

Statement of Mr. Soedjatmoko,
Rector of the United Nations University
before the Executive Board of Unesco
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Mr. Chairman, Distinguished Delegates, Members of the Commission.

Once again I have the honour - and pleasure - of addressing the Executive Board of Unesco on the developments during the past year at the United Nations University. This I will do by introducing the Annual Report of the Council of the United Nations University for 1982-1983 which has been submitted to the General Assembly, Unesco and ECOSOC as required by the Charter of the University.

My past three meetings with the Executive Board, the first of which was in September 1980, concentrated on the broad ideas the University had developed toward its future direction, how these ideas had crystallized in the Medium-Term Perspective (MTP), and the initial steps taken toward implementation of this perspective. I am pleased to say that the report which I am presenting today shows how the University has moved beyond this planning and initiation into the first year of actual programme work under the MTP. This progress is a manifestation of the efforts that have gone into translating the MTP into action. It is also evidence of the University's commitment to continuity and change that has guided its thinking over the last few years. And stemming from this outgrowth in new directions is a surge in interest and increasing co-operation in the work of the University by a number of nations, institutions and individual scholars.

Developing new intellectual responses to the complex and interlinked concerns facing the world that would provide a framework for appropriate political action has become more acutely urgent since I spoke of this last year because of continued deterioration of the global situation. In his recent annual report to the United Nations General Assembly the Secretary-General reinforced the views he presented last year on the state of the world by emphasizing how little progress had been made toward solutions and that the "great international turmoil" has produced a "stalemate on all horizons." Again, he lamented the waning political usefulness the United Nations had experienced after its early years. But if we recall the world at the time the United Nations was established, we remember a world quite different from that we know today.

Today there are many more nations and ultimately more actors, all with greater political consciousness, striving to find an appropriate place in a world that is growing increasingly smaller. This has brought more conflicts and with it many more problems to solve. This as well as rapid social change, often fueled by rapid advances in science and technology has resulted in changes in the linkages between various parts of the world and even modifications in the nature of change itself. Out of this has emerged

a world in transformation, bringing with it profound, rapid and extremely painful transitions at all levels of society everywhere and increasing interdependence among nations that have yet to understand the often contradictory processes of change and the implications for their future.

What we have failed to realize is that one reason for not being able to find solutions to problems of global dimensions is because we do not have an adequate understanding of these processes of change. Accordingly, because of the obsolescence of our analytical concepts we are often stymied in making choices among possible courses of action. The resulting drift and paralysis of the collective capacity for moral and political judgement have added to the distortion of patterns of the generation, application, and distribution of knowledge whereby an inordinate proportion of science and technology is being devoted to military purposes, while efforts for solving the problems of poverty, hunger and inequality, which science and technology would be capable of overcoming, remain neglected. Unfortunately, the continuing knowledge explosion has contributed little, as yet, to our understanding of how to approach these pressing global problems of human survival, development and welfare more effectively.

The proper understanding of the processes of change calls for the generation of the kind of new knowledge and the development of the appropriate tools that will be required to help to solve these problems. For these reasons, in addition to the efforts at the international level by inter-governmental bodies, a truly global perspective from which to view these problems must be developed based on the solidarity of all humankind rather than solely on the perspectives of nation states. It is in the development of such global views that the United Nations University, as an integral part of the United Nations system and as part of the international academic community, could make a modest but, it is hoped, significant contribution.

The Charter of the University charges it to "devote its work to research into pressing global problems," the problems I have mentioned. In this way, we are linked to the process of trying to understand societal change in its global context, and as a consequence moved to reorient our work through the Medium-Term Perspective for 1982-1987. In this regard, we are very much encouraged by Unesco's own formulation of its Medium-Term Plan for 1984-1989 that presents areas of work encompassing global concerns commensurate with those described in the University's MTP. We moreover welcome the opportunities that will be made possible by the Medium-Term Plan for major programmatic collaboration in areas of mutual interest as this will strengthen relations between Unesco and the United Nations University. The desirability, and indeed necessity, of such collaboration was stressed by the representative of the Director-General during the last session of the United Nations University Council in June of this year. As examples of possible areas of co-operation, he cited several major programmes of the Unesco Medium-Term Plan: Reflection on World Problems and Future-Oriented Studies; The Sciences and Their Applications to Development; Information Systems and Access to Knowledge, Principles, Methods and Strategies of Action for Development; and Peace, International

Understanding, the Freedom of Peoples and Human Rights. The representative of the Director-General also drew attention to the collaboration that already exists between Unesco and the UNU and emphasized how this had been strengthened in recent years in areas such as human rights, ecological science, and information overload and underuse. In addition, he drew attention to activities in connection with the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission, Unesco's Man and the Biosphere programme, such as the UNU's publications ASSET and Mountain Research and Development, and work in the ACC Sub-committee on Nutrition and the ACC Task Force on Science and Technology.

Looking at the areas of possible collaboration many of which have been specified even more clearly in the Director-General's report we can see where the University, given its academic role in the United Nations system, can contribute to the efforts of Unesco through its research and training capabilities. More specifically, it seems to me that the kind of research being undertaken by the Development Studies Division of the University, which is concerned with looking at global problems as they are manifested at the local and country level, could, for example, make an important contribution to Unesco's work in the major programme concerned with the sciences and their applications to development. The University's Regional and Global Studies Division, which examines the regional implications of global problems, could have substantial input to offer to Unesco's major programme dealing with peace, international understanding, the freedom of peoples and human rights. The involvement of the Global Learning Division, which is concerned largely with communications problems and communicating the results of the University's work to various users, could well be in the major programme treating information systems and access to knowledge.

The representative of the Director-General as well as the Director-General's report now, stressed the need for consultation on how to proceed with further collaboration. I agree with this. I think that, given the immediacy of our task, we should establish contacts at an operational level, with Vice-Rectors of the University meeting with their counterparts in Unesco. One such meeting, in fact, has already taken place. The Vice-Rector of the Regional and Global Studies Division recently met with Unesco representatives to discuss the possibilities of joint scholarly meetings with UNU participation or sponsorship.

The UNU Council and I, and our colleagues at the University Centre, fully support the expressed desire of the Executive Board of Unesco and the Director-General to ensure close co-operation with Unesco in our various programme activities. Moreover, I agree with the view that the establishment of the United Nations University was in no way designed to restrict the areas of competence of Unesco or of other United Nations organizations. The converse ought also to be true, for the United Nations University has a clear mandate in its Charter adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. Thus, we regard our role and interrelations with the United Nations family as complementary and synergistic in nature and geared to the service of the United Nations system and the peoples of the United Nations.

The evidence of the past year based on the progress the University has made indicates that it has already begun to find its niche in the complex of approaches that are in various ways trying to understand the intricate web of interlocking concerns that challenge society today. I believe we can say with increasing confidence that the University is beginning to overcome the inevitable marginality which any young institution suffers.

I would like to illustrate some of our activities and involvements to make two important points. First, I think they show the distinctive manner and strength that the University has evolved in addressing the global concerns that it shares with other scientists, scholars and policy-makers. This includes the capability and credibility we have developed also to be involved with other, still-emerging, problems such as climate changes brought on by human activity in tropical forests, the learning to tend the global commons together or how to ensure equitable benefits from breakthroughs in the field of microprocessors or biotechnology. Second, I think these illustrations help to make clear the emerging profile of the University as an institution centred on three core concerns: (1) peace and conflict resolution; (2) development in a changing world; and (3) science and technology for human welfare.

The continuing drift toward anarchy and chaos in today's world and the malfunctioning international economic system are two processes that reinforce and feed on each other. The linkages between the two processes are becoming more and more apparent and improved understanding of these linkages will be central to any effort to arrest or improve the situation. This has led the Independent Commission on International Development, widely known as the Brandt Commission, and the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues, known as the Palme Commission, to plan to meet jointly in January next year. As a member of the Palme Commission, I will be attending the meeting. This will ensure a UNU role in what could be a significant examination of the interrelationships between the persistent economic crisis, with only slight signs of recovery, and the burden of the arms race, nuclear as well as conventional, with a resultant distortion of the world and national economic systems.

In addition, the worsened economic conditions and growing political disorder has set upwards of 16 million refugees adrift around the globe. An Independent Commission on International Humanitarian Issues was convened by Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan in Geneva in July to consider such problems as disaster relief, the problems of unprotected persons in special situations, and the observance of humanitarian norms in times of armed conflict. I serve as a member of the Commission representing the UNU. The Commission will report the results of its findings to the General Assembly. Humanitarian issues are also involved in our project on migration, an activity in which we are dealing with some of the major processes of international and national change taking place in the world.

The continuing economic disorder badly requires some sort of common diagnosis and consensus on what kind of concerted action is needed to

correct the present unacceptable situation. The University has already begun to contribute to this search, I believe, in various ways. One was the brainstorming session we organized in New York in February to examine the implications for third world countries of the prospects of continued low growth in the OECD countries even after the recession has ended. Participants included leading scholars from North and South and East and West. Through such sessions, we hope to bring additional perspectives of the world academic community to the United Nations on emerging global problems. There was general consensus that the impact of the recession on the South would be long-term and was already devastating. A discussion of de-linking from the North brought forth general agreement that this might not be a viable strategy because of, among a number reasons, the South's need for access to science and technology. It was further realized that we lack the conceptual framework that would enable us to link the impact of the present economic crisis on the third world with the question of economic restructuring in the North and the need for structural reform in the South. Lastly, the role of effective South-South co-operation was emphasized.

The discussions at the Non-Aligned Conference in New Delhi in March also showed this need for new theoretical approaches and the identification of new negotiating packages. All of which reinforced our own convictions that a major thrust in development efforts must be improved understanding of the international economy. This, in turn, strengthened our belief that another significant contribution the UNU could make in this area would be the establishment of a research and training centre with a fresh focus on problems of the global economy. The institution has come to be known by its acronym WIDER - World Institute for Development Economics Research. The institute would be the focal point for a worldwide research and training network on economic and related issues. Over the past few months we have been engaged in negotiations with several governments which have expressed interest in hosting WIDER.

Our activities in peace and conflict resolution have evoked a positive response in the form of invitations to collaborate with us; they have also attracted external funds. One component is concerned with enhancing capacity to deal with causes of conflict. In addition, our proposed project on regional security problems has elicited much interest.

We have now reached agreement on joint activities in the field of regional security and peace studies with the International Association of Universities (IAU). This work, which is being organized by the Regional and Global Studies Division, will also involve the International Social Science Council and there will be collaboration in this area with the United Nations Secretariat in preparing for the International Year of Peace. We are also now actively preparing for a November Tokyo Seminar on Peace, Science and Technology, the second in this series of annual seminars on peace and conflict resolution.

Yet another example of where the University is located in the complex of pressing global problems is the deepening crisis in Africa. The first

activity in this part of the world already under way, in collaboration with UNITAR, is an African regional perspective project as part of a larger activity involving the perspectives and priorities for development in Africa, the Arab World, Asia, and Latin America.

The second activity is our proposal for a research and training centre in Africa for natural resources which continues to arouse great interest. Again, the institute would be the focal point of a network throughout Africa. The proposed institute received full support at a consultative meeting we held in Nairobi in January. A number of African governments have expressed interest in hosting the institute and have indicated their willingness to contribute substantial sums.

In a third important African activity, the EEC Commissioner for Development has informed us that our Regional Food and Nutrition Project, which will also involve a network of institutions, is now under active consideration for funding. The project has been developed in co-operation with the Association of African Universities which will assume executive agency responsibility for the project to obtain EEC funding under the terms of the Lomé Convention.

Our work in the search for more satisfactory development strategies, organized chiefly by the Regional and Global Studies Division, has already stimulated efforts by other institutions to move into this area of research, and thus bolster the efforts to bring about a more humane social sciences with a tighter focus on people and their indigenous needs and aspirations. One example of this type of study, in our Arab Alternative Futures Project, is the sub-project on "The Islamic Revival Movements," a joint activity entirely financed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. Another would be the Rockefeller Foundation project on new types of development research in Africa and Asia to which the University has made some intellectual input.

Explorations by the Global Learning Division into questions about the management of complexity or the legal issues raised in the management of such global commons as space, radio frequencies, river basins, and trans-border data flows have stimulated much excitement and active response. These are frontier areas of potentially great significance for third world nations if they are to lessen and not increase their dependencies on the North.

Because the University is called upon to address global issues, it is imperative that it should undertake, as a continuous process, a large number of exploratory activities. It is primarily in this way that it can maintain its relevance and the capacity to respond to issues of global significance, both old and new. Of course, some of these exploratory activities may not necessarily lead to specific programmes or activities, and others may be implemented if extra-budgetary funding becomes available. The heartening response to these exploratory activities by scholars, institutions and governments with proposals for collaboration, including

activities funded by external sources at no cost to the University, shows how explorations have paid off. They have led to promise of closer ties and greater co-operative efforts in a number of nations.

In Spain, for example, following initial activities and various consultations with government and academic leaders, a formal meeting was organized in Madrid on the 14th and 15th of September to consider in detail various proposals for co-operation between the UNU and Spain. It was a fruitful meeting and details of the decisions are now being worked out.

In India, the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) has offered its co-operation on research into various scientific and technological concerns that figure in our programme. A good example of the sort of collaboration that a country like India can offer the UNU was provided last year in the training arrangements that the Central Food Technological Research Institute in Mysore, a University associated institution, developed to build up staff capabilities at the Food Technology Development Centre in Bogor, Indonesia. A number of other institutions in developing countries have expressed interest in similar South-South "twinning" operations.

During a mission to Canada in May, we had the opportunity to meet with Prime Minister Trudeau and the Governor-General of Canada, both of whom showed great interest in the work of the University, with a view to establishing collaborative relations and obtaining support for our activities. The University has taken a major step in developing activities with Canada with the signing of an agreement in Tokyo in June with the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) on co-operation and joint financing of an international energy study group consisting of eminent third world scientists that will focus on energy technology assessment, and on reviewing energy research needs, priorities and resources in the third world. We are pleased with the existing continuing collaboration between Unesco and the UNU in the areas of renewable energies and energy planning and management (a representative of Unesco participated in the UNU workshop in Beijing in March 1983). There are regular contacts in Paris which will make it possible to increase this collaboration, particularly through the extension of ASSET, for which we are grateful of Unesco's support.

We have already co-operated with IDRC this past year on problems of research organization and management in the third world, particularly to meet the requirements of small and medium scale industries. A global workshop organized by the Development Studies Division was held in Ottawa with regional workshops held simultaneously and linked with a teleconferencing system in Bogota, Nairobi and Singapore.

A set of agreements establishing closer academic co-operation and extending existing institutional agreements with China was signed in May when the Secretary-General of the Chinese Academy of Sciences was in Tokyo.

There has also been growing interaction with the Eastern European nations. There have been recent visits by the Regional and Global Studies Division to the Soviet Academy of Sciences in Moscow to explore the possibilities of more extensive collaboration with institutes and research centres in the Soviet Union; agreement was reached on the participation of the Soviet Academy in three University seminars later this year. A former Council member and a UNU staff member visited Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and the German Democratic Republic to discuss with government and academic leaders potential opportunities for participation in the University's programme and institutional development.

I cannot, of course, leave any discussion of contributions and interests of countries without mention of our host country, Japan, which has done so much to make the UNU a reality. There has been heartening progress over the year in the planning process of our permanent headquarters site. We have also continued to expand our contacts with Japanese institutions and scholars in a variety of ways.

A valuable meeting was held in Zurich, Switzerland, in June, where we met with a cross-section of representatives of European universities and research institutions. We had very useful discussions of possibilities for co-operation with special reference to the subject of global problems and global learning. The Zurich session, was a good example of the benefit the University gains from meetings with various academic communities and of the UNU outreach activities being developed by the Global Learning Division. While we try to limit the number of meetings and symposia which we organize, the importance of our holding a fairly large number of meetings should be clearly recognized.

The University is a new institution. It is necessary for it to become known in order that it can gain the confidence and the support of governments, universities, institutions, organizations, and individual scholars and scientists. One-time meetings for this purpose will not suffice - it is necessary that the work of the University should be brought to the continuing attention of such bodies. It is only in this way that the outreach activities of the University, which the Council has endorsed as extremely important, can be successfully carried out. These meetings are also important to develop the growing constituencies for work of the University over and above the strictly programmatic work. Some of these constituencies are vital for the fund-raising efforts of the University and can help put the UNU on the map, as it were.

Positioned as it is at the intersection of the international academic community and the United Nations system, the University's efforts at developing co-operative ties have involved not only colleagues in universities, but also those within the United Nations family. In this connection, I have already mentioned the opportunities offered in the recently adopted Unesco Medium-Term Plan for programmatic collaboration and strengthened relations between Unesco and the UNU. In the same vein, the report of the newly appointed Executive Director of UNITAR to his Executive Board, along

with decisions taken by the Board on the future work of UNITAR, afford a welcome opportunity for strengthening programmatic relationships between our two organizations.

The continuing world economic situation has, as is generally known, put a damper on the amount of funds governments are willing or able to earmark for international organizations. This has forced us to seek alternative means of building up much needed resources. Over the last several years we have broadened our fund-raising strategies in the direction of seeking support for endowed research and training centres and I believe the substantial progress we have made with, for example, WIDER and the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa indicates that this broadening in strategy is beginning to pay off.

All in all then, I think we can say with some confidence that we have begun to move, and in the right direction, in the implementation of the Medium-Term Perspective. In addition to ongoing and new programme activities we have also begun to move in new directions in our training efforts. We have been exploring the possibilities of strengthening the interdisciplinarity of the training programme through the establishment of inter-institutional training networks. The University now has 32 associated institutions and more than 100 research and training units carrying out its work in more than 60 countries. The number of UNU Fellows presently in training is 58, and 350 have completed training. During the year, 41 workshops, seminars, symposia, and specific meetings were held, primarily in developing countries. The University also published or co-published 54 titles, with a notable increase in monographs with broad appeal.

Thus in many ways and at many levels I believe that the emerging profile of the University is becoming clearly defined. We have begun to attract and stimulate the interest of other organizations, universities and individual scholars. From this the parallel activities, which I described to the Executive Board last year, are beginning to emerge, additional links are being forged with our United Nations system counterparts, and the University Centre in Tokyo has furthered strengthened its intellectual capacity. I think it fair to say that the developments so far have justified the correctness of the course set by the Medium-Term Perspective.

Thank you very much.

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