

ORAL STATEMENT BY SOEDJATMOKO  
RECTOR OF THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY  
BEFORE THE SECOND COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
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Mr. Chairman and Distinguished Delegates,

It is my pleasure and honor once again to make a statement, on behalf of the United Nations University, before the second committee of the General Assembly. First, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Mr. Bryce Harland on his election as chairman of this body. I am certain that the deliberations of this Committee will greatly benefit from his wisdom and guidance.

Mr. Chairman, you have before you the Annual Report of the Council of the United Nations University for 1983-1984 and the text of my presentation of the report. I would like now, with your permission, to make a short statement to single out some of the most important points of the report and to try to give you an idea of the kind of thinking that goes into the University work that makes it at the same time an academic institution and a United Nations organization.

The first point is that, the University is now at the midway point of its Medium-Term Perspective - the MTP - which was initiated to help the University. The 6-year MTP, which began in 1982 and ends in 1987 appears to be an course.

The second point is that the Report of the Council of the University describes the University's progress in the past three years in trying to fulfill the MTP objectives, which are: (a) to develop a University programme focussed on the five themes of the MTP, (b) to pursue a new phase of institutional development, emphasizing the exploration and establishment of the University's own research and training centres, and (c) to obtain supplementary programme support in addition to the University's Endowment Fund. My presentation on the report in describing the development of a programme based on the MTP themes highlights a selection of activities from the report and tries to show how they link our research concerns in development theory, which is also a major concern of the UN system, and some of its practical policy implications. The presentation also indicates where UNU activities are undertaken in conjunction with other United Nations agencies or are contributing to other efforts within the United Nations system.

There has been co-operation, for example, with UNESCO in a wide range of activities, from support for ASSET, University's journal on alternative energy, to co-operation on a workshop on Effective Communication for Nutrition in Primary Health Care and on the project on Information Overload and Information Underuse, with FAO in the area of traditional food technologies, with UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO in work on nutrition, with the Outer Space Affairs Division which provided support for a symposium on maintaining outer space for peaceful uses organized by the University and other organizations, with INSTRAW on work in our project on Household, Gender and Age and with the Preparatory Committee of the United Nations in connection with preparatory meetings on

regional peace and security as input for the International Year of Peace. The Report of the Council shows where we have also co-operated in our work with the international academic community.

The third point is that the presentation attempts to show how the books we have published and our training activities have been the principal practical manifestations of our research. We published over 40 scholarly publications during the year. Most of these were books produced with commercial publishers. By 1 June this year a total of 402 UNU Fellows had completed training. I may add that our training programme has reached a stage where more and more former UNU Fellows are being involved in ongoing UN University research.

The fourth point touches on the progress we have made in setting up our own research and training centres, and the added benefit this has had in helping to stimulate fund-raising activities. The Board of WIDER, the World Institute for Development Economics, is now complete and we hope to have a Director soon. In addition to the generous pledge from the Government of Finland for WIDER, we have the pledge of the Government of the Ivory Coast for INRA, the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa. The Government of France, together with a number of other governments and international organizations, has also shown great interest towards setting up INRA.

Mr. Chairman, I would like at this point to mention the continuous and generous support and interest of the Government of our host country, Japan, and of the Japanese people. Following the agreement of the

Council of the University at its 23rd session that the proposed research and training Centre in Japan could be an institute of advanced studies, and that its establishment could be preceded by a programme of activities, local UNU supporters in Japan organized a foundation to help build a financial base and broader support for the RTC. The Foundation is headed by a leading and respected industrialist and includes leading figures in the academic, business and political worlds. There has also been notable progress in plans by the Government of Japan to complete the permanent headquarters of the University.

I have spoken to you as the head of a United Nations organization in summarizing briefly our progress during the year. Allow me now to wear for a few minutes my hat as rector of a university to try to show you how UNU as a university contributes to other efforts within the United Nations, and, how it tries to involve a range of disciplines, from the natural to the social sciences, in contributing to practical solutions that the United Nations is seeking to problems of global dimension.

I will take an activity that is typically one of the concerns of an academic institution while at the same time an aspect of the problems confronting the United Nations. The sub-project on the Management of Complexity is trying to look at ways of understanding and dealing with complex natural and social system. This may seem at the outset to be a very "intangible" contribution to very tangible and real problems. I would like to recall some words of the Secretary-General in his report this year which emphasized that "many of the contributions of the

United Nations are in less tangible forms: for example, the extent to which the United Nations has succeeded in raising global consciousness on key issues".

Complexity confronts us at every level of the natural world and of human society - from the global to the national to the local and, indeed, down to the turmoil and fragmentation that so frequently now occupy the individual human spirit. Our essential task at the University is to try to understand better how humankind might survive and manage its affairs in a world that is becoming increasingly interdependent while at the same time honouring indigenous value in the myriad cultures that together make up this world. By bringing together evolving views on complexity, we are hoping to develop deeper insight into the problems of the management of change in development in a world that is both interdependent, pluralistic and in a state of profound change.

We are, therefore, interested in complexity for two main reasons: for the inherent significance of the study of complexity as a major step forward in the evolution of science and for the insights to be gained that have an important potential for practical application.

It has become quite clear that the complexities connected with very rapid and profound social and cultural change which are part of the development process, pose new challenges to governance. One important dimension of the development process, both locally and globally, is how to reconcile the need for self-management and freedom, on the one hand, with the need for the most rational allocation of resources at the national and international level, on the other.

Therefore, we must learn to understand and manage complex, often unstable, systems while respecting the autonomy of distinct, though interdependent, processes and elements within these systems. We will have to rethink our attitudes toward order and disorder, and consider the levels of disorder we can accommodate in a humane manner, without recourse to oppression and violence. For this, we need to draw upon the insights of all cultures, analyzing approaches to complexity in traditions other than those of the Western, classical, scientific universe of discourse.

The first venture of the University into this new domain was designed to provide at least a partial mapping of actual states-of-the-art in thinking and research with regard to complexity, the behaviour of complex dynamic systems as they have emerged in different disciplines and areas of research. Thus, a University sponsored symposium on the management of complexity was held at Montpellier from 9 to 11 May this year which brought together eminent representatives of these disciplines who are working on complexity. It may interest you to know that the media in France devoted considerable coverage to this event, including Le Monde, which gave it a full page, Le Nouvel Observateur, and Radio France-Culture.

Following the symposium it was agreed that it was of utmost importance for the University to demonstrate how the concepts developed in the field of complexity could be applied practically, and, in doing so, to focus on a case study where primary data had already been collected. Such a case study should concern a non-equilibrium, dynamic system, involving ecological, economic, political and social issues and,

preferably, an international resource management or "global commons" issue and the problem of governance.

Together with a number of major oceanographic institutes, we are now looking at the possibility of focussing on fishery in a specific geographic area because this would involve international resource assessment and allocation structure which is of interest to a number of countries. The complexity approach should help provide new insights to current policies which have sometimes led to overfishing certain species, collapse of some eco-systems, and closure of fisheries.

The project concept would also include comparative studies in both industrialized and developing countries, and would touch on self-organization and diversity within an overall fluctuating framework and involve questions of immediate economic and policy importance.

Mr. Chairman, as I have said in the past, we are basically still a young institution. Still, we have begun to achieve some results and are moving toward achieving more as we pursue our Charter objectives. We are fully aware of the difficulties we will have to face in pursuing our goals in this time of worldwide economic problems. Nevertheless, as I have indicated, we see new resource prospects changing as we develop new activities and the new research and training centres to attract potential supporters and donors. The Report of the Council before you indicates where we are. Our primary objective now is to complete the work set out in the remaining period of the MTP. Mr. Chairman, I am grateful for this opportunity to address the Committee and, as in previous years, I know that the University will benefit from the wisdom of its observations and discussions. Thank you.