



SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 29th MEETING

Chairman: Mr. ter HORST (Venezuela)

later: Mr. VERCELES (Philippines)

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The meeting was called to order at 11.10 a.m.

AGENDA ITEM 69: DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION (continued)
(A/36/3/Add.2, Add.4, Add.13, Add.14 and Add.29, A/36/15, A/36/37 (Part I, II and III), A/36/39, A/36/45, A/36/47 (Part I and II), A/36/116 and Corr.1, A/36/240, 333, 356, 380, 419 and Add.1, 421, 477, 483, 497, 528 and Corr.1, 536, 538, 566, 573, 576, 577, 584, 605 and 631 and Corr.1; A/CN.11/21; A/CONF.100/11; A/CONF.104/22 and Add.1; A/C.2/36/L.2 and L.3)

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1. Mr. AL-ATTAR (Executive Secretary, Economic Commission for Western Asia) recalled that the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197 stated, among other things, that the regional commissions should play a greater role in the global policy-making process. The Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) attached great importance to that principle and he believed that the trend would intensify and that existing forms of participation would be improved.

2. With regard to the economic and social problems of the countries of Western Asia, he said that, in the agricultural sector, the irregular domestic production of basic food-stuffs in most ECWA countries, combined with a high rate of growth in urban food demand, had resulted in a decline in the region's self-sufficiency in the second half of the 1970s. It seemed certain that the disparity between supply and demand would increase in the 1980s, and it was therefore expected that the net deficit in total food imports would reach the astronomical figure of \$40,000 million by the end of the century. At the same time, the region would come to depend increasingly on a very limited number of external sources of supply. That being so, ECWA attached the highest priority to the planning of agricultural production and supply. Consequently, the proposed programme budget for 1982-1983 dealt in various ways

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Economic Commission for Western Asia)

with the state of food security in the ECWA region through a set of programmes relating, among other things, to food security policies, the conservation of agricultural resources, the adoption of agricultural policies and the improvement of water supply and conservation.

3. In view of the increasing concern about the exhaustion of oil resources in the ECWA region, there was a great demand for the development of new and renewable sources of energy. The study on such forms of energy prepared for the Nairobi Conference had aroused great interest among all member countries, particularly with regard to the possibility that new forms of energy might satisfy the specific requirements of rural development, which was of great importance for the ECWA region.

4. In the industrial sector, the ECWA region was characterized by the production of a limited range of manufactures and a low level of specialization. Dependence on external markets for the import of manufactures and the export of commodities was the dominant pattern of the region's trade. There were still many artificial barriers which impeded trade in the region and little had been done to improve industrial efficiency, which was a pre-condition for the expansion of exports, which, in turn, contributed to the establishment of an integrated industrial structure. The region's industrial infrastructure was still inadequate and there was virtually no co-operation among the various national development plans and policies. Consequently, industrialization in the region should involve the reorientation of manufactures and, in some cases, the substitution of local products for imports should serve as the basis for a new industrialization strategy. The rate and form of industrial growth in the region would depend on the measures adopted by member States to ensure co-ordination among their various programmes and policies. The international co-operation programme that ECWA was carrying out with UNIDO would make a substantial contribution to that process.

5. Regional strategies had been prepared to cope with the crucial problems of development, and regional needs and priorities had been taken into account in the international strategies. Efforts had been made to achieve closer regional co-operation and integration among the ECWA countries and a series of positive developments had had a direct impact on international co-operation. For example, at the Eleventh Arab Summit Conference, held in Amman in November 1980, a Arab Action Strategy for economic activities in the period ending in the year 2000 had been adopted and the 1980s had been proclaimed the first Arab Development Decade. ECWA had considered the International Development Strategy for the Third United Nations Development Decade at its eighth session, held in April 1981; it had concluded that the implementation of the Strategy would require great efforts on the part of member States, and had urged that

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specific assistance should be provided with a view to the attainment of national goals and the formulation of attainable objectives in the sphere of regional development. That concern was reflected in ECWA resolution 93 (VIII).

6. The current concerns and priorities of the region, as reflected in the regional strategy adopted by ECWA, could be summed up in the following terms: development of regional technological capacity, involving promotion of the establishment of a technological base through pooling of resources and co-ordination of national policies; efforts to achieve greater collective independence with regard to food supplies through programmes designed to intensify and expand agriculture; promotion of investment of more of the available financial resources in the region, with provision of the necessary incentives and correct identification of viable economic investment projects; co-ordination of the development efforts of member countries with a view to minimizing duplication and unjustified competition; rationalization of movements of workers in the region, through the preparation and application of a comprehensive regional strategy designed to satisfy requirements for skilled workers rapidly and the preparation of an effective system for regulating migratory movements; achievement of more balanced and diversified economic development; streamlining and enhancing the efficiency of the supply of human and natural resources in the region; reduction of the disparity between the income of different groups and geographical regions through the balanced and equitable distribution of new projects; strengthening of the region's institutional, administrative and physical infrastructure; reduction of the region's economic dependence on foreign technology, commodities and labour, promotion of co-operation with the other Arab countries and the developing countries; and promotion of efforts and projects aimed at economic co-operation and integration among member countries, leaving the political aspects aside.

7. Most of the problems he had mentioned required regional solutions. Consequently, economic co-operation and integration were essential for future development if the region hoped to make genuine, lasting progress in the realization of its economic potential. In view of the limited resources available to ECWA for the implementation of its basic programme, it could deal only partially with the many problems existing in the region which had to be tackled in the various programmes.

8. The proposal for the period 1982-1983 represented a real growth of 0.4 per cent. That growth would be almost completely absorbed by activities which supplemented the substantive programme and, more specifically, reflected

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the need to strengthen ECWA's activities relating to statistics to have more frequent recourse to expert groups to study the technical and socio-economic aspects of various areas of the programme for the current biennium, and to speed up the policy-making process through specialized intergovernmental meetings concerned with various programme areas.

9. With reference to the restructuring of the economic and social sectors of the United Nations system, and more particularly its regional aspects, he said it was necessary to protect the resources of the regional commissions, he suggested that their structures should be strengthened, a course which, in his view, was implicit in General Assembly resolution 32/197. Although it was currently necessary to pursue a zero-growth policy, in the case of the regional commissions that policy should be accompanied by a programme for the decentralization of activities which would require, among other things, the transfer of the necessary resources. Seven posts had been decentralized to ECWA in the period 1979-1981, but given the expansion of its functions and the role it was called upon to play as the main centre for economic and social development in western Asia, the decentralization process had not responded to the many aspirations of the region. Entire sectors of development remained unplanned, while in other sectors the minimum resource base meant that any retrenchment would have harmful effects.

10. In the particular case of ECWA, there were a number of priority areas in which a better distribution of work and responsibilities among the regional commissions and the rest of the system would be justified, for example, development planning, marine economy and technology, integrated transport, science and technology, statistics, cartography, trade, information and documentation services, and population. In his view, the decentralization progress could be speeded up without undue prejudice to analytical activities.

11. The restructuring process had exerted strong pressure on ECWA's financial resources. Although it had been recognized in the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197 that, taking account of the expansion of their functions, adequate budgetary and financial provision should be made for the activities of the regional commissions, sufficient action had not yet been taken in that regard. In his view, a comprehensive analysis of the long-term consequences of the restructuring process for the regional commissions was long overdue. In any event, he considered that Economic and Social Council resolution 1981/66 represented a turning-point in that regard.

12. Mr. ALAKWAA (Yemen) requested that the statement by the Executive Secretary of ECWA should be circulated.

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13. Mr. ADEDEJI (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa) said that there had been very little improvement in the conditions of life of the vast majority of the African people during the past two decades since most of Africa had become politically independent. Today Africa was faced with four major crisis: a food crisis, an energy crisis, a balance-of-payments crisis and crippling debt burdens. Those deteriorating African economic conditions had been caused in large part by the pursuance of economic policies which, if continued, would lead only to further deterioration. Firstly, the economy of virtually every African country had depended persistently on the exports of one or two primary commodities, except in cases where initiatives had been taken for the exploration and exploitation of petroleum, uranium or forest resources. Secondly, domestic savings had been encouraged without regard to the availability of the raw materials and factor input supplies to which such savings must correspond. Thirdly, the African countries continued to export agricultural products at diminishing prices in order to earn the foreign exchange necessary to buy food which could have been produced in the first instance by an application of the resources devoted to agricultural production for export. Fourthly, the economies of Africa were in the main still made up of highly fragmented regional, sub-regional and national economies. They were fragmented by extremes in the distribution of income with the high-income urban market tied to the production and marketing systems of the developed economies; they were fragmented by product differentiation, trade marks and advertising; they were fragmented by a wide variety of unnecessary design specifications; they were fragmented by ill-developed national, multinational and regional transport and communication systems; and they were fragmented by market allocation policies among world cartels of developed countries. Furthermore, the African region was continuing to exhaust its natural resources with little heed being paid to direct renewal or their replacement with new and renewable capabilities for expanding and diversifying production of goods and services to meet the requirements of the population.

14. With a view to redirecting the economic growth of Africa, the Lagos Plan of Action was particularly concerned with the physical natural resources or raw materials basis of economic growth and especially with ways and means of rapidly developing at national, multinational and regional levels the existing capabilities for natural resources exploration, evaluation and management. The plan was also particularly concerned with the promotion of intra-African as well as extra-African trade in industrial raw materials.

15. Closely linked with that question was the role which the international community and in particular the United Nations should play in the task of helping Africa to face the challenge of the present economic situation in order to ensure the economic survival of the continent and to lay the foundation for restructuring its economies, thus enabling them to embark on a process of internally self-generating and self-sustaining development.

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(Mr. Adedeji, Executive Secretary of the
Economic Commission for Africa)

16. He wished to express his gratitude for the support which the Lagos Plan of Action had received and in particular for the adoption of General Assembly resolution 35/64. The comprehensive report requested by the Assembly for the achievement of the aims and objectives set out in the Plan of Action appeared in document A/36/513. Furthermore, it was to be hoped that Governments would respond to the appeal made in the resolution for an adequate flow of resources to secure the effective implementation of the Plan of Action.
17. With regard to the Industrial Development Decade for Africa, proclaimed by the General Assembly in resolution 35/66 B, a joint ECA/UNIDO/OAU/Intersecretariat Committee had been set up to work closely in harmony on the implementation and monitoring of the decade programme. An intergovernmental meeting of experts had been convened by the three organizations to consider the programme of action for the decade. The programme of action would be submitted to the biennial Conference of African Ministers of Industry, which would take place in Addis Ababa from 23 to 25 November 1981. All the African inter-governmental organizations concerned with the various developmental fields would be involved in the programme.
18. The food crisis, which was more severe in Africa than in other regions of the world, was dealt with in General Assembly resolution 35/69, which requested a study on the establishment of regional food trade and distribution organizations in Africa. However, since it was not yet clear as to the form and degree of assistance which OAU might need under the terms of the resolution, the interim report before the Second Committee (A/36/149) had concentrated on an analysis of Africa's food and agriculture problems in the 1980s.
19. With regard to the United Nations Transport and Communications Decade for Africa, it should be pointed out that the Pledging Conference for United Nations Trust Funds, held on 3 November 1981, had again ended with very few substantial pledges being made in support of the Decade.
20. Since 21 of the 31 least developed countries were located in Africa, ECA had shown particular interest in the United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries held in Paris. It was determined to do everything in its power to ensure the success of the Substantial New Programme of Action that came out of the Conference. However, additional resources were needed to fulfil that task and he hoped they would be forthcoming from the General Assembly.
21. In 1977 the ECA Conference of Ministers at Kinshasa had set up the Multinational Programming and Operational Centres in order to promote economic and technical co-operation among the African countries. All of them had proved

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their usefulness and shown great potential but unfortunately they might never be able to realize that potential because of lack of budgetary resources and indeed their very existence might now be in danger.

22. Finally, he hoped that the Second Committee would endorse the recommendations made by the Economic and Social Council in resolution 1981/65 concerning the expansion of conference facilities in Addis Ababa.

23. Mr. Stanovnik (Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Europe) said that during the 1970s Western Europe, together with the United States of America, had experienced a considerable reduction in its economic growth which on the average was nearly 50 per cent lower than that registered in the 1950s and 1960s. Growth continued to be very stagnant and nearly a half of the countries of Western Europe were now experiencing zero growth or a negative rate of growth. In that respect, the conclusion had been reached that the reduction in the rate of growth was not cyclical in character nor due to energy problems but rather was the result of structural difficulties. Those difficulties had resulted from the accumulation and convergence of various negative trends which had already developed in the 1960s, although then they were not perceived so clearly, and not from the events that had occurred in 1973 with regard to oil supplies.

24. During the last two decades the more advanced market-economy countries had experienced a process of dynamic growth which had led to a high degree of satisfaction of the immediate material needs of the population. Agricultural and industrial capacity was sufficient to satisfy demand. However, they had now reached a point of relative saturation which had led to very considerable changes in society, in the labour market, in investments and in savings, which had dwindled. Thus, a paradox arose: the greater the need for investment as a result of technological progress, the less the possibility of meeting that need because of the reduced level of savings. That situation had been linked with the changes which had occurred in international trade on a world scale during the post-war period. While, during the immediate post-war period international trade had reached 10 per cent of the combined national product, in the 1960s and 1970s that percentage had been doubled in the case of intra-regional and interregional trade of the ECE countries and had reached 40 per cent in the case of the production of certain industries. The result of that increase was that any change in the world economy had a greater impact on the domestic level since the economies never returned to such an obvious state of isolation as could be perceived immediately after the war.

25. After 1973, ECE had had to tackle the major problem of the 1970s, namely structural readjustment. The changes registered in the world economy required a dynamic structural readjustment at the domestic level so as to move from the less productive and less competitive sectors towards the more competitive sectors. If that adjustment was to be possible, then there must be economic growth. Thus, at the beginning of the 1970s there occurred a typical

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the Economic Commission for Europe)

contradiction which was manifested in the following vicious circle: the slowness of economic growth reduced the possibilities of making the necessary adjustment; the insufficient degree of adjustment reduced the rate of increase of productivity; and finally that reduction contributed to a reduction in global economic growth. ECE and other study centres such as GATT and OECD had become convinced that the only solution to the problem lay in structural adjustment. If the developed countries gave in to protectionist pressures it would be no solution to the problem since experience showed that protectionism was always equated with resistance to adjustments. While such dynamic sectors as chemicals and mechanical engineering were able to make the adjustments and maintain their growth, the more vulnerable sectors, such as glass, leather and others were seeking protectionism, thus reducing their capacity to compete and increasing their costs, and constituting a burden on national economies. Consequently, there was no other solution except the structural adjustment of the developed countries and the important task at the present time, when the Assembly was preparing plans for world negotiations on the new international economic order, was the need to synchronize internal and external adjustments so that, together with the solution of the problems of unemployment, inflation and balance of payments, an international climate favourable for greater access to the markets of the developed countries was established.

26. The socialist countries of Eastern Europe had also not been so prosperous as in the past. During the post-war period, they had had a rate of growth of the net material product of more than 10 per cent. During the 1960s, however, their rates of growth were 7 per cent but the difficulties at the end of the 1970s and in the last five year plan had resulted in decreases in the rates of growth of the countries of that region which were expected to be even lower during the 1980s. The socialist countries were also faced with a structural problem although it was different from that of the market economies. The problem facing them on the labour market was the scarcity of manpower - not unemployment - largely due to the lack of internal mobility of workers. They also had problems linked with the cost of material production and energy. Although some of the countries of Eastern Europe, especially the USSR, possessed large energy resources, often those resources were not easy to exploit because of distance and other geographical considerations which increased the cost of production. Moreover, the increase in transport costs and the need to build a transport infrastructure were factors to be added to the foregoing ones to explain the reduction in productivity and the level of growth. The productivity of capital was also reduced by the need to make investments in urban and transport infrastructures whose productivity was low.

27. Although countries of southern Europe had followed the doctrine trade was the basis of economic growth and had attained a remarkable level of economic development and a high level of exports, particularly of manufactures, their economies had suffered from the shrinkage of demand for their manufactures.

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Economic Commission for Europe)

As a result, they were experiencing balance-of-payments deficits, rising unemployment and all the problems characteristic of inflation.

28. Turning to ECE's programme of work, he said that the Commission had concentrated on energy, because, although an estimated 80 per cent of the world's known energy resources were to be found in the region, they consisted mainly of coal, bituminous schists, and tar shales and sands. For that reason, the countries of the region were very dependent on oil, for although they consumed two thirds of the total world petroleum production, they produced only one third. In his view, the crux of the energy problem was not the price of oil. Low energy prices had been a disadvantage rather than an advantage, since they had encouraged countries to establish industries that consumed a lot of energy. Oil prices were now reaching a level close to that of substitutes; tremendous efforts were therefore being made to replace oil by coal and nuclear power. The region was producing as much energy from nuclear power sources as from hydroelectric sources, and it was estimated that by the end of the century, 22 per cent of the electric power would come from nuclear sources. On the other hand, at the end of eight years, the real rate of energy saving had reached an annual 1.5 per cent, which meant that the developed countries were consuming about 10 per cent of what they would have been consuming if the trend up to 1973 had persisted. In terms of physical volume, petroleum imports were at about the same level as in 1974, which reflected a trend towards an increasing use of coal and nuclear energy.

29. ECE's second priority area was trade, which was also related to energy, as the countries of Eastern Europe were rich in energy sources while those of Western Europe were not, so there were good prospects for greater co-operation between East and West in the energy sphere. At the present time, the countries of Western Europe were importing 100 million barrels of coal equivalent in various forms, which were, in descending order of importance, oil, gas, coal and electric power.

30. ECE's third priority area was natural resources, for although the countries of the region were technologically advanced, none of them, except the USSR, was well endowed with natural resources. ECE was concentrating also on water resources development; agriculture and forestry; and transport and the environment.

31. On the subject of centralization and decentralization, he said that they did not necessarily conflict with each other. The decentralized units should have their own raison d'être, which should not be based only on historical or geographical considerations but also on the possibility of achieving greater efficiency. Therefore the regional commissions should be considered not only as organs for carrying out the policies of the General Assembly but also as entities capable of participating in the process of negotiation by contributing their information and experience.

32. Mr. VERCELES (Philippines) took the Chair.

AGENDA ITEM 72: SPECIAL ECONOMIC AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE (continued)
(A/36/3/Add.28, Add.31 and Add.32, Part I and Corr.1-2, Part II, A/36/38, 73 and Add.1, 183, 208 and Add.1, 259, 261-267, 268 and Corr.1, 269-272, 273 and Corr.1, 274, 278, 281, 282, 599 and 636; E/1981/16 and Corr.1, E/1981/37 and Corr.1, and E/1981/86; A/C.2/36/L.4)

33. Mr. BERKOL (United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator) said that General Assembly resolution 35/107 provided for a review of the mandate of the Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Co-ordinator (UNDRO) and that, in his comments on the question, the Secretary-General had recommended that the mandate should not be changed (A/36/73/Add.1, paras. 15 to 18). Most of the views expressed by members at the Economic and Social Council's summer session had been in line with that recommendation, and he expressed the hope that it would be possible to arrive at a consensus confirming or reaffirming the mandate, after which the organizational and administrative aspects of UNDRO might be considered.

34. UNDRO's primary task remained co-ordination, which implied rather more than just co-operation, since it involved a concentration of efforts. Such co-ordination usually involved the creation of inter-agency teams under the supervision of the Resident Co-ordinators of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In that way contact and co-ordination were established with the national authorities and their role was respected and supported.

35. At the international level, co-ordination also required that consultations take place between the decision-makers at the headquarters of the different United Nations agencies involved. UNDRO's Co-ordination Centre had been set up for that purpose, as well as emergency aid units for relief operations in the agencies and organizations most concerned with emergency situations. Co-operation with the five regional commissions had been strengthened to improve co-ordination; joint projects would be pursued with the commissions, mainly in the field of the training of national officials in the disaster preparedness.

36. As to the financing of UNDRO, he expressed appreciation for the contributions to the trust fund received during the current year from Australia, Barbados, Chile, Iceland, Iran, Jamaica, Norway, the Philippines and Turkey; he also expressed the hope that further contributions would be received before the end of 1981 and in 1982.

37. Turning to the question of assistance to the drought-stricken areas of Ethiopia, on which the General Assembly had adopted resolution 35/91 and the Economic and Social Council had subsequently adopted resolution 1981/33, he said that although famine and the effects of civil strife continued to be felt in the north, significant improvements had taken place in the southern provinces. According to the United Nations Co-ordinating Committee for Relief and Rehabilitation and the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission of the Government of Ethiopia, 1.5 million people would be in need of food aid during the period from April 1981 to September 1982. In addition, a food deficit of 350,000 metric tons was forecast for 1982. The total food assistance therefore

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required for that period, calculated on the basis of full rations for an average of 12 months and two thirds of full rations for 6 months, amounted to 292,000 metric tons of grains, 27,600 tons of supplementary food and 15,400 tons of edible oil. Discounting supplies pledged and in the pipeline the requirements were 144,000 metric tons of grains, 17,600 metric tons of supplementary food and 14,400 metric tons of edible oil. In the sphere of health care, a short-term programme had been drawn up providing for the improvement of services, including provision of drugs and supplies, and the restoration of the health infrastructure through the repair and reconstruction of damaged facilities. In that connexion, he was happy to report that at the thirty-fourth World Health Assembly the Director-General had been requested to mobilize, on an emergency basis, health and medical assistance for the Government of Ethiopia. The short-term emergency programme also provided for assistance with respect to water supply, education, animal husbandry, transport and logistics. The total costs of that programme were estimated at \$25 million. Contributions received by UNDR0 for the period 1980-1981 amounted to some \$40 million. In addition, the World Food Programme would provide 10,000 tons of wheat, valued approximately at \$3 million, which should be sufficient to meet the needs of the 280,000 drought victims in the Ogaden area for a period of three months.

38. As to Gambia, UNDR0 had organized a multi-agency mission to assess requirements for rehabilitation and emergency assistance. Following an appeal for that purpose, Member States and United Nations organizations had contributed more than \$12 million.

39. In Angola, another multi-agency mission had determined the needs of approximately 600,000 displaced persons in the south and in the central plateau area. Twelve million dollars would be required for immediate needs and an estimated \$60 million for long-term relief. A total of about \$10 million in cash and in kind had been contributed or pledged by Member States, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations and he was confident that the target of \$60 million would be attained within the forthcoming months.

40. He thanked the Member States and organizations that had supported work of UNDR0, which depended largely on their collaboration for the co-ordination of relief.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.