

RECTOR'S ORAL REPORT  
AT THE 25TH SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF THE UNITED NATIONS UNIVERSITY  
AT EL COLEGIO DE MEXICO  
8 JULY 1985

I am sure that I speak for all of us when I say how fortunate we feel to be holding a Council session at El Colegio de Mexico. It is the first time that the Council has met in a Third World university, and the excellence of this institution is a great source of confidence in the capacity of the developing countries to find solutions to the problems that confront them and the international system as a whole. We owe a strong vote of thanks to our Chairman, Professor Urquidi, for initiating the move to hold the session here. The warm hospitality, efficient organization, and enthusiastic help we have received here at El Colegio is a splendid reflection of Mexico's intellectual and human resources.

I would like to express, on behalf of all of my colleagues at the United Nations University, a warm welcome to two new members of the Council, Dr. Helge Gyllenberg and Dr. Gerald Lalor. I should also like to take this opportunity to join in welcoming the new Director of WIDER, Dr. Lalith Jayawardena, who is attending his first Council session, and to Dr. Nevin Scrimshaw, who has returned to Tokyo after a long association with the UNU, as Director of the Development Studies Division on an interim basis. As you know, Vice-Rector Miguel Urrutia left the University in April to take up the post of Vice-President at the Inter-American Development Bank.

With sadness, I note the death of a valued collaborator of the UNU: Martha Stuart, who from an early stage in the Medium Term Perspective, helped us develop the concept of the village video network and trained many villagers and others from a number of countries in the use of video as a development tool.

I would like to say a few words on the nature of this Council session before I go into the substance of my report. First, let me point out that this is the first summer session of the Council at which the Annual Report of the Council is not being written and discussed. This is a result of the decision taken last year by the Council to accept the recommendation of ECOSOC to change the Council's reporting-period to conform to the calendar year. Accordingly, the draft Annual Report for 1985 will be presented at the Twenty-sixth session in December of this year.

Subsequently, ECOSOC has passed a resolution requesting that, starting in 1986, the UNU report biannually instead of annually to ECOSOC, in even-numbered years. The General Assembly has endorsed this procedure for the report on the UNU to the Second Committee as well. The resolution, however, raises a number of constitutional and procedural questions which we expect will be clarified in the next few months. The representative of the Secretary-General will give us some information about the current state of affairs, which will enable the Council, in accordance with its Charter obligations, to express its views on this matter.



Among the major items for discussion at this session are a paper that I have prepared on networking in response to the Council's request. The paper explains the centrality of networking as the major *modus operandi* of the UNU. It gives an account of the various kinds of networks that have emerged, as well as of some of the policy issues that are bound to have an impact on the further evolution of the UNU. I will have more to say on this subject when I introduce the paper for the Council's consideration.

Also on the agenda for this session are the progress reports on INRA, the research and training centre in Japan, and the headquarters building. In addition, we will discuss a paper on fund-raising, and progress reports on two feasibility studies, one on initiating an undergraduate program of education on global issues and one on the possibility of the UNU conferring academic degrees.

The preliminary draft Programme and Budget for 1986-87 is not on the agenda for this session, though it was discussed by the Committee on Institutional and Programmatic Development and the Committee on Finance and Budget. I would like to emphasize, as I did to the Committees, that this document is provisional at this stage. The final draft will reflect the comments made by the Council Committees, as well as the revisions that emerge from our internal planning processes at the University Centre. The final draft will be presented to the Council for its consideration and adoption at the twenty-sixth session.

I know that the Council must be very eager to hear about WIDER, particularly since the Director has been appointed and the first Board meeting held. Dr. Jayawardena will give a progress report on WIDER, indicating the research themes that were adopted by the WIDER Board at its meeting in May. Dr. Jayawardena will brief the Council on WIDER's activities on a regular basis each December.

Allow me now to describe, briefly, a selection of the activities that have taken place in the past six months, that is, since the twenty-fourth session of the Council took place last December

In January, the second of a series of four UNU seminars on Regional Peace and Security was held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to discuss African security problems. The series of seminars was planned in consultation with the United Nations Secretariat for the International Year of Peace. Part of its purpose was to provide scholarly background information for the regional, inter-governmental meetings organized by the UN in preparation for the Year of Peace in 1986. You may recall that the first of these four seminars was held in Costa Rica at the end of last year. The third seminar, on Asian peace and security, was held in Tashkent, USSR in April, and the series was completed in May with a seminar in Vienna, Austria, on Europe's role in the security of other regions. The rapporteurs of all four seminars have been asked to participate in the UN intergovernmental meetings as experts.

An exploratory workshop was held in January at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, on the search for economic theories that integrate new insights into the development process. Designed to have a catalytic role in



promoting innovative research, the workshop took up, among other topics, international finance and debt, new directions in macro-economics, household economics, the place of agriculture in development economics, and international trade and industrial strategy.

At the end of February, 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 have already been revised and edited for publication.

The third section of the project on Perceptions of Desirable Societies began in March with a planning meeting in Bangkok. Buddhist scholars, activists and clergy from eight countries participated in the session, which was actually held in a Buddhist temple-- a first for the UNU. The Mahayana, Theravada, and Tibetan traditions were represented, as well as the more syncretic approaches developed largely in the West.

His Eminence Jaime Cardinal Sin, Archbishop of Manila, inaugurated the UNU Annual Lecture Series in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania in May. The theme of his address was "Poverty and Human Rights". I believe all of you have received copies of this thoughtful and stimulating statement.

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. Following the meeting, the UNU co-sponsored with the Commission and the Japanese National Institute for Research Advancement a one-day forum on humanitarian issues for an invited audience of Japanese academics, policy-makers, and journalists; and members of the diplomatic core and foreign press. The forum was also the occasion for the release of the Japanese edition of the Commission's first publication, which deals with the crisis in Africa. It is entitled Famine: A Man-Made Disaster.

The second of a series of regional training colleges in micro-processor technology was held in Bogota, Colombia in June. These five-week courses complement the training programmes at the International Center for Theoretical Physics 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 Yaoundé.

An international directory of anthropologists and social scientists who work on food and nutrition is now available for users. The directory, which was compiled by the International Union of Anthropology and Ethnography and the International Union of Nutritional Sciences, is stored in a computer at the MIT/Harvard International Food and Nutrition program. It contains information about individual specialists, including their academic and field experience. It can be accessed directly by computer; print-outs are also available.



We have reached agreement with the Government of the Netherlands on the terms of a feasibility study to assess the viability of a programme of research and training on employment creation in relation to new technologies such as micro-electronics and biotechnology. We expect to have an exchange of letters with the Dutch in the very near future to formalize this agreement, at which time we will appoint the coordinator for the study. Both the UNU and the Dutch government hope and expect that this study will lead to the establishment of a research and training center in the Netherlands.

At the 24th session of the Council, the Council asked me to describe, at this session, how the UNU is responding to the crisis in Africa. We have prepared an information paper for you that summarizes our major activities in Africa. However, it is not strictly accurate to describe these activities as responses to the crisis; most of them were planned or in place well before the unfolding of the current acute phase of the African crisis, and have demonstrated their relevance as the dimensions of the crisis have become widely known.

In a number of areas, ongoing UNU activities anticipated the crisis in Africa, and have made it possible for us to come forward with timely analyses-- done by Africans-- of its root causes. We are also ready, through INRA and such projects as the African Regional Food and Nutrition project, to come forward with practical research and training activities that can help lay the foundations for the renewed development effort that must arise out of the relief phase of response to the crisis.

Our consultations with senior officials in Africa and in the UN system have confirmed, through expression of the expectations that they have with respect to the UNU, that our responsibility is to address ourselves to long term solutions, based on lessons drawn from the particularly disastrous confluence of natural and man-made circumstances that afflicts Africa today. This we can do most effectively, I believe, by continuing our focus on capacity-building in African institutions and analysis of specific policy issues. Let me first summarize our ongoing activities in Africa, and then explain how new activities will develop this emphasis.

As you know, the UNU is continuing to prepare the ground for the establishment of the Institute for Natural Resources in Africa. We have prepared a prospectus for INRA, which summarizes the salient features of the proposal. The Government of France hosted a technical meeting on the INRA proposal in June. It was attended by representatives of the World Bank, UNDP, the EEC, the OECD, the ECA, the African Development Bank, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and of the governments of France, the Ivory Coast, Italy, Japan, Zambia and Zimbabwe. This meeting advised the UNU on the final revision of the proposal, which will be presented to a pledging conference of potential donors, which is expected to be held in Paris in November of this year.

Another very practical research and training activity that the UNU is ready to implement is a joint project of the UNU and the Association of African Universities on African Regional Food and Nutrition. The aim of this 5-year project is to augment scientific and institutional resources for research



and development, planning, training, and related advisory services on food and nutrition in Africa. The African member states of the Lome Convention have requested complete funding for the project from the European Development Fund of the EEC. The first phase of the project will concentrate on post-harvest food conservation and food-processing technologies in relation to nutritional needs, taking into account the work of others in food strategies and policies and in nutrition and health.

As plans for the establishment of INRA and the Food and Nutrition project progress, the UNU's regular programme activities in Africa continue to develop. Among them is the Regional Perspectives project on Nation-building or Transnationalization in Africa. It began in 1982 with the main objective of studying the question of whether actual development strategies in Africa contribute to self-reliant development, which is a necessary condition for nation-building, or rather encourage the integration of Africa in the dominant global process of transnationalization. With a co-ordinating unit in Dakar, Senegal, 36 researchers from 24 African countries are engaged in the project, working specifically on three themes: 1) the state and the peasant, 2) the state, natural resources and industrialization strategies, and 3) the state, the social components of the nation, and world conflicts.

The Special Committee on Africa is a group of senior African scholars who, under the auspices of the UNU, are attempting through collaborative research and reflection to map a more stable future for the continent defined by and for the aspirations of Africans. The Secretariat and the Project Director are based in Nairobi, which was the site of the first symposium organized by the Committee in March.

The activities I have just mentioned are those that deal exclusively with Africa. Throughout the programme of the University, in our projects that deal with peace and conflict resolution, food, energy, natural resources, economic issues, human and social development, and science and technology, African scholars and African problems are engaged.

In addition to the research projects, the UNU has awarded fellowships to more than 160 African scholars. The success of this training effort is marked by an unusually high rate of return of fellows to their home countries, and by a pattern of career development among them that points to the relevance of their training experiences. Our activities have also given us the benefit of links with a great number of African academics and policy-makers.

The UNU will build on these contacts, research findings and experiences in Africa in designing new programme activities. We have decided that the implementation of the proposed Advanced Seminar on Global Problems should, in the first instance, be organized in cooperation with African universities, in order to provide a setting within which young African scholars and policy-makers can deepen and develop their analysis of the issues facing that continent. The advanced seminar format would encourage the exploration of the natural, economic and socio-political roots of African problems, their complex inter-relationships, and their linkages with the international system.



We are also determined to increase our efforts to strengthen biotechnology research in Africa. Both INRA and the Regional Food and Nutrition project are institutional developments with important contributions to make in this area. We are also planning further project activity in biotechnology in Africa. We are in the process of identifying African institutions with competence in this field and devising ways to assist them in building their professional staff and other institutional capacities. Research will be initiated in areas of immediate practical importance, such as solid-state fermentation to improve the quality of foods, and microbial processing of organic wastes into useful byproducts.

WIDER is also involved in the overall thrust of the University's emphasis on Africa. One of the first research topics selected will deal with food strategies and agricultural policies in the poorest developing countries, most of which of course are in Sub-Saharan Africa. The proposed research will be comprised of a number of country case-studies in Africa to analyze both the shortcomings of domestic policy and the adverse impact of international economic conditions.

The years 1986 and 1987 are the final biennium of the Medium Term Perspective. I see the coming biennium as a period of completion, consolidation, programmatic and organizational review, planning, and shifts in resource allocation. A number of research projects will be concluded in this two-year period, and their results published and disseminated. This will, obviously, place far greater demands upon our Information and Academic Services than they have yet experienced. Both will need correspondingly greater resources-- particularly human resources-- and will have to use those resources creatively and efficiently.

The presentation and dissemination of our research findings to a variety of audiences in useful and accessible forms is not, however, a task that can be left solely to Information and Academic Services. The entire programme staff must be involved in the effort, and this effort must be integrated into every activity of the University from the planning stage forward. The Council has asked me to present a paper on dissemination at the next Council, and I shall be pleased to do so.

Our research findings may have their greatest multiplier effect through the training activities of the University. Efforts to intensify and streamline the fellowship programme will also involve the entire staff of the UNU, and should not be compartmentalized under the sole responsibility of the training officer.

The first Medium Term Perspective 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. These clusters have evolved almost organically out of the broad research front established by the first MTP, and I believe they indicate the direction that the second MTP should take.

This process of coalescence will enable the UNU, over the next biennium and beyond, to reduce the number of discrete activities and to consolidate our efforts. We need to move at a deliberate pace into newly defined problem areas-- areas defined in large part by the findings of our previous efforts. We also need to leave some problem areas behind-- leave them, one hopes, enriched by our involvement, with networks, practical findings, and new perspectives.

As our activities are consolidated, the need for intellectual leadership from the Centre is more crucial than ever before. The first MTP was in a sense a scanning exercise, and as such its large number of diverse projects required a great deal of programming and administrative activity. The process of completion, dissemination, consolidation, and planning that I have outlined will require less of this but a great deal more intellectual leadership. The priority of the next biennium should be to consolidate the UNU's ability to fulfill that challenge.