributions. The Governments of Jordan, Mexico, and the United Arab Emirates made new pledges or contributions to the Endowment Fund. The Governments of

Algeria and Argentina made their first contributions to the Operating Fund. Pledges to the Endowment and Operating Funds now total US\$144 million, of which close to US\$112 million has been received. Still, only 34 Member States of the United Nations have contributed to the financial support of the University so far.

During the year under review, the University published 93 titles, with a significant increase in technical reports. It moved into the third volume of two journals, Food and Nutrition Bulletin and ASSET, and launched publication of a new journal, Mountain Research and Development, a co-publishing effort with the International Mountain Society which also has support from UNESCO.

This last is but one instance of the many ways in which there has been growing collaboration between the University and other UN agencies in which I believe we have already begun to respond to last December's General Assembly Resolution.

The journal in question is an outgrowth of the co-operation between our natural resources work on highland-lowland interactive systems and UNESCO's Man in the Biosphere programme. We have also received support from MAB in the development of a regional institution for mountain studies in Nepal. Our work on water-land interactive systems, in co-operation with the Academy Institute on Limnology in Austria, is also complementary to some UNESCO activities and there has been further co-operation with them in the study of application of knowledge to arid lands problems. We further expect to launch a joint programme on management and policy applications in marine environments with the Intergovernmental Ocean Commission, with whom we are arranging a programmatic workshop in Lisbon,

Portugal in 1982.

Also with UNESCO, and within the context of our activities in human and social development, two joint meetings were held in the past year, one dealing with the role of new theoretical concepts on the process of development, was held in Ulan Bator, People's Republic of Mongolia in August 1980, and a second, on the application of indicators of socio-economic change in social planning, in Seoul, Korea, early this month. In December, the University will host a colloquium on the dissemination and teaching of refugee law which it is jointly organizing with UNESCO and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

Close ties with other UN agencies have also been developed. The work in world hunger is integrated within the UN system by participation in the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) Sub-committee on Nutrition (SCN) and its Advisory Group on Nutrition (AGN). The University organized missions on behalf of the ACC-SCN to assess training needs and possibilities in 10 African nations during the year. The University has also been collaborating closely during the year with FAO and WHO in preparation for next month's Expert Consultation in Rome for review and revision of protein-energy requirement estimates. We also co-operated with FAO in organizing technical consultation on transfer of technology to build agro-industry, especially small and medium-scale and held a joint UNU-FAO workshop on processing of grain legumes.

The training of UNU Fellows has begun to bear fruit in beneficial ways for the UN system. Several UNU Fellows who have completed their training have been selected by FAO as consultants and advisers. Fellows have moved into policy-making roles in several Third World institutions,

thus speaking directly to the UNCSTD recommendations on building institutional capacities and capabilities.

A University project on African Regional Perspectives on the New International Economic Order (NIEO), one of several regional perspectives to be examined, is being developed in close co-operation with the UNITAR project on the Future of Africa. In the natural resources field, we were deeply involved with the Secretariat of the UN energy conference in Nairobi throughout the preparatory stages as well as at the conference last month. The University also organized jointly with the Secretariat a regional preparatory workshop at our Tokyo headquarters in July. Other important University contributions to the Nairobi meeting included the designation of ASSET as the official newsletter of the conference, and the premiere showing of a video tape, prepared with University support, on an integrated rural energy system in China. We look upon this as the beginning of a village-to-village learning project in which the University and other institutions and agencies, within and without the UN system, could co-operate closely.

While this increasing interaction with the rest of the UN system has been most heartening to us, we fully recognize that a more integrative and continuing effort is called for. This has been a very important consideration in the process of review and re-evaluation in which we have been engaged over the last year. Through the restructuring of the University, we believe we will be able to develop even more co-operative and mutually supportive interaction with the rest of the UN system.

Following on the initiation of the medium-term planning process by the Council in 1979-1980, I presented some initial thoughts on the

University's next stage at the sixteenth session of the Council in December 1980. The Council asked that I develop these more fully, and, at the seventeenth session in June 1981, I presented some basic considerations for the institutional and programme development of the University within a medium-term perspective for 1982-1987. These considerations, with which the Council expressed its general agreement, provide the basic framework for our thinking about the future orientation of the University.

We are adopting a longer six-year perspective, rather than annual planning, with the goal of reinforcing the University's capacity to increase understanding of the forces that are so rapidly changing the modern world and better illuminate the options for global decision-making. The longer view, we believe, will enable us to build networks that can evolve more integrative methodologies and ideas for coping with pressing global problems. It will further strengthen our ability to carry out our Charter responsibility to increase institutional capabilities in the Third World. Such a longer view will help the University to improve global consciousness and awareness of current and future crises and may contribute significantly to the global research agenda for the coming decades.

Our efforts to redirect and restructure the institutional and programmatic development of the University are set in a world engulfed in compounding crises. This body is all too familiar with the tragic litany of problems of poverty, hunger, violence, injustice, escalating energy demand and environmental degradation, as well as the unchecked arms race, rising international tensions and the decreasing capacity of the international system to deal with them. I need not discuss them in

any great detail.

The urgency of redirecting and reorganizing the University is demanded by the recognition that all of these interlocked crises have become more acute since the founding of the University. In an increasingly crowded, competitive, and insecure world, humankind urgently needs integrative and persuasive ideas and solutions for dealing with the unprecedented scale, pervasiveness and complexity of the problems now faced. An essential task for the United Nations University, therefore, is to join other universities and centres of learning in an effort to enhance our collective capacities to prepare our societies and the global community for inevitable rapid and profound social and structural change, nationally and globally and to manage them at lower social, human and economic cost.

A major premise guiding our medium-term perspective is that of combining the imperative of change in the University with continuity and institutional stability with a view to increasing its global relevance and effectiveness. It is on the basis of the accomplishments and the experience gained in the first stage that we are building the University's work now and in coming years.

On the other hand, there is also the necessity and urgency of change. Many scholars, scientists and policy makers, within and without the UN system, with whom we have consulted over the past year, have called attention to the pressing need to make the University a more relevant, responsive and effective global institution vis-a-vis the academic and scientific community, the UN system, and humankind in general.

Mr. Chairman, when I appeared before this body for the first time one year ago, I cited a number of urgent questions that needed answering.

Questions that turned on issues of peace and conflict resolution, of international economic disorder, of the intractable nature of poverty which breeds hunger and disease, of the knowledge explosion that has provided us so few relevant answers, of the need to tap moral and religious and humanistic values, and of the urgency of educating youth about the reality of global interdependence and the importance of higher levels of international understanding and co-operation.

We believe that the University will be able to speak more effectively and respond more flexibly to these and other emerging global issues by adopting certain themes which would reflect the priority concerns and problem areas for the medium-term. At its seventeenth session in June, the Council endorsed five such themes. They further stressed the importance of evaluation and review of activities carried out under the themes, both in their design and implementation.

All five themes build, to a greater or lesser extent, on the work of the three initial programmes of the University in world hunger, the use and management of natural resources, and human and social development. All five have many interlinkages and thus respond to the concern expressed by the Council as well as others, that the University approach its work in a comprehensive, interdisciplinary fashion avoiding undue compartmentalization and fragmentation. Since these themes will be so central to the future work of the University, I think it is worth dwelling on each for a moment.

The first theme is Peace, Security, Conflict Resolution and Global Transformation. Activities within this theme will seek to provide a deeper understanding of the structural and institutional conditions which can make the process of social change at the national and global levels

more responsive to certain basic values such as peace, equity, participation and human rights. A primary concern will be with the diffusion and shifts in the configuration of power on the national and international scene and our fragmentary understanding of it. Among the specific issues to be considered will be: i) the role of the state in development and in the process of global transformation; ii) the problem of violence and human conflict, and particularly its contemporary manifestation in the pathology of the arms race; iii) potential conflict over resources and their impact on other patterns of conflict; and iv) management problems in social change at the local, national, and international levels.

In our planning of activities under this theme, we have been aided by UNESCO's Division of Human Rights and Peace which was represented at an exploratory meeting we held in Tokyo last December and a subsequent workshop the same month on Peace and Development in Asia which we jointly organized with Hiroshima University. We also recognize the potential linkages of our work in this area with the new University for Peace in Costa Rica at the appropriate time, as well as with the work of the UN Committee on Disarmament and Development and the Second Special Session on Disarmament.

The second theme is The Global Economy. There is now general dissatisfaction and anxiety about the way the international economic system functions -- as a constraint to growth and contributor to inflation and unemployment in the North, and as a breeder of even greater dependencies and inequities in the South and its relationship to the North. There should obviously be greater co-operation and dialogue on how to make the global economy function in reflection of modern realities, but in practice there has been a virtual breakdown in communications between different schools

of economic thought. Most present study of international economic policy is too small in scale, too partial to national points of view, too skewed toward the North, and too much the business of economists alone. A variety of disciplines are needed to comprehend the many complexities and strands in the current global economy -- as, for example, the impact of energy and resources problem, shifts in global interrelationships, non-state actors on the international scene, modern communications, profound value shifts among people, and unprecedented mass-scale migration.

The University, with its work focused on a global scale, its autonomy and academic freedom, its stress on the interdisciplinary approach, and its goal of establishing communication between different schools of thought is a logical sponsor of the sort of research needed on problems of the global economy.

The third theme is Hunger, Poverty, Resources and the Environment. Activities under this theme will build on work done to date in the area of world hunger and natural resources, and broaden these concerns by linking them to the problem of poverty. It will thus be possible to examine in greater detail the social, economic and political factors that contribute to malnutrition, environmental degradation, and over-all development. Under this theme, greater emphasis will be placed on the negative synergistic effect of the food and energy crises, inequitable energy distribution, and the development of energy planning systems relevant to the specific social and cultural conditions and processes in the Third World and the development of training methodologies in this area.

The elimination of poverty and hunger through employment generation

and the building of self-reliant capabilities, which will figure largely in the work under this theme, are goals directly in line with the operational plan for the implementation of the UNCSTD programme of action.

The fourth theme is Human and Social Development and Co-existence of Peoples, Cultures and Social Systems. The University's work on social indicators and processes of social, cultural and economic change will be related to problems of co-existence which are stressed in our Charter and the interrelationships between the fostering of co-existence of peoples of different cultures, languages and social systems and economic and social change. It will attempt a much more detailed reassessment of development theories and strategies within specific regional setting.

An emphasis on cultural factors has underlain much of the University's work to date, recognizing that development choices must arise from within individual cultures and societies and draw more heavily on endogenous intellectual activity. One of the most important challenges in the years ahead will arise from the need to enhance the global society's capacity for tolerance and co-operation across racial, ethnic, religious, and language barriers.

A major component of the global transformation now under way involves demographic change on an unprecedented scale which the University is going to begin to study on both the macro and micro scales. On the macro level, uncontrolled migration to urban areas, other rural areas, and across national and continental borders by migrant workers, illegal immigrants and refugees of war, famine and other disasters is already a serious problem and will grow worse. The different aspects of the problem of migration have been studied by different disciplines such as economics,

sociology, anthropology and others. But there has been no global integrated research on the over-all impact of large scale migration.

These vast movements of people are bound to result in major changes in the ethnic and cultural composition of many countries as well as increased social tensions that will erupt along the fault lines of race, religion, language and ethnicity.

On the micro scale, the combined effect of large scale demographic change and the process of accelerated industrialization is causing a change in patterns of work in both industrialized and developing societies. This has an impact on the family structure and on the interaction between genders and age groups -- with particular implications for the future role of women and youth -- which needs more study.

The fifth theme is Science, Technology and Their Social and Ethical Implications. Technological choice has enormous consequences for a nation's further development process. If the scientific and technological experience of one society is transplanted into another without adequate consideration of the different social, economic, and political context of the latter society, its effects may be socially disruptive. Technology cannot produce the desired results unless it is generated from within the user society. The broader social and ethical dimensions of technological choice need to be fully explored.

New strides in technology in the North stress the importance of the Third World building up its own basic and applied science capabilities -- in order to meet the threat of increased dependencies posed by advances in such fields as biotechnology and micro-electronics. The former could have important implications for meeting the Third World's food and energy

needs, the latter to enhance its capacity in information processing and improved productivity. The University's work in this theme could explore such areas as the appropriate "mix" of knowledge-intensive technologies and traditional food and energy production and conservation systems or help create the information environment for diffusion of social innovation, an essential requirement to the revitalization of the countryside and the creation of new employment opportunities.

In order to organize the University's work with these five themes as general guidelines, we have concluded, and the Council has agreed, that we need to redefine the University's modes of operation. Accordingly, instead of organizing on the bases of the three initial problem areas as has been the case until now, we are reorganizing our various scholarly and scientific activities into three divisions based on the new modes of operations. The three divisions are: 1) Development Studies; 2) Regional and Global Studies; and 3) Global Learning.

The first two divisions, each headed by a Vice-Rector, will stress research and training with a strong policy orientation. Development Studies will focus on problems of human survival, development and welfare of global significance as they are manifested in particular local settings, particular countries, and including their policy implications. The research will be predominantly empirical in nature, and related advanced training. This division will generally have a natural science bias in its research, but must also take into account the social science aspects of the programmes assigned to it.

Regional and Global Studies will study problems which could be most appropriately addressed by the larger regional and global level. It will

seek to link these problems to the search for international understanding of such problems in and outside the United Nations system through symposia, conferences, commissions, study groups and the like. Naturally, results of work in the first division could contribute useful knowledge to the second, while the latter could suggest further research in the former.

The principal role of the Global Learning division, also headed by a Vice-Rector, will be to use the new information and communication technologies now available to give the University an effective outreach to centres of learning, to the UN system, to policy-makers in governmental and inter-governmental organizations, to non-governmental organizations, to groups of concerned citizens and to opinion-forming individuals. This outreach should be used to disseminate knowledge of an interdisciplinary nature set in a global context, including that generated by our own research, and also to help strengthen the capacity of Third World institutions to develop human resources in those fast-growing areas of science likely to lead to technological innovations of major significance for self-development.

The work of this division will also speak to the need for people all over the world to improve their capacity to learn lessons in global terms and over a longer trans-generational time span because of the rapidity of social and environmental change. Knowledge for human growth and peaceful co-existence of people everywhere will have to be gained not only through formal education but also, and perhaps largely, through a process of mutual, collective learning -- or what may be called social learning -- by young and old, rich and poor, strong and weak, in all walks of life and across social levels.

We will want to pursue exploratory activities in this division in concert with UNESCO and other organizations experienced in the field to ensure that the University makes the most effective contribution in ways that are different from or complementary to other similar activities.

Within the context of these five themes, and three modes of operation, the University has developed specific programme clusters around which its work will be organized. For 1982, these programme clusters are: i) Resource Policy and Management; ii) Energy Systems and Policy; iii) Food, Nutrition and Poverty; iv) Science, Technology and Social Innovation; v) Peace and Global Transformation; and vi) The Development Problematique.

For the six-year medium-term perspective, the Council has stressed the high priority for the University to enhance the intellectual strength of the University centre in Tokyo, in order to increase its capacity to develop and plan the University's worldwide activities. This can be done by widening the range of disciplines and expertise represented by the centre staff, by enlarging its staff and redefining its roles, by creating a Planning and Evaluation unit, and by inviting outstanding visiting scholars and senior research associates to spend varying periods of time in Tokyo and work with the centre staff -- if possible by secondment to the University from various governments and universities. The eventual establishment of an Institute for Advanced Studies based in Japan and close to the headquarters, which is now under active study, would further significantly enhance the intellectual capacity of the centre. The achievement of this critical intellectual mass will undoubtedly require a considerable increase in the funds that we now have available. We

will have to stress the importance of this goal to Governments in seeking further support for the Endowment Fund.

At the same time, the centre cannot be viewed as the total University. While building its intellectual strength, we should move at the same time, with deliberate speed toward the Charter vision of the University as an international community of scholars, and therefore a growing constellation of institutions, organizations and individuals linked to a central programming and co-ordinating hub in Tokyo. Over the medium-term perspective, we hope to establish several incorporated institutions beyond the Institute for Advanced Studies in Japan. We also plan to expand our relationships with our associated institutions so as to take advantage of their total institutional strength and not only, as in the past, expertise in one particular programme area. Knowledge should flow both to and from Tokyo as well as among the other links in a multicentred University.

Mr. Chairman, while I recognize full well the difficulties we face and the challenges we must overcome in this task of restructuring the United Nations University, I believe we are now moving in directions that are practical and achievable ways to address the pressing global issues which I suggested to this body one year ago should be on the University's agenda for the medium and long-term. The new instrumentalities of scholarship which we are in the process of devising will enable us to interact and collaborate much more effectively with the rest of the UN system as well as with the international academic community. Above all, they will allow us to respond in much fuller measure to the concerns of the Charter given us by the United Nations General Assembly.

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