

Oral Report of the Rector
to the 26th Session of the United Nations University Council
Tokyo, Japan
9 December, 1985

I would like to join in welcoming all of you, Council members and observers, to Tokyo once again-- an especially warm welcome to those members who are here to attend the last Council session of their terms. We are very deeply grateful to you for your guidance over the past six years, and for your dedication to the progress of the University. We will have several occasions on which to thank you during the course of this week, so I want to offer now just a first, brief word of appreciation.

One of the highlights of this Council session, I feel sure, will be the Council colloquium, as part of our celebration of the tenth anniversary of the United Nations University. It will be a retrospective and prospective view of the UNU after its first decade. Our distinguished speakers will be Roger Gaudry, first Chairman of the University Council and a member of the founding committee of the UNU; James Hester, the first Rector; and C.V. Narasimhan, who as Chef du Cabinet and later Under Secretary-General for Interagency Affairs and Co-ordination, was a key figure in the establishment of the UNU and the first representative of the Secretary-General on the Council.

We also invited Mr. M'Bow, the Director-General of UNESCO, in his capacity as another key figure in the establishment of the United Nations University. As the Assistant Director-General for Education, he was the first representative of his predecessor as Director General of UNESCO on the Council. Unfortunately, Mr. M'Bow could not accept our invitation, and we will miss the opportunity to learn from his long perspective on the United Nations University. I personally am very much looking forward to this colloquium. I might add that we will hold a public commemoration of our tenth anniversary in the spring of next year.

The major agenda item for this Twenty-sixth session of the Council is the programme and budget for the 1986-87 biennium. You have the draft document before you for your consideration and adoption. As you know, the coming biennium completes the period of the first Medium Term Perspective. It therefore is planned as a period of convergence, consolidation and communication of results. With the last of these three elements in mind I will present, as requested at the last Council session, a paper on dissemination policy. This is a discussion paper and will be further refined and elaborated.

Another major item of business for this Council session is the preparation of the annual report of the Council. For the first time, we are preparing in December the original report for a full calendar year, thus finally bringing our reporting period into conformity with the recommendation of

ECOSOC which was accepted by the Council last year. I believe that this will make the progress of the UNU much easier to follow through the Annual Reports.

Last July, immediately following the 25th session of the Council, I reported to ECOSOC on the work of the UNU for the first time. We will report to ECOSOC now on a regular basis, as we do to the General Assembly through the Second Committee. The representative of the Secretary General will, I hope, bring us up to date on discussions in the Secretariat about rationalizing the reporting requirements of the UNU. The representative of the Director General of UNESCO may also wish to make some observations on this subject.

It has been only five months since our last Council meeting, but these have been busy and productive months for the UNU. I would like to draw your attention to a selection of our activities. Some of these have already been mentioned in the Committee on Institutional and Programmatic Development. I hope the members of that committee will bear with me.

Let me begin with a few highlights that took place immediately before our last Council session. The fourth and last seminar in a series on Regional Peace and Security was held in Austria in May. Its topic was Europe's role in the security of other regions. This seminar was preceded by others in Latin America, Africa, and Asia, all of which were planned to provide scholarly background material for the regional, intergovernmental meetings that were organized by the United Nations in preparation for the International Year of Peace in 1986. A selection of the papers prepared for the UNU seminars have been published in the journal Alternatives, and complete volumes for each region are being edited for publication next year.

The project on New Social Thought completed its activities in June. Three volumes are now being edited for publication.

In July, a meeting was held jointly with UNICEF to bring together the final reports of the project on the effects of nutrition and primary health care programmes on the health-seeking behavior 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.

The implementation phase of the project that is working to introduce biogas technology developed in China to Guyana was formally begun in July, as President Desmond Hoyte (who was at that time Prime Minister) inaugurated a biogas digester at a Guyanan farm. The construction of digesters is well ahead of schedule. We will probably build twice as many digesters in the first stage than we had envisioned. Four technicians from the Institute of Applied Science and Technology in Guyana have undergone training as UNU fellows at the Guangzhou Institute of Energy Conversion, an associated institution of the UNU. In addition, two Chinese engineers from the same institution went to Guyana to train local masons in digester construction using local

materials, and to advise on the modification of machinery to operate on biogas.

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. I have described this UNU activity at some length, because I believe that it illustrates and brings together so many of the important interests and modalities of the United Nations University.

In August, a workshop on food composition data was organized by the secretariat of the INFOODS project in conjunction with the International Congress of Nutrition. Most of the regional sub-groups of the project have met, some of them with financial support from the International Development Research Center (IDRC) of Canada. The working groups on Food Analysis Guidelines and Users' Needs have completed their reports, which are in the process of being published.

Our work in biotechnology continues to expand in scope and coverage. In August, 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. The research network on brucellosis (undulant fever) met in November to discuss research priorities and the establishment of computerized communications links.

Seven Japanese universities collaborated with the UNU in organizing a six-day seminar in September, on international organizations. One of the participating institutions treated the seminar as a credit course for students, and others have indicated that they will do so on the occasion of the next seminar. This year's theme was chosen partly in observance of the 40th anniversary of the United Nations. The lecturers included staff of the United Nations University, 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 East Asian Perspectives project held a meeting in October in Japan, at which the research teams from the Republic of Korea, China and Japan

presented their first results. For the first time, a research team from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also attended a meeting of this project.

A UNU task force met in Switzerland in November to develop a definition and concept of geophysics, a field which is in its infancy. 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 geophysics and the potential applications of it.

The UNU Special Committee on Africa held its final symposium in November, on the theme of science and technology in Africa in relation to development. The Committee is now preparing its final report based on the proceeding of this and a previous symposium. An important outcome of this project has been the emergence of a group of African intellectuals who have reflected collectively on the African crisis from a purely African perspective. Their enthusiasm for the recently concluded activities of the Committee has prompted some members of the group to declare their intention to continue deliberation along the same lines through their own means and through the co-operation of interested organizations. As the UNU moves to implement plans for the Advanced seminar on Global Problems, which will be aimed in the first instance at young African policy-makers, the conclusions of the Special Committee on Africa will provide valuable substance and guidelines.

The first phase of a research project that is attempting to apply the concepts and methodologies developed in the United Nations University project on complexity has been completed. Its results were reviewed at an expert group meeting in November. The study, of fisheries in Nova Scotia, has provoked interest in follow-up, comparative studies in national fisheries-research institutes in six countries. The basic text arising from the project's first theoretical seminar, The Science and Praxis of Complexity, has been published.

The eighteen-month study on the feasibility of establishing a research and training center on employment creation and new technologies has gotten underway this autumn with the receipt of the first installment of the Dutch contribution for its financing, and with the appointment of Dr. Charles Cooper as Director. Additional staff have been recruited to work with Dr. Cooper at the University of Limburgh. They are elaborating a detailed workplan for the study, which will involve collaboration with institutions in a number of developing countries.

I shall leave it to Dr. Jayawardena to present to you the highlights of WIDER's activities in the last five months. Let me simply say that great progress has been made in implementing a programme that was approved by the WIDER Board only seven months ago. I had the opportunity to attend one of the Director's advisory group meetings, in October, and I found it most impressive, both in its expertise and its enthusiasm for the new Institute.

Currently, there are one hundred and twenty-five UNU fellows in training; eighty-two fellows completed training programmes during the course of

1985. Fellowships this year were related to seven of the nine UNU programme areas, and we are increasingly trying to relate UNU research results to training. As our programme of research produces more and more results, we are developing and initiating new kinds of training activities, and new guidelines for implementing this area of our mandate. The establishment of a University-wide training unit and the appointment of a senior training officer to head it will help to strengthen our fellowship programme.

Dissemination of the results of our work and information about ongoing activities continue, making use of an expanding variety of techniques. The mainstay of our dissemination is of course academic publications-- books, our three journals (ASSET, Food and Nutrition Bulletin, and the Journal of Mountain Research) as well as the placement of articles in the journals of other publishers, monographs and research reports. In addition we are making growing use of both audio and audio-visual tapes. I have already mentioned our experiment in computer networking. We have held the second lecture in the UNU lecture series, participated in several major book fairs, and used the resources of our networks to spread the word of our activities. In addition, our own information publications, including Work in Progress, Update, the Focus series, and occasional publications reach various key audiences. As you know, we also continue to co-publish Development Forum. I would like to refer you to the annexes of the discussion paper on dissemination policy for more detailed information.

If these highlights have been rather lengthy and disjointed, I hope you will forgive my presentation, and recognize that it becomes more and more difficult to encapsulate the activities of the UNU in a short space or time. Our activities are wide-ranging and diverse, as the Medium Term Perspective adopted by this Council in 1981 concluded that they should be.

As we enter the last biennium of the MTP period, we have more and more tangible evidence that our work is being recognized and appreciated. Let me give you just a few recent examples. I have already cited President Hoyte of Guyana's public appreciation of the biogas project in his country, which he saw as contributing to self-sufficiency both on the household and the national levels. The project on the effects of deforestation on micro-environments in the humid tropics that the UNU is conducting jointly with the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture in Nigeria has generated such enthusiasm on the part of the new Director General of IITA that he took his entire Board to the site of the project for a full-day field trip on the occasion of his first meeting with the Board week before last.

Information Services recently received a letter from the Provost of Alma College in Michigan informing us of plans to make the five themes of the UNU programme the focus of a series of senior seminars. Their interest had been excited by recent issues of Work in Progress, which led them to inquire about how the college might become a cooperating center of the United Nations University. Further indication of the hopes and expectations that many colleges and universities have about the UNU was given at the meeting of the International Association of Universities last summer, where I was a keynote speaker.

Both Dr. Kwapong and I were besieged with inquiries about cooperation with the United Nations University.

The newly founded Third World Academy of Sciences asked the UNU to co-sponsor its first major conference, on South-South and South-North co-operation in science. We have also been encouraged by the increasing interest of several Indian institutions in a more systematic collaboration with the UNU, and are now drawing up specific proposals for implementation as a follow-up to the general agreement of co-operation with the Indian Council of Scientific and Industrial Research.

Finally, the work of the UNU is drawing attention from governments. The Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity, at its 21st session last July, passed a resolution endorsing the initiative to establish INRA and appealed to governments and other funding agencies to support INRA financially. Additionally, the President of Senegal, in his capacity as Chairman of the OAU, appealed to potential donor countries to support INRA.

The most visible form of recognition is, of course, financial support. In this area we are far from satisfied with our progress but we do have some reasons for encouragement. Over the period 1980-1985, the University attained an annual real growth rate of 5 percent in the income available for its work. During 1985, the University has received new pledges of US\$ 1,652,727 from seven governments. During the year we have actually received payments on previous and current pledges amounting to US\$ 10,289,429 from twelve governments. As of December 5th, pledges to the Endowment and Operating Funds of the University, including funds for WIDER, totalled US\$ 177.2 million, of which 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 US\$ 2.1 million over four years to the secretariat of the UNU INFOODS project. Sometimes, of course, the funds do come onto the books of the UNU, as in the case of the grant of Canadian\$ 125,000 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 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.

The prospects for mobilizing increased programme and project support are good. We have also observed a growing interest on the part of

governments in providing substantial funding for the establishment of UNU research and training centres in their own countries. The University will continue to pursue both kinds of funds in addition to our primary efforts to raise more general endowment and operating contributions.

Funding for WIDER is an integral part of the resources strategy of the UNU. It is important that WIDER's vigorous start with its programmes should be supported by efforts to raise the additional US\$ 25 million envisaged as necessary in the original plans for the Institute. We have been actively working to produce a substantial Nordic contribution to the endowment fund, earmarked for WIDER, as a necessary prerequisite for other, especially Third World, funding. Discussions, greatly helped by the full articulation of the WIDER research programme, have taken place in Sweden and Norway and I believe that Dr. Lal Jayawardena will have some concrete developments to report.

In order to achieve the optimal management of the funds we have 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.

As you know, every year the finances of the UNU are audited by the external and internal auditors of the United Nations. The Board of Auditors is composed of member states, and each year, the Board selects a team of external auditors from a member state to go over our books.

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 United Nations University. As you know, recent months have seen a considerable strengthening of the Japanese yen. While this will continue to require careful monitoring, the University's programme and budget for 1986-87 should not be adversely affected, thanks to administrative steps which we took in time to avoid substantial damage.

We will continue, in-house, the process of evaluating projects that we have completed and closely monitoring those that are ongoing. In 1986, there will also be external evaluations of one completed major project from the Regional and Global Studies division and one from the Development Studies division. In 1987, there will be an external evaluation of one completed project from the Global Learning division as well as an evaluation of the work done under the first Medium Term Perspective.

I also plan, early in the coming year, to reconstitute the Rector's Advisory Committee, and to establish a new, Japanese Scientific Advisory Committee. The regular Annual Planning meeting will take place in April with participation from UNU fellows and other colleagues from our networks. All will be instrumental, I am sure, in helping us to define the future direction of the University and to draw lessons from what we have accomplished so far.

Several deductions from our experience to date are already quite clear. One is that in order to remain a vital institution, the UNU will have to

continue to enter new fields of inquiry. At the same time, it will have to consolidate its activities and its financial position. The first MTP was in one sense a scanning exercise, and I feel gratified that in implementing it, the University has positioned itself at the forefront of research and training in a number of pressing global issues.

Out of the scanning exercise and a wide range of exploratory activities, certain clusters of issues are emerging, which will point the way toward the second MTP period. We are just beginning to develop our concepts of these clusters-- and I do not want to preview them here in their very preliminary state-- but we are already positioning ourselves to address them. This movement is reflected in the programme and budget for the next biennium.

The need for simultaneous dynamism and consolidation has important organizational implications for the United Nations University. I feel that we must continue to reevaluate the status and potential of our network of associated institutions. For the next biennium, I think we should place a moratorium on the addition of more institutions to the 39 that are now associated with us, until we are sure that we are making the most of existing relationships and know what our future directions are likely to be.

I believe that the need for consolidation also compels us to build up our capital endowment in order to assure a higher level of programme expenditure on a continuing basis. One assured way of doing this would be to reduce our level of expenditure, after the next biennium, by a modest amount for a limited period, and reinvest the resulting surplus in the endowment fund. This would give us needed flexibility to respond to emerging needs, and protect the value of our funding base against possible damage from inflation or currency movements.

Consolidation of the programme suggests that some streamlining of the structure of the University will be both possible and desirable. We face the continuing need to prevent compartmentalization of the programme, to reach a wide spectrum of cultures and ideologies, and to make our presence felt in as many geographical areas as possible. Tighter co-ordination of research and training within the Centre will make possible decentralization without chaos, and facilitate the integration of new research and training centres into our total programme.

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 United Nations University. I have decided that permanent appointments should be given to administrative personnel in the General Services category against certain posts in that category which have been identified as being of a continuing nature. This is particularly appropriate in the cultural setting of Japan, where the practice of staying with one employer throughout one's career is widespread.

At the same time, I think we should 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.

One of the most important tasks that faces us in the next biennium is, in my opinion, the business of effecting the structural and programmatic changes that will consolidate our position-- intellectual, financial, and administrative-- as we begin to prepare for the second MTP period. The past ten years have been our period of establishment, then growth and intellectual expansion. By the end of the coming biennium, I think we will have a very solid base on which to build further.