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SECOND COMMITTEE  
2nd meeting  
held on  
Tuesday, 22 September 1981  
at 10.50 a.m.  
New York

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 2nd MEETING

Chairman: Mr. VERCELLES (Philippines)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.50 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN

1. The CHAIRMAN expressed gratitude for his election, which provided him with the opportunity to contribute to the cause of the economic development and well-being of mankind since the Second Committee was the principal forum in which the economic problems of the world were discussed and strategies and arrangements for resolving them were formulated. Many milestones in the economic history of the world had been launched in the Second Committee and the thirty-sixth session promised to be a particularly important one from an economic standpoint, especially for the developing countries. The preceding year had been marked by a world-wide recession, exorbitantly high interest rates and inflation, which had acted as constraints on economic growth, and by fewer efforts on the part of the developed countries to assist the developing world. That state of affairs had given rise to a number of critical issues which the General Assembly must resolve at its current session and he hoped that the Second Committee would be able to tackle them with courage and vision, thereby contributing significantly to global development, particularly that of the developing countries.

2. A number of critical issues faced the Committee. First, he would give the highest priority to the need to resume the North-South dialogue, in particular the launching of the global negotiations on international economic co-operation for development, which had been stalled for the past two years. Pending the outcome of the forthcoming summit meetings at Cancún, the Committee should try to help generate a political climate and establish an appropriate framework for launching the global negotiations as soon as possible.

3. Second, attention must be focused on the food shortage in developing countries. Inadequate food and agricultural production remained the single most important economic problem of those countries, and he suggested that the Committee should work towards the formulation of a global plan of action on food and agriculture up to the year 2000 in segments of short-, medium- and long-term phases.

4. Third, with regard to international trade, the seemingly intractable problems of protectionism, inflation and trade imbalances continued to plague Member States, especially the developing countries. The Committee should continue to press for solutions to those problems, bearing in mind the relevant recommendations of UNCTAD.

5. Fourth, as the recent Nairobi Conference has shown, the development of new and renewable energy sources was of paramount importance, given the continuous depletion of non-renewable oil resources. The high cost of energy hurt the oil-importing developing countries most. Unfortunately, the Conference had not reached agreement on the institutional and financial framework or the resources needed to implement a programme of action effectively. He suggested that the Committee should review those issues and make a concerted effort to achieve positive results.

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(The Chairman)

6. Fifth, the recently concluded Conference on the Least Developed Countries, which had adopted a Substantial New Programme of Action, had pointed to the need for special measures to benefit the least developed among the developing countries. The goals of that Programme included the establishment of a target of 0.15 per cent of GNP for official development assistance (ODA) to the least developed countries. He urged the Committee to endorse that Programme and hoped that the developed countries would raise their levels of ODA to the target set for the least developed countries and increase their over-all levels of ODA to the 0.7 per cent set for assistance to the developing countries as a whole.

7. Sixth, with regard to the financing of the Vienna Programme of Action on Science and Technology for Development, the General Assembly had expressed great concern that the financial resources available to the Interim Fund were sorely inadequate, and proposals had been made to establish a financing system for science and technology for development. He urged the Committee to take decisive action on that issue.

8. Seventh, on the question of human settlements, a number of important questions had been taken up by the Commission on Human Settlements at its fourth session held in Manila. The problems of inadequate financial support had again been highlighted and the Committee should deal with it squarely.

9. There were also important questions relating to industrialization, technical and economic co-operation among developing countries, desertification in Africa and the growing problem of the effective mobilization and integration of women into development, not to mention the continuing question of the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system with which the Committee should forge ahead.

10. Finally, on the question of operational activities for development, the Committee would have before it the Secretary-General's reports on the United Nations system as a whole, reports from the various operational arms of the system and reports on technical co-operation activities undertaken by the Department of Technical Co-operation for Development. It was a matter of great concern to the developing countries that the financial resources for those programmes had been stagnating and even declining in real terms. Such a trend was bound to cancel out the successes of the United Nations in the field of economic and social development, particularly that of the developing countries. There were also disturbing rumours that another financial crisis might be looming for UNDP and other development assistance programmes. He hoped that the actual state of affairs would be fully aired in the discussions on operational activities for development so that the necessary corrective measures could be taken to revive and stimulate those activities.

11. All members of the Committee should be concerned at the impasse in the North-South dialogue, for poverty and hunger in the developing countries could not wait on political indecision. In his report on the work of the Organization, the Secretary-General had referred to the actual weakening of international

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(The Chairman)

co-operative efforts and an erosion of the system of multilateral co-operation. What was needed was to rekindle the spirit of mutual co-operation, interdependence and shared responsibility that had emerged in the 1960s and receded in the 1970s. The Committee should help to reverse that trend and revive the forces of creativity necessary for economic and social progress. It should forge a new political compact aiming for parity of privilege and opportunity, so that the peoples of all nations could share equitably in the tasks and benefits of development.

#### ELECTION OF THE VICE-CHAIRMEN

12. Mr. ROMUALDEZ (Philippines) nominated Mr. ter Horst (Venezuela) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

13. Mr. VALTASAARI (Finland), speaking on behalf of the group of Western European and other countries, nominated Mr. Ringnalda (Netherlands) for the office of Vice-Chairman.

14. Mr. ter Horst (Venezuela) and Mr. Ringnalda (Netherlands) were elected Vice-Chairmen by acclamation.

15. Mr. ter HORST (Venezuela) expressed appreciation for his election and pledged to perform the functions of Vice-Chairman with efficiency and impartiality.

16. Mr. RINGNALDA (Netherlands) expressed appreciation for his election and pledged his best efforts to ensuring that the Committee worked effectively.

#### ORGANIZATION OF WORK

17. The CHAIRMAN drew attention to document A/C.2/36/L.1 which contained suggestions for the organization of the Committee's work. That document had been prepared taking into account comments made by delegations, and reflected a number of ideas and suggestions made within and outside the Committee. The proposed time-table for the consideration of items allocated to the Committee was contained in document A/C.2/36/L.1/Add.1. None of the suggestions contained in that document should be seen as precluding any delegation from expressing its views fully on any matter within the Committee's purview, the purpose of the document being simply to achieve a sharper focus in the consideration of items assigned to the Committee. Deadlines had been suggested for the submission of proposals in order to prevent the problems usually associated with the late submission of draft resolutions. A schedule was also provided for the discussion of such proposals and if any delegation wished to make a broad statement of policy at that particular point, he would be able to do so.

18. Mr. PLECHKO (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) observed that the time-table proposed in document A/C.2/36/L.1/Add.1 made no provision for a general debate but, at the same time, provided for representatives of organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system to make statements in relation to agenda item 12 during the first two weeks of the Committee's work. That proposal was based on

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(Mr. Plechko, USSR)

earlier agreement that, in order to save time and resources, such representatives should speak at the beginning of the Committee's work, in the general debate. If there was to be no general debate, however, such an organization of work would mean that the discussion of pressing international economic problems would be supplanted by statements from representatives of the secretariats of different organs.

19. In his view, there was no justification for such a procedure. A general debate was needed in order to give thorough consideration to the general state of the international economy and the most pressing international economic problems, and to gain a better understanding of the purposes and principles which guided different countries in their approach to such problems and their co-operation with other countries in solving them. Without a general debate, insufficient attention might be paid to the factors which determine the main directions of economic policy and attempts might be made to solve the problems discussed in the Committee in isolation from the factors which caused them.

20. With regard to the allusion to the Committee's work at the thirty-fifth session, he wished to recall that the decision taken on that occasion to dispense with the general debate had been motivated by exceptional circumstances, namely that all Member countries had had a chance to express their views on the international economic situation at the eleventh special session of the General Assembly. No such circumstances could be invoked at the current session and the Committee should therefore begin its work with the customary general debate.

21. Mr. ter HORST (Venezuela) observed that the Chairman had made some very useful suggestions concerning the Committee's organization of work, particularly with regard to the launching of the global negotiations on which no progress had as yet been made. That was a vital economic issue and was closely related to the Committee's work.

22. The representative of the Soviet Union had said that the Committee's organization of work should include provision for a general debate. Speaking on behalf of the Group of 77, he wished to suggest that the special circumstances that had motivated the suppression of the general debate at the thirty-fifth session remained valid. The developing countries hoped that the forthcoming summit conference at Cancún would take a decision on how to plan for the launching of the global negotiations and, on behalf of the Group of 77, he wished to suggest that the Committee organize its work in such a way that, once the Cancún summit was over, the launching of global negotiations could, as an exception be considered in the plenary in order to facilitate the Committee's work. Delegations would still be free to make statements in the Committee on specific aspects of that issue.

23. He also wished to propose that consideration of those sub-items of item 69 for which documentation might already be available should be expedited so that different groups could table draft resolutions. Since the Group of 77 would be concentrating on item 69, the sooner documents on that item became available, the sooner the Group would be able to start work on its draft resolutions.

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24. Mr. TANIGUCHI (Japan) said that the Committee's weakness in the past had been that its debates were far too general and rhetorical. When the general debate had been dispensed with at the thirty-fifth session, the Committee had worked very well, while at the thirty-fourth session so little time had remained after the general debate that such vital items as the resolution on global negotiations had been rushed and several mistakes had been made. If the Committee dispensed with the general debate, it would be able to proceed directly to the consideration of vital issues. Moreover, if the Cancún summit adopted important resolutions, the Committee would have a chance to consider them later in the session. It would be a duplication of work to have both a general debate and a debate on the various major issues identified by the Chairman. The debate on specific items should also be to the point and any representatives of United Nations organs who presented their reports under item 12 should do so as precisely and briefly as possible in order to avoid a repetitive, bureaucratic debate. Better still, if they had nothing new to add to their written reports, they should simply circulate written statements and dispense with any oral presentations.

25. Mr. BOYD (United Kingdom) said that his delegation supported the views expressed by the delegations of Venezuela and Japan regarding the general debate. Furthermore, the work of the Committee should be conducted in a businesslike manner in order to achieve as much progress as possible.

26. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia) said that his delegation felt that a general debate was necessary since there were a number of important issues which were not entirely reflected in the agenda of the Committee. If the substantive debate on agenda item 12 (Report of the Economic and Social Council) in the proposed time-table for the consideration of items in document A/C.2/36/L.1/Add.1 was combined with the statement by the Director-General for Development and International Economic Co-operation and the introductory statements to be made on behalf of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system, that would be tantamount to general debate and would allow delegations which wished to do so to make statements in that context.

27. Mr. MULLER (German Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States, stressed the urgent need to resolve the questions relating to the restructuring of international economic relations on a democratic and just basis. The general debate which was taking place in the plenary sessions of the General Assembly underscored that need. It was, therefore, logical that the Committee should begin its work with a discussion of the question of the establishment of a new international economic order on the basis of the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States and the resolutions of the sixth special session of the General Assembly. Such a debate could evaluate the implementation of United Nations resolutions in that field and determine the factors which impeded their implementation, and thus serve as the basis for achieving positive results in favour of developing countries. Nevertheless, the delegations of the Group of Eastern European Countries were prepared to accept the proposal made by the Group of 77 on the understanding that that would not constitute a precedent for the organization of work of the Committee in the future. Furthermore, he stressed the right of each delegation to express its views on any agenda item or question of principle.

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28. Mr. ter HORST (Venezuela) urged the representative of Australia to reconsider the position of his delegation regarding the general debate in order to permit the Committee to reach a consensus.

29. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia) said that his delegation would not stand in the way of a consensus. Nevertheless, he requested further information on the nature of the debate on agenda item 12.

30. The CHAIRMAN said that there seemed to be a consensus in support of the proposal made by the representative of Venezuela that there should be no general debate during the current session. He said that, if he heard no objection, he took it that the Committee wished to adopt that proposal.

31. It was so decided.

32. The CHAIRMAN said that he had suggested a substantive debate on agenda item 12 since in the past the report of the Economic and Social Council had not been given the consideration it deserved. The substantive debate would be conducted on the understanding that delegations which participated in the substantive debate would not repeat their positions when the separate chapters of the report were discussed.

33. Mr. JOSEPH (Australia) said that, in considering the report of the Economic and Social Council, the Committee should also hear the statements of the various heads of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system.

34. The CHAIRMAN said that, in order to facilitate matters, he would suggest replacing the phrase "substantive debate on agenda item 12" with the phrase "consideration of agenda item 12", which had been used in the past.

35. Mr. ter HORST (Venezuela) said that that would be acceptable to the Group of 77 on the understanding that there would be no debate when that agenda item was considered. Furthermore, the statements to be made on behalf of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system should be limited to the first two weeks of the time-table of the Committee with the exception of the report of the Secretary-General of UNCTAD.

36. Mr. TANIGUCHI (Japan) requested information concerning the number of statements to be made on behalf of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system. Those statements should be brief and concise and, if possible, should be limited to 10 minutes each.

37. Mr. MULLER (Secretary of the Committee) recalled that the statements made on behalf of the organs, organizations and bodies of the United Nations system were presented in accordance with General Assembly resolution 34/212. There were 16 statements which would be made during the two weeks allotted to that sub-item. He did not feel it was necessary to impose a time limit for the presentation of the statements since the heads of the various organizations had been informed that they should not repeat or summarize their reports to the Committee, but should only provide new information on important developments affecting their programmes.

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38. The CHAIRMAN said that, if he heard no objection, he took it that the Committee wished to adopt the proposed time-table for the consideration of items contained in document A/C.2/36/L.1/Add.1 with the amendment which he had already suggested.

39. It was so decided.

40. The CHAIRMAN said that, with regard to the proposal of the representative of Venezuela to begin consideration of those sub-items of agenda item 69 for which documentation was already available, the Committee would make the necessary arrangements with the Secretariat and act accordingly.

41. It was so decided.

42. The CHAIRMAN drew the attention of the Committee to paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 34/401 on the rationalization of the procedures and organization of the General Assembly and appealed to all members of the Committee to make every effort to attend meetings punctually in order to expedite the work of the Committee.

The meeting rose at 12.15 p.m.

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