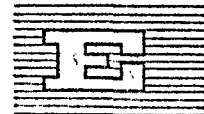


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FIRST (ECONOMIC) COMMITTEE

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 20th MEETING

held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 25 July 1979, at 10.30 a.m.

Chairman: Mr. HORN (German Democratic Republic)
later: Mr. MAVROMMATIS (Cyprus)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.40 a.m.

REGIONAL CO-OPERATION (item 7 of the Council's agenda) (continued) (E/1979/32, E/1979/47, E/1979/48, E/1979/49, E/1979/50, E/1979/51, E/1979/76 and Add.1; E/1979/C.1/L.9)

1. Mr. HABIB (United Arab Emirates) said that, as a developing country, the United Arab Emirates was actively promoting regional, interregional and international co-operation. Such bodies as the Arab Common Market, the Arab Council for Economic Unity, the Arab Monetary Council and the various Arab development funds provided a solid basis for technical co-operation among developing countries, as recommended in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, and for promoting the establishment of the New International Economic Order through measures of collective self-reliance.
2. In both the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries (OAPEC), and the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC), his country was endeavouring to promote the socio-economic development of oil-producing developing countries. The members of OPEC had expressed solidarity with the other developing countries, in particular the least developed among them. His country also paid particular regard to the economic and social problems of the countries members of the Group of 77 and was collaborating with them in all sectors of international co-operation.
3. His country had participated in the most recent session of the Economic Commission for Western Asia (ECWA) and fully endorsed its report (E/1979/49/Add.1), which had been adopted by consensus.
4. Mr. WU (China) said that, at its thirty-fifth session, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) had reviewed the achievements in co-operation for economic and social development in the region and had drawn up regional plans and activity programmes for the period 1980-1981. It had noted that multilateral and bilateral economic and technical co-operation had increased, at regional and subregional levels, among the developing countries of the region, the members of the Association of South East Asian Nations, and the island countries of the Pacific.
5. On the other hand, the export of manufactured goods and the industrialization of the developing countries of the region had been seriously affected by the protectionist policy pursued by some developed countries. At the thirty-fifth session of ESCAP, many developing countries had expressed the hope that the programme of action for Asia and the Pacific adopted in 1978 by the Conference of Ministers of Trade of the region would soon be put into effect. In resolution 199 (XXXV) ESCAP had affirmed that the new strategy for the Third Development Decade must aim at the establishment of a New International Economic Order to promote economic development and co-operation in Asia and the Pacific.
6. China attached great importance to the development of relations with all countries of Asia and the Pacific. Several senior officials of the ESCAP secretariat had visited China, and China had appointed a permanent representative to ESCAP and had pledged 200,000 Yuan Renminbi to the Commission for the current year. It hoped to increase its contribution to development co-operation in the future.

7. Mr. ONDREJČEK (Observer for Czechoslovakia) said that he was pleased to note that the regional commissions had made a positive contribution to promoting the economic and social development of several member States.

8. At the thirty-first session of the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) the Soviet Union, supported by all the socialist countries, had tabled a proposal to convene all-European high-level meetings on the protection of the environment and the development of energy and transport, which were topics of paramount importance for the economic, scientific and technical development of member States and for the future of European co-operation. His delegation was pleased to note that the idea of holding a high-level meeting on co-operation on the environment had come to fruition at the thirty-fourth session of ECE.

9. The development of peaceful co-operation among ECE member States was of particular importance for other parts of the world as well, for its results could be put to good use by States members of other regional commissions. His country therefore supported the proposals to increase co-operation between ECE and other regional economic commissions. In its view, the co-operation should take the form not only of exchanges of information and studies but also of joint research and the participation of experts from developing countries in ECE activities. ECE should remain a platform for mutually advantageous co-operation between countries with different social and economic systems. At the same time, its co-operation with other regional commissions should contribute to the establishment of the New International Economic Order and to the socio-economic development of other regions.

10. ECE should continue to give priority to East-West trade, multilateral economic, scientific and technical co-operation, protection of the environment, long-term planning and projections, and co-operation in the field of energy and transport. His delegation was convinced that ECE and the other regional commissions could play an important role in the United Nations system with regard to the economic and social development of all regions of the world.

11. Mr. WASHBURN (United States of America) said that the Secretary-General's reports on regional co-operation and on the meetings of the executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions had further strengthened his delegation's conviction that the commissions were particularly important members of the Council's group of organizations. Their role was doubly useful since they not only brought the special circumstances and requirements of the various regions to the attention of the United Nations but made their members aware of their interdependence and mutual responsibilities by setting their problems in a wider perspective.

12. His delegation supported the increase in the responsibilities of the regional commissions as part of the restructuring of the economic and social sector of the United Nations. In particular, they should be given the status of executing agencies of UNDP projects in the categories mentioned in paragraph 23 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 32/197. Such decentralization and transfer of authority and responsibility to the regional commissions could give greater impetus to economic and technical co-operation among developing countries. The commissions must, however, bear in mind that the initiative for such co-operation must come from the developing countries themselves, and that the commissions' role was merely to support that process.

13. The transfer of responsibility to the commissions could contribute to greater efficiency and savings, or at least a stabilization of expenditure. His delegation therefore considered that the resources needed by the regional commissions to discharge their new responsibilities should be derived exclusively from a redeployment of the existing resources of the United Nations system. The transfer of responsibilities could, moreover, result in a streamlining of work procedures and of subsidiary bodies of the regional commissions, as the example of ESCAP showed. It should also promote co-operation at the regional and subregional level, and with other commissions and organizations. While, however, co-operation could extend to organizations outside the United Nations system, the regional commissions should not provide them with secretariat services.

14. His delegation commended the Secretary-General's reports and encouraged the regional commissions to continue to make the most effective use of their talents and resources.

15. Mr. SALIBA (Malta) said that he would limit his statement to the interregional aspect of economic co-operation. Being situated in an area that came within the purview of three regional economic commissions (ECE, ECA and ECWA), his country considered that such a potential disadvantage could be turned into an excellent opportunity for carrying out advantageous interregional co-operation. ECE had taken the first steps in that direction by its active participation in the meeting of experts on co-operation in the Mediterranean region, which had been held at Valletta in connexion with the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The Executive Secretary of ECE had announced that there were to be closer consultations between the ECE and ECWA secretariats on the feasibility of carrying out joint projects in the Mediterranean region. His delegation awaited the outcome with interest.

16. Mr. MENDEZ-AROCHE (Venezuela) said that his delegation supported the tendency to entrust greater responsibilities to the regional commissions, thus enabling them to contribute to the implementation of the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, the Lima Declaration and Plan of Action, and the first plan of short-term and medium-term action for global priorities in the field of economic co-operation among developing countries decided upon at the last meeting of the Group of 77. His delegation was pleased to note the progress made by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLA) in the field of interregional co-operation.

17. Reviewing various fields of co-operation, he noted with satisfaction the intensification of the collaboration between ECLA and the specialized agencies in combating malnutrition among children and in remedying inadequacies in education. In the field of human settlements, technical co-operation should emphasize practical innovations in regard to building materials and techniques. Account should also be taken of the activities of the professional associations in the region and of other international programmes in progress in the same sector.

18. His delegation approved of the efforts towards co-operation in agricultural development, which should be seen in the context of rural development strategies, and the activities carried out in the field of education in Latin America and the Caribbean. It had noted with interest the studies carried out on external debt in Latin America in the framework of the programme relating to international

trade. The external debt of developing countries was symbolic of the imbalance and injustice of current economic relations. A study of those problems should make it possible to adopt corrective measures and to follow up the structural solutions which were being sought by dialogue and negotiation at the international level.

19. The parallel study on the position of energy-importing Latin American countries should make it possible to show that the increase in the price of oil was not the sole cause of the difficulties of the developing countries, as was also confirmed by the fact that there were some developed countries among the energy-importing countries. Many Latin American countries did not take advantage of the abundant energy resources available to them. Now that the world's oil resources were dwindling, production and consumption systems should be rationalized by making savings in energy and by encouraging the consumption of local energy. That was being done, for example, by Costa Rica, which was resorting increasingly to electrical energy in order to reduce its oil imports as much as possible. It should be added that, according to the report on economic trends in Latin America in 1978 (E/1979/72), the trade deficit was highest in the oil-exporting countries of the region, whereas in the oil-importing countries, it represented only a fraction of the total balance-of-payments deficit. It should also be noted that the distinction between energy-importing countries and energy-exporting countries did not appear in the report of the Secretary-General on the industrialized countries. The proposed study would undoubtedly demonstrate the advantage of horizontal co-operation in prospecting, exploiting and developing the energy resources of Latin America. Among the various studies planned, the study of various sources of multilateral financing for the exploitation of raw materials in Latin America should make it possible to make better use of those resources.

20. Venezuela attached great importance to programmes relating to transport and industrial development, and in particular to regional co-operation in specific industrial sectors. It was important to ensure complementarity between the activities of ECLA and other regional programmes carried out within the framework of various integration agreements, such as the Latin American Economic System or the Carthage Agreement.

21. His delegation also supported ECLA resolution 394 (XVIII) concerning cultural co-operation, and in particular the promotion of indigenous traditions.

22. He drew attention to the programme adopted by ECLA on the administration of technical co-operation. The failure of the recent international negotiations made economic co-operation among developing countries even more essential, but such co-operation should supplement measures taken in the context of the north-south dialogue and not be a substitute for them. In conclusion, his delegation shared the concern expressed at the UNDP Executive Board regarding the revision of the criteria for the distribution of resources for technical co-operation.

23. Mr. Sarbuland KHAN (Pakistan) pointed out that nearly two thirds of the people living in absolute poverty in the world were to be found in the region to which Pakistan belonged. In the countries concerned, external debt and unemployment were constantly on the increase, while agricultural and industrial productivity

remained at a low level. The support given by the international community to the activities of ESCAP, in particular to activities for the benefit of the least developed and most seriously affected countries of the region, should be on a scale commensurate with those problems.

24. His delegation endorsed the programme of work and the priorities adopted by the Commission for the forthcoming biennium. ESCAP had an essential catalytic and support role to play in furthering economic and technical co-operation among developing countries and in promoting subregional and interregional co-operation programmes with ECWA and ECA in particular.

25. Referring to the recommendations in the Buenos Aires Plan of Action, he said that ESCAP should devote a larger portion of its resources to promoting technical co-operation among developing countries. It was preferable to promote that kind of activity in existing regional and interregional bodies which already possessed the required institutional framework and whose very existence reflected the willingness of member States to co-operate. The only restrictions on such activities were lack of financial and technical resources.

26. His delegation strongly supported the principle of decentralization of the social and economic activities of the system in favour of the regional commissions, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197. ESCAP had already taken some useful steps towards rationalization by integrating four of its regional training and research institutes into a single regional development centre and by reorganizing its intergovernmental machinery. It was regrettable, however, that the process of decentralization was so slow. Not only should the process be speeded up, but the commissions should be given the necessary financial resources and autonomy to put it into effect.

27. Mr. HAJNAL (Hungary) said that his country welcomed the move to transfer greater responsibility to the regional economic commissions. It also welcomed the measures adopted by the Governing Council of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) at its latest session to enhance the involvement of the developing countries in setting the priorities for the regional programmes of the third programming cycle of UNDP. Those new responsibilities would help the regional commissions to consolidate their role as effective centres for the promotion of regional economic and technical co-operation. They would also promote co-operation among the commissions. The African regional project on the promotion of agricultural producers' co-operatives, in the execution of which his country was playing a direct role, was a good example of the possibilities that existed.

28. Co-operation among the regional commissions could be implemented either in the framework of more formal arrangements or through less formal contacts among the executive secretaries. His delegation felt that the more formal arrangements would ensure more systematic activity. The conclusion of an interregional action programme between ECA and ECLA seemed an interesting new initiative in that respect. The Council should perhaps study the practical advantages of the action programme and encourage similar initiatives.

29. It had been reassuring to see that the Executive Secretaries of the regional commissions were making commendable efforts to intensify regional and interregional co-operation. Nevertheless, his delegation felt that there was still room for improvement and it hoped that the Executive Secretaries would continue to bear in mind the provisions of Council resolution 1978/74 when submitting proposals concerning the programmes of work and priorities of their respective regional commissions.

30. With regard to the Economic Commission for Europe, his delegation was satisfied by and large with the activities carried out within its framework. The Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe had laid the foundations for stable and long-term co-operation between East and West, and had helped to make ECE one of the most active of the regional commissions. His delegation hoped that the high-level meeting on the protection of the environment that ECE had decided to hold would give a new impetus to the Commission's activities in that field.

31. As a country with insufficient energy resources, Hungary attached considerable importance to the question of energy. It was convinced that the time was ripe to make practical preparations for an all-European high-level meeting on energy, as proposed by the USSR three years earlier. It hoped that ECE would take action in that direction at its next session. It would also be desirable to organize a similar meeting on transport, which was a question of great importance to his country in view of its geographical situation.

32. The Executive Secretary had referred to the question of East-West trade as a major area of concern to the Commission. As far as his country was concerned, it was indeed an important question, since a good part of its national income came from foreign trade and many countries of western Europe were among its traditional trading partners. His country therefore considered that ECE should pay more attention to substantive trade policy questions.

33. At the most recent session of ECE his delegation had made several proposals for the intensification of regional activities within the framework of ECE and for improving the effectiveness and activity of the Commission itself. He referred in particular to the proposal aimed at facilitating international co-operation in the field of pharmaceuticals. The decision adopted by ECE on that subject was a good start for more intensive regional co-operation in that field.

34. Mr. BIRYULEV (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) noted that the development of regional co-operation had been more marked in regions where action by progressive forces and peace-loving people had brought about a climate of détente. The strengthening of détente, peace and security was the prerequisite for economic and social development. That was why the SALT II agreements recently signed by his country and the United States of America were important.

35. Unfortunately, tension persisted in some regions: in the Middle East, for example, Israel's expansionist policy and refusal to withdraw from the Arab territories occupied in 1967 and to accept a just and equitable solution of the Palestinian problem constituted a serious threat to peace in the region and in the world. The separate peace agreement between Egypt and Israel, which some saw as a first step, could not lead to peace because it denied the Palestinian people the right to their own country and sanctioned the Israeli occupation. That agreement opened the way to direct imperialist intervention in Arab affairs, the armaments race and greater political and economic instability in the region. Its adverse

effects on the activities of ECWA were already apparent: the Commission had had to leave Beirut because of continual attacks by Israeli aggressors. His delegation understood the Commission's concern over the separatist policy of one of its members, in contradiction to the objectives of the Arab States.

36. International machinery existed for solving the whole problem: namely, the Geneva Peace Conference on the Middle East, which all the interested parties could attend, including the Palestine Liberation Organization, whose legitimacy had been confirmed every year since 1974. That was not the point of view of his country alone; it was shared by Bulgaria, Hungary, the German Democratic Republic, Poland, Mongolia and Czechoslovakia.

37. The regional economic commissions had an important role to play in developing trade and scientific and technical co-operation. His country had always taken an active part in activities of that kind. In the Economic Commission for Europe measures were being taken to increase co-operation among the member countries, in accordance with the provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. At its thirty-fourth session the Commission had decided to convene a high-level meeting in November on the protection of the environment. Intensive preparations were in progress, for if the meeting was successful it could lead to similar co-operation in other fields, such as energy and transport. The Commission had also decided to set up a new subsidiary body to prepare for the meeting on energy proposed by his country.

38. The reports of the other regional commissions and the statements by their Executive Secretaries showed that they had been very active in the past few years. He noted with satisfaction that they had concentrated on specific projects for economic, technical and commercial co-operation at the regional and interregional levels. Moreover, the recent sessions of the regional commissions had made an important contribution to the preparation of the new international development strategy. As was emphasized in the commission's reports, in order to overcome the economic and social problems of the newly independent States it was essential to free international trade relations from imbalances, injustices and protectionism. Progressive economic and social reforms were also necessary in the developing countries. Greater attention should be given to industrialization, agrarian reform, economic and social planning, the role of the public and co-operative sector, distribution of national income, participation of the masses in development, training of local personnel and development of national resources.

39. His country was supporting the regional commissions' new activities in those fields by granting fellowships to African and Latin American students, organizing symposia and research activities in the Soviet Union on economic and social development problems and financing expert missions.

40. He welcomed the emphasis placed on programmes for economic and technical co-operation among developing countries. That method was particularly useful because it met the desire of the developing countries to settle the problems inherited from the colonial Powers themselves. He also supported the co-operation between the regional commissions, which was described clearly in document E/1979/32.

41. Although the regional commissions had already taken steps to rationalize their structure in the framework of the decentralization of the economic and social activities of the United Nations system, the process of decentralization was still too slow, particularly the transfer to the regional commissions of the role of executing agents. If responsibility was delegated to the regional commissions, they must also be given the credits and the resources in staff released from headquarters, in order not to add to the Organization's budget or to increase the number of posts unnecessarily.

42. His delegation looked forward to the Secretary-General's note on the financial implications of the decisions taken by the regional commissions. It was not prepared blindly to adopt decisions with budgetary implications and reserved the right to raise the matter in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly.

43. Mr. Mavrommatis (Cyprus) took the Chair.

44. Mr. AL-ATTIYAH (Observer for Qatar) said that Qatar's policy of regional co-operation with other developing countries was based on the following objectives: contribution to the establishment of a New International Economic Order; promotion of collective self-reliance and solidarity, and removal of all the barriers which prevented the developing countries from utilizing the relatively advanced technology possessed by some of them.

45. In that context, Qatar sought to boost its economic, technical and cultural relations with countries of the Arab Peninsula and the Gulf, with other Arab countries and with Islamic States. The Emir of Qatar had called for the establishment of a Gulf Common Market to utilize the homogeneous economic, social and cultural features of the Gulf countries and take advantage of their potential. The objective of the Gulf Common Market was to facilitate the transfer of goods and services between member States and to enable them to exchange information and views on economic development plans, in order to harmonize their policies and avoid duplication of activities, especially in industrialization.

46. With regard to industrial co-operation, Qatar, together with the other Gulf countries, had established a joint body to diversify, through industrialization, the national income of those countries, which at present was derived merely from oil. UNIDO had given valuable help to that body, which published information on industrial development projects and policies, conducted pre-feasibility and economic feasibility studies and appraised the possibilities for joint ventures between member States.

47. In monetary matters, the Gulf countries had made strenuous efforts to unify their currencies in order to protect them against foreign exchange rate fluctuations, imported inflation and speculation in the money market.

48. On the subject of energy, the region's countries had also sought to formulate joint policies. Thus, at the Arab Energy Conference, held in March 1979, the participants had agreed to establish, in collaboration with the Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries, an Arab Joint Committee for Energy, which would have the task of formulating appropriate guidelines for an Arab national energy policy and establishing groups of experts to conduct research into energy resources and their use.

49. With regard to fisheries, the countries of the Gulf had established a regional project in Qatar, with UNDP technical assistance, to study and manage fishery resources, promote the spread of modern technology, organize the marketing of fish and establish statistical systems.

50. Mr. VALTASAARI (Finland) said that he noted with great satisfaction the progress made in implementing Council resolution 1978/74. The enhancement of the role of the regional commissions was a necessary step, since a large number of development problems were either of a local nature or had localized aspects and could best be dealt with in a regional or subregional context. Regional and subregional co-operation could thus help United Nations bodies to take better account of the diversity of the situations and needs of the countries in each region. The recent decision of the UNDP Governing Council to involve the regional commissions more closely in decisions concerning the use of regional IPFs should enable the commissions to play an even more important role in the development of their respective regions. One of the chief immediate tasks facing the regional commissions was to promote economic and technical co-operation among developing countries, at both the conceptual and the operational level. While he did not wish to detract from the role of UNDP or UNCTAD in co-operation among developing countries, it should be recognized that the regional commissions were better suited than centralized bureaucracies to take the main responsibility. All the regional commissions seemed to have a sufficient mandate to take vigorous action in that respect, and to make an important contribution to the growth of collective self-reliance of the countries in their regions.

51. In Europe, the regional economic commission acted with great efficiency, particularly with regard to implementing the provisions of the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe. The results already achieved, and those which could be expected in several fields, particularly in environmental matters, were eloquent proof of the possibilities for international co-operation despite the heterogeneous composition of ECE. The Commission had just established a new subsidiary body entitled "Senior Advisers to ECE Governments on Energy"; Finland hoped that it would lead to a fruitful exchange of ideas and information on a subject which remained one of high priority for practically all Governments.

52. Lastly, he stressed the role that the Commission could play in the North-South dialogue. He was thinking not only of co-operation between ECE member countries and the developing countries of the Mediterranean but also of the contribution

which ECE, consisting mainly of industrialized countries, could make towards the establishment of the New International Economic Order. Its work on economic perspectives could be of great value in that connexion and in the long term it would certainly be one of the Commission's most important undertakings.

53. ✓ Mr. WHITE (Observer for Australia) said that his delegation was generally satisfied with the outcome of the previous session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which had concentrated largely on the practical problems of developing the Commission's role in economic co-operation among the countries of the region. His delegation had noted, however, that the problem of North-South relations and political differences had intruded into the deliberations to a much greater extent than in previous years, and it hoped that the trend would not undermine the practical and constructive approach which had always been a feature of ESCAP's work.

54. Australia regarded the Commission as the major regional organization to which it belonged. It hoped that the operational nature of the Commission's activities would continue to be stressed and that, in the restructuring process, it would have a more central co-ordinating role in the activities of the specialized agencies. It was for that reason that Australia, at the thirty-fifth session of ESCAP, had been particularly concerned with the question of streamlining the Commission's conference structure. It was anxious to arrest the proliferation of meetings and to achieve better co-ordination of the topics considered in the various subsidiary organs, while avoiding unnecessary growth in bureaucracy.

55. The thirty-fifth session had seen the admission of two new full members (Fiji and Solomon Islands) and two associate members (New Hebrides and Niue). Australia saw that as proof that the nations of the Pacific were interested in the Commission; it hoped that ESCAP, for its part, would become further involved in the development of the Pacific subregion, taking into account the special problems of island developing countries.

56. ✓ Mr. TANIGUCHI (Japan) said that his delegation was glad to note the increasing recognition of the important role that the regional commissions should play in the economic and social development of the developing countries. Japan had taken an active part in the work of ESCAP and had noted that the Commission emphasized the importance of social as well as economic development. ESCAP had been promoting the implementation of various regional co-operation projects, such as the Mekong Committee, the Committee for Co-ordination of Joint Prospecting for Mineral Resources in Asian Offshore Areas, the Typhoon Committee and many training centres. Such projects reflected the desire for collective self-reliance on the part of the countries of the region, and regional co-operation of that type would undoubtedly lead the way towards stability and prosperity in South-East Asia. Japan would continue to support those activities as much as possible.

57. His delegation welcomed the decision taken by the Commission concerning the development of a regional information system to promote economic and technical co-operation among developing countries. It considered that activity of that type was one of ESCAP's basic functions and that it responded to the requirements of the new Development Decade. The Japanese Government had decided to offer financial assistance to ESCAP for the purchase of a computer, an essential part of the information system envisaged.

58. Japan supported the decentralization of economic and social activities in the United Nations system. It considered, however, that more serious attention should be paid to the rationalization and co-ordination of the activities of the regional commissions, which would naturally increase as a result of decentralization. He hoped, therefore, that the decisions taken at the Commission's thirty-fifth session on the rationalization of ESCAP meetings and operations would be implemented as envisaged.

59. In conclusion, he emphasized the important role that the regional commissions should play in drafting and implementing the new International Development Strategy. Japan intended to continue and to intensify its financial and technical assistance to ESCAP activities.

60. Mr. GREEN (New Zealand) said that the existence of the regional commissions bore witness to the importance which the United Nations had always attached to international co-operation at the regional level. As decolonization had progressed, the regional commissions had taken on new functions and activities reflecting the wishes of their member Governments. The adoption of General Assembly resolution 32/197 had marked the beginning of a new era for the commissions; they had been given greater responsibility and autonomy in the framework of closer and more practical co-operation with each other and with other organizations of the United Nations system.

61. It was encouraging to note that implementation of the resolution on restructuring was proceeding apace in all the regional commissions, with the full co-operation of the Headquarters services whose activities were being decentralized, and that the arrangements made by the Executive Secretaries and the heads of other bodies in the system to improve exchanges of information and co-ordination of effort in areas of common interest had helped to identify potential problems and suggest possible solutions. In that context, the periodic meetings of the Executive Secretaries had been particularly valuable. His delegation shared the view of the Executive Secretaries that the possibilities for redeployment of resources from Headquarters to the regions should be fully explored, but it accepted that additional resources might be necessary and it was ready to give consideration to any suggestions which the Secretary-General might submit on that subject to the General Assembly at its thirty-fourth session.

62. The regional commissions were also making their voice heard more clearly and more frequently in respect of the formulation of global policies. The second session of the Preparatory Committee for the New International Development Strategy had shown the substantial contribution which the regional commissions could make to the elaboration of the Strategy and the potential benefits of greater emphasis on the regional dimensions of development issues. Although there were problems common to all regions, approaches and needs differed from one region to another.

63. New Zealand, which was a member of ESCAP, hoped that the Council would endorse the resolution embodying the Commission's unanimous decision to admit Fiji and the Solomon Islands to full membership and Niue and the New Hebrides to associate membership, for that decision marked a further strengthening of the representation

of Pacific island developing countries in the Commission. Indeed, the interest shown by Pacific countries in the Commission's activities had grown steadily during the past decade. In 1978, the Commission had acknowledged the need for institutional adjustments to reflect the new balance within it by deciding to establish a senior-level liaison post in the Pacific. Unfortunately, the establishment of that post had been delayed and his delegation, like the Pacific countries themselves, was looking forward to the full implementation of the decision in question in the next biennium.

64. He welcomed the co-operation established between ESCAP and UNDP with regard to the inter-country programming of regional projects. A comprehensive list of project proposals tailored to the needs and priorities of the Pacific countries had been drawn up and the success of the joint ESCAP/UNDP mission augured well for the future.

65. ESCAP had taken an important step towards rationalization when it had agreed to the merging of four of the five regional development institutes in a single Asian and Pacific Development Centre. The task would be a complex one but it was already well under way. In the matter of the rationalization of the Commission's conference structure, his delegation regretted that more comprehensive and vigorous measures had not been taken.

66. The Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives, an institution without parallel in other regional commissions, had proved a most useful vehicle for ensuring liaison between delegations and the Commission's secretariat. In particular, it had endeavoured to streamline the Commission's work programme and to develop criteria for the inclusion or deletion of activities. His delegation regretted that the Commission had not given full endorsement to the Advisory Committee's constructive recommendations, for it considered that the criteria proposed had been practical, flexible and necessary, but it was confident that further consideration of the matter would result in the elaboration of guidelines acceptable to all.

67. Mr. VILLA (Philippines) said that, in the view of his delegation, the regional commissions acted as a catalyst for technical and economic co-operation at the subregional, regional and interregional levels and were in an advantageous position to carry out programmes in their respective regions. Accordingly, his delegation favoured the decentralization of activities to the regional commissions, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 32/197. It was regrettable that implementation of the relevant provisions of that resolution was progressing very slowly, probably because of a shortage of resources, for it was clear that the transfer of responsibilities should be accompanied by a corresponding transfer of resources. His delegation endorsed the proposal of the Executive Director of the Commission on Human Settlements for the deployment of eight regular budget posts to the regional commissions (E/1979/76, paragraph 40).

68. On the subject of decentralization, his delegation also endorsed the decision of the Executive Secretaries to maintain a liaison office for the regional commissions at Headquarters.

69. One of ESCAP's major tasks during the period under consideration had been to prepare its contribution to the new International Development Strategy. As had been pointed out by the Executive Secretary of the Commission, two thirds of the people of the world living in absolute poverty were inhabitants of the region. Consequently, any new strategy should aim at accelerating the economic and social development of those people, through appropriate policy measures. The Commission, which had first-hand knowledge of the related problems, should be able to grasp and fully to reflect the real issues that hampered the economic growth of many developing countries.

70. In adopting its programme of work and priorities for the biennium 1980-81, the Commission had drawn attention to the need to mobilize resources for the expeditious implementation of its programme. ESCAP, whose role in the region was expanding, needed additional budgetary and extra-budgetary resources.

71. Mr. EL-SHAFEI (Observer for Egypt), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said he was surprised that the representative of the USSR had devoted such a large part of his statement to developments in western Asia and to the process under way for solution of the problems encountered in that region. He acknowledged that the Soviet Union, as a great Power and a permanent member of the Security Council, had a legitimate concern about the situation in that part of the world and recognized that it had helped both Arab and non-Arab countries to assert their national rights. However, not only had the Soviet Union never made any attempt to facilitate the negotiations which had resulted in the conclusion of certain agreements, but it had opposed those negotiations from the very outset. It was difficult for his country to understand such an attitude on the part of a great Power which was certainly in possession of all the information required to assess the difficulties of the situation.

72. Together with the representative of the Soviet Union, he deplored the negative impact which instability in the region had on economic co-operation, development and growth. He also agreed that it had been necessary to remove the headquarters of the regional commission from one Arab country to another and, along with the Soviet delegation, he condemned the raids and expansionist policies of Israel. It should be borne in mind, however, that Egypt, as a sovereign State, had the right to decide what path to follow. Mention had been made of a conference at Geneva, but no effort had been made to facilitate its convening. Neither the treaty concluded between Egypt and Israel nor the Camp David agreements were final peace treaties; they were operational agreements for the eventual achievement of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East and for the full implementation of all the provisions of Security Council resolution 242, having regard to the principles embodied in the United Nations Charter and the rules of international law. After emphasizing that Egypt was seeking a comprehensive rather than a separate peace, he outlined the provisions which had already been adopted or were being drawn up in respect of Sinai, the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem. The agreements

between Egypt and Israel did not relate only to Israeli withdrawal; they also called for negotiations on the introduction of autonomy as a purely provisional measure. All delegations knew very well that the process of restoring peace had begun and would not stop. Accordingly, he appealed to every delegation to assist rather than hinder the process and to refrain from raising the issue on every possible occasion, irrespective of its relevance to the subject under discussion.

73. ✓ Mr. VORONIN (Secretary of the Committee), replying to questions asked during previous meetings, said that the programme budget implications of the draft decisions relating to the reports of the Economic Commission for Western Asia on its sixth and seventh sessions (E/1979/C.1/L.7) were to be found in document E/1979/L.48. The financial implications of the draft decisions relating to the reports of the Economic Commission for Latin America, the Economic Commission for Africa and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific would be circulated at a later date.

TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS (item 9 of the Council's agenda)
(continued) (E/1979/C.1/L.8)

74. ✓ Mr. WILLIS (United States of America) introduced the draft resolution concerning an international agreement on illicit payments (E/1979/C.1/L.10). The Committee would no doubt remember that during the debate on transnational corporations his delegation had announced its intention to submit a draft resolution on the subject to the Committee.

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT (item 14 of the Council's agenda)
(continued) (E/1979/C.1/L.8)

75. ✓ Mr. ABBAS (Sudan) introduced the draft resolution relating to international co-operation on the environment (E/1979/C.1/L.8) on behalf of the sponsors, who had now been joined by Pakistan, the Philippines and the United Republic of Tanzania. He expressed the hope that the Committee would adopt the draft resolution by consensus, thus giving practical expression to the general support which had been voiced for UNEP's activities during the discussion.

76. ✓ Mr. PONCET (France), referring to operative paragraph 4 of the draft resolution, restated his Government's position of principle, which was that every effort should be made to avoid setting up new bodies, if necessary by reshaping and adapting existing structures. In that respect it would be wise to follow the example set by the Economic Commission for Europe, particularly in the area of the environment.

77. His delegation considered that the appeal to all Governments in paragraph 5 of the draft resolution was addressed also to future contributors and to countries whose contribution was either inadequate or made in non-convertible currencies. On that understanding, it would not oppose the adoption of the draft resolution.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.