



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 47th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. MURGESCU (Romania)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 71: UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE ON NEW AND RENEWABLE SOURCES OF ENERGY
(continued) (A/34/585)

1. Mr. AKL (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) said that his organization was participating actively in the preparations for the Conference, as could be seen from the fact that the Technical Panel on Ocean Energy had held its first meetings from 5 to 9 November at UNESCO headquarters. Furthermore, energy in all its aspects had been part of UNESCO's programme of work for several years; he would only mention that it was UNESCO that had organized in 1973 an International Congress entitled "The sun in the service of mankind". Other UNESCO activities in the field of energy included the organization of seminars and the execution of pilot projects on the utilization of new and renewable sources of energy in rural areas with a view to promoting basic and applied research, the organization of training courses in very diverse fields on the rational use of different sources of energy, and the compilation and exchange of information on prospecting, production, distribution and utilization of different forms of energy.
2. UNESCO would be making a considerable contribution to the preparations for the Conference; in December, the Director-General would convene an expert group to advise the secretariat on UNESCO's long-term programme in the field of energy, and the Executive Board had decided to have a study made on the establishment of an international information system on new and renewable sources of energy.
3. Mrs. SIKRI (India) said she was glad to note that preparations for the Conference were under way, with the establishment of a Co-ordinating Committee and the appointment of eight technical panels of experts. The importance of the Conference for the economic growth of developing countries could not be over-emphasized, since the rate of increase in the per capita consumption of energy in those countries would soon be much higher than in developed countries. It was for that reason that India was represented on five of the eight technical panels. It was also for that reason that research activities had been undertaken in India, both by the public sector and by research institutions and universities, primarily in the fields of solar energy and biogas. At present, there were 70,000 biogas plants in India. The aim of the current biogas programme was to establish small plants to serve the needs of individual families, but larger plants would have to be established in the near future, and for that purpose technological innovations were necessary.
4. Her delegation attached great importance to the recommendations in Economic and Social Council resolution 1979/66, which had been further elaborated in draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.18, recently submitted by her delegation on behalf of the Group of 77. There were several measures which could be taken almost immediately, for example with respect to the transfer of technology and the exchange of information, in which her Government was ready to participate. It was therefore important, pending the holding of the Conference, to adopt a resolution giving clear guidelines for assistance to developing countries in the field of new and renewable sources of energy without prejudging the outcome of the Conference.

5. Mr. GORDAH (Tunisia) said that his delegation welcomed the arrangements made with a view to accelerating the preparations for the Conference and ensuring its complete success. The mandate given to the technical panels was extremely important, and the panels must be allowed access to studies and results of experiments already carried out under the auspices of various agencies and institutions of the United Nations system, so as to permit synthesis. It was also urgently necessary to begin preparations for the Conference at the regional, subregional and national levels, with the assistance of the regional commissions. As proposed in the report, the regional commissions could undertake demonstration projects with a view to evaluating the energy needs of a given country or region; those projects would constitute an excellent means of involving the countries concerned in the process of research and experimentation on the technologies they would be using.
6. The success of the Conference would depend to a large extent on the amount of material and human resources made available to the Secretariat and the Preparatory Committee for the Conference, but it would also depend on a realization by the international community of the possibilities offered by new and renewable sources of energy; that accounted for the decisive role of the information programme.
7. Mr. DIMITRIEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) said that the Soviet Union, being aware of the complexity of the energy problem, was very much in favour of the development of international co-operation in that field and, as early as 1975, had advocated the convening of European conferences on the subject. The decision at the thirty-fourth session of the Economic Commission for Europe to establish a special body entitled "Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Energy", whose functions included organizing a high-level European meeting on energy, showed how interested the countries of the region were in the development of co-operation in the field of energy. The Soviet Union welcomed the establishment of that new body.
8. The USSR had agreed with the decision to hold the Conference in 1981. With regard to the preparations, it believed that the Committee on Natural Resources had the necessary experience to act as a preparatory committee. It was also important that there should be a single mandate for all the technical panels, so that the results of their work could be consolidated and the synthesis would be easier to prepare. On the basis of that synthesis, the Committee on Natural Resources could then produce preliminary recommendations for the Conference, thus dispensing with the need for a meeting of Chairmen of the technical panels and allowing savings to be made. In that connexion, it was absolutely essential that all the preparations should be financed from appropriations for the purpose under the regular budget of the United Nations. The proposal to increase the membership of the technical panels, as indicated in paragraph 5 of the report (A/34/585), would lead to unnecessary expenditure, especially as all Governments would have access to the reports of the panels and would be able to comment on them.
9. Under the terms of resolution 33/148, paragraph 7, all organs, organizations and agencies of the United Nations, including the regional commissions, had been invited to co-operate fully in the preparations for the Conference. It was encouraging to note that the Centre for Natural Resources, Energy and Transport had

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(Mr. Dimitriev, USSR)

already made a useful contribution. Furthermore, co-ordination within the United Nations system was essential if unnecessary expenditure was to be avoided. The question of preparations in the developing countries themselves was very important, and those countries should receive the necessary information through national focal points designated to co-ordinate the preparations for the Conference in each country. The cost of actions envisaged in the report (sects. IV, V and VII) should be covered by the Conference budget or by funds from the UNDP budget and other extrabudgetary resources. Too large an information programme should therefore be ruled out. The Soviet Union regarded the demonstration projects recommended in the report as most untimely; since it was the Conference itself that would have to make recommendations for such activities and to set priorities in the light of concrete data from each country or region, carrying out those projects at the present stage would lead to unnecessary expenditure.

10. Soviet specialists were prepared to participate actively in the preparations for the Conference, and his delegation hoped that due account would be taken of its comments on the preparations for the Conference in the Committee's recommendations on the subject.

11. Mr. MÉNDEZ AROCHA (Venezuela) said that, although new and renewable energy sources at present accounted for only a small part of total energy consumption, particularly in the industrialized countries, one could reasonably hope that they would take over from conventional energy sources, guarantee supplies of energy to isolated rural areas and encourage the adoption of new life styles of a more human dimension. It would be a mistake to try to deal with all energy problems at the Conference, firstly, because the question of conventional energy sources was already being discussed in other international forums and would no doubt also be considered during the new round of negotiations which was to take place within the United Nations system, and, secondly, because the energy problem could hardly be dissociated from world economic problems. The question of energy imports in particular must be considered within the over-all context of international trade, because the difficulties which developing countries faced in that connexion were similar to those they faced with regard to imports of food or machinery.

12. Venezuela attached great importance to the question under consideration, as could be seen from the programmes on which it had embarked in such fields as geothermal and solar energy. For instance, research on the uses of solar energy in agro-industries had been undertaken in collaboration with a number of universities. Venezuela was prepared to transmit the results of its experiments to other countries in the region, within the framework of the programmes of the Latin American Energy Organization. The increasing scarcity and cost of hydrocarbons had shown how important it was to redirect traditional energy policies towards energy sources which despite their great potential, had been insufficiently exploited in the past. Thus, some countries such as Costa Rica had decided to develop their hydroelectric potential in order to reduce their oil imports. He hoped that other countries would follow that example. In addition, discussions in the technical panels should be focused not only on energy conservation but also on the need for environmental protection. He was gratified that the Conference was to be held in a developing country.

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13. Mr. LASARTE (Uruguay) said that, although the General Assembly had taken the necessary action at its last session, preparations for the Conference had not advanced as fast as might have been expected. Accordingly, all concerned should redouble their efforts in order to remedy that situation. The technical panels should make a vital contribution in the area of information. The Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation should try to remove the traditional bureaucratic obstacles created by the complicated structure of the United Nations system. The concerned organizations and bodies of the United Nations system should, according to the material and human resources available to them, participate in studies on specific subjects and train the skilled personnel who would be required to develop and use non-traditional energy sources. Of course, Governments also had an important role to play. The General Assembly, for its part, should take stock at the current session of the preparations for the Conference and lay down guidelines to ensure its success. It was in that spirit that his delegation unreservedly supported the provisions of draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.18, submitted by India on behalf of the Group of 77. It hoped for a display of solidarity and a spirit of co-operation, both within and outside the United Nations system, in helping the developing countries to develop and utilize their renewable sources of energy by ensuring a regular transfer of technology and information and providing bilateral and multilateral financial assistance as indicated, in the eighth preambular paragraph of General Assembly resolution 33/148.

14. On the substance of the question, he believed that care must be taken first of all to ensure that the transition from traditional energy sources to renewable energy sources was made smoothly. Despite the encouraging results of research and development activities relating to wind, power, geothermal energy and solar energy and the energy potential of the ocean, biomass, fuelwood and charcoal, oilshale and tar sands, there was still a long way to go before those energy sources could replace conventional sources. Consequently, the question of new and renewable sources of energy could not be considered, and action on them could not be taken, without having regard to the need to rationalize, in the interests of conservation, the exploitation, distribution and consumption of non-renewable resources. His delegation also believed that all aspects of the question must be considered simultaneously, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 33/148, paragraph 2. It should be borne in mind in that connexion that new sources of energy, such as wind power, could in some respects supplement traditional sources. On the question of opportunity cost his delegation considered that it should be possible to ensure by concerted action that new and renewable sources of energy were competitive with traditional sources. It also wished to reiterate its doubts as to the advisability of including the question of the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in the agenda of the Conference, especially since the Organization of American States was already considering that issue in connexion with the activities of the Inter-American Nuclear Energy Commission. Finally, he wished to recall that his delegation had already suggested to the competent regional bodies a number of solutions to the energy crisis. Such solutions would include, for instance, the creation of machinery to guarantee minimum supplies to those developing countries which lacked oil, the drawing up of energy balance-sheets and the development of new energy sources by means of financial assistance and joint research efforts.

15. Mr. ZWAYNE (Syrian Arab Republic) said that his delegation endorsed the suggestions and recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/34/585) and in the draft resolution submitted by India (A/C.2/34/L.18). Everyone was aware that the energy problem was becoming increasingly acute. Since the discovery of petroleum, the developed countries had persisted in using it irrationally and improvidently. Oil consumption must therefore be limited and rationalized. With regard to the question of new and renewable sources of energy, a distinction must be made between the programmes of developing countries and those of developed countries. It was regrettable that the technical panels which had been set up did not include enough experts from developing countries, when their membership should have been universal. In addition, the composition of the Conference secretariat should be expanded on the basis of equitable geographical distribution in order to ensure the success of its work and provide enough time for preparations so that the real priorities could be established when the Conference met.

16. The CHAIRMAN announced that the Committee had concluded its consideration of item 71 and suggested that the deadline for the submission of draft resolutions under that item should be Tuesday, 27 November, at 6 p.m.

17. It was so decided.

AGENDA ITEM 12: REPORT OF THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COUNCIL (continued)
(A/C.2/34/L.60, L.62, L.67)

18. Mr. SINGH (Fiji) introducing draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.60, said that the Syrian Arab Republic and Barbados should be added to the list of sponsors. The draft resolution was similar in format and content to a number of others submitted under the same item. Its purpose was to direct the attention of the international community to the economic problems of the Kingdom of Tonga, a small island developing country in the South Pacific, and to propose measures to ameliorate them.

19. In order to absorb the surplus of manpower in the traditional agricultural sector caused by increasing population pressure, the Tongan development plan aimed at creating employment opportunities in other sectors such as tourism and manufacturing. That would not be easily achieved, however, especially since half the resources needed to implement the development plan would have to come from outside the country. For the time being, Tonga's economy was heavily dependent on a few agricultural products such as copra, bananas and other fruits and vegetables. During the 1970s, copra prices had fallen while prices of imports had more than doubled, producing a persistent and growing trade deficit which revenues from tourism and remittances from Tongans working abroad were insufficient to offset. The geographical isolation of the Kingdom of Tonga compounded its economic problems. High freight costs and irregular shipping services impeded the development of export markets, especially for perishable commodities. Nor could one overlook the impact of frequent natural disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes.

20. Nevertheless, the international community had not been blind to Tonga's problems. For example, in its resolution 32/94, the General Assembly had requested

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(Mr. Singh, Fiji)

the Committee for Development Planning to consider including Tonga in the list of the least developed countries. Although the Committee had chosen not to change that list until the end of the Second Development Decade, it had recommended special assistance for Tonga and other countries whose inclusion in the list had been requested, and the Economic and Social Council had endorsed that recommendation in its resolution 1978/58. The draft resolution under consideration was generally in line with that resolution and merely added to it the General Assembly's endorsement, taking account of recommendation 117 (V) of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.

21. Mr. MODISI (Botswana) said that his delegation had become a co-sponsor of the draft resolution.

22. Mr. ERDEMBILEG (Mongolia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.62 entitled "Role of the public sector in promoting the economic development of developing countries" on behalf of the sponsors, now including the Congo, Czechoslovakia and the Syrian Arab Republic, said that for most countries which had recently acceded to independence it was extremely important to change the economic structure imposed by capitalism and to throw off the control of foreign capital in order to achieve autonomous economic development. As the Secretary-General had stated in his report (E/1979/66), the public sector could play a major role in mobilizing national resources for economic and social development. The experience of developing countries with a stable public sector showed that it was an asset in the struggle against domination by foreign monopolies and an essential factor in autonomous economic development, even though other sectors could also play an effective role.

23. In its resolution 34/179, the General Assembly had recommended that the competent United Nations organs should take into account the studies on the role of the public sector in promoting the economic development of developing countries in formulating a new international development strategy. The draft resolution under consideration was aimed at giving new impetus to those studies by suggesting new approaches in that field. He drew attention in particular to paragraph 3, because developing countries required technical and economic assistance to develop their public sectors and modernize their public enterprises. The regional economic commissions could organize practical discussions among developing countries on that subject. The Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific was already playing an important role in that connexion, and it was to be hoped that the other regional commissions would follow suit.

24. In its resolution 1979/48, the Economic and Social Council had recommended that the General Assembly should determine which aspects of the role of the public sector required further in-depth study, and paragraph 5 of the draft resolution formulated a response to that recommendation: the aspects in question were determined, and the Secretary-General was requested to submit a further comprehensive report in 1983, which should give ample time for its elaboration. The role which the public sector could play as an instrument of development was described, and paragraph 5 (e) dealing with ways and means of facilitating the practical exchange of experience and information among developing countries on

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(Mr. Erdembileg, Mongolia)

the role of the public sector was extremely important. In the final paragraph, the competent organizations were invited to assist the Secretary-General continuously in preparing further studies on the role of the public sector, and it was encouraging to note that UNIDO had already made an important contribution in that field. The sponsors of the draft resolution hoped that it would be adopted by consensus.

25. Mr. RAMOS (Cape Verde) announced that his delegation wished to become a co-sponsor of draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.62.

26. Mr. CASSANDRA (Sao Tome and Principe) announced that his delegation also wished to become a co-sponsor of the draft resolution.

AGENDA ITEM 59: OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES FOR DEVELOPMENT (continued) (A/C.2/34/L.71)

27. Mr. SINGH (Fiji) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/34/L.71 entitled "United Nations Development Programme", and said that the text was self-explanatory.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

28. The CHAIRMAN reminded delegations of a number of important matters regarding the organization of work. At the beginning of the session, the General Assembly had set 1 December as the deadline for submitting to the Fifth Committee all draft resolutions with financial implications. He wished to inform delegations that he had informed the President of the General Assembly of the difficulties the Second Committee had experienced because of the many draft resolutions it had to consider, and that the President had pointed out that the deadline of 1 December had been set by a General Assembly decision. Decisions must therefore be taken by the evening of 30 November on all draft resolutions with financial implications if the Committee wished them to be considered during the current session, even if night meetings were required. He proposed that Tuesday, 27 November should be set as a deadline for the consideration of draft resolutions submitted under items 63 and 69.

29. Mr. WAKASUGI (Japan) requested that the deadline for the consideration of item 63, "United Nations University", should be postponed until 30 November in view of the difficulties experienced by the delegations that were elaborating the draft resolution. It was his understanding that the draft resolution did not have financial implications.

30. It was so decided.

31. The CHAIRMAN read out rule 120 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly which stated as a general rule, inter alia, that "no proposal shall be discussed or put to the vote at any meeting of the Committee unless copies of it had been circulated to all delegations not later than the day preceding the meeting". He said that under the same rule the Chairman could permit the discussion and consideration of amendments, or of motions as to procedure, even though they had not been circulated or had only been circulated the same day.

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That, however, was an exception which must not become the rule. He recalled to members of the Committee that they must likewise comply with the provisions of article 128 regarding conduct during voting. He read out paragraph 4 (b) of document A/C.2/34/L.1 dealing with the decision of the General Assembly to limit explanations of vote to 10 minutes and suggested that, like other Committees, the Second Committee should apply that time-limit of 10 minutes to all statements on draft resolutions.

32. It was so decided.

33. The CHAIRMAN requested members of the Committee to make the necessary efforts to conclude before the following week the consideration of all agenda items except items 55, 56, and 70, and announced that the work for the following week would be organized accordingly.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.