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on Wednesday, 17 July 1968, at 10.20 a.m.

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Population and its relation to economic and social development
(item 5 of the Council agenda) (continued)

Chairman:

Mr. BILLNER

Sweden

Note: The list of representatives attending the session is found in Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, Forty-fifth Session, prefatory fascicle.

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POPULATION AND ITS RELATION TO ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (item 5 of the Council agenda) (E/4454 and Add.1, E/4486/Add.1, E/4493/Rev.1, paras. 152-166, E/4551) (continued)

Mr. AKSEH (Turkey) said that the very wording of item 5 of the Council agenda denoted the international community's awareness of the close relationship which existed between economic and social development and population growth.

History revealed that the rates of development of the industrialized countries at the turn of the century had been, on the whole, rather low and in many instances compared unfavourably with the growth rates achieved by the majority of developing countries during the years following the second World War. Nevertheless, those countries had rapidly reached affluence and prosperity. They had had a decisive advantage over the present developing countries in that the rate of increase of their populations averaged about one per cent per year whereas the average rate of population growth in the developing countries had been 2.3 per cent in the fifties and 2.5 per cent in the early sixties, in a number of instances even reaching 3 per cent. That meant that the population of those countries would double in less than twenty-five years and that the progress made through hard work and sacrifice was partly nullified.

Turkey offered a particularly striking example of that trend. In the past three years, the annual growth rate target of 7 per cent set in the development plans had been achieved. At that rate, if the population remained stationary the per capita gross national income would double every ten years, and in less than one generation Turkey would reach a standard of living equivalent to that of the advanced countries of western Europe. Unfortunately, during the nineteen-fifties, the annual population growth rate had been 2.85 per cent and, although it had fallen to 2.61 per cent in the nineteen-sixties, it was still well above the world average.

There was no doubt that economic development, urbanization and the spread of education could bring about a lowering of fertility. But it was precisely the high birth-rate which very often prevented the economic development which would result in a reduction of population pressures. Often the only way to break out of the vicious circle, therefore, was to introduce family planning on a nation-wide scale. There were many countries which had reached that conclusion and decided to take measures to curb fertility as a means of accelerating economic and social development. The application of such measures was often facilitated by the fact that the individual was happy that recognition had been given to one of his basic rights, that of determining the size of his own family, and that he had been given the means of exercising it. In that field, sovereign States and individuals were, of course, free to adopt the line of action they considered best.

His delegation was glad to see that United Nations demographic activities had been considerably extended, as the Population Commission's report revealed, but it considered that United Nations bodies should devote still greater attention to countries' family planning needs. In that connexion, his delegation thought, as the United States representative had pointed out, that the Population Commission was, perhaps, over-emphasizing the preparation of statistics and research of an academic nature, to the detriment of more practical activities which could be of direct benefit to the developing countries. Demographic statistics and projections were, indeed, essential tools for drawing up well-conceived development plans but research should be directed mainly at supporting United Nations action in the field, particularly with regard to human fertility and its medical aspects.

The need to review priorities and concentrate efforts on the most pressing needs became all the more evident in the light of the statement in paragraph 10 of the note by the Secretary-General on population and its relation to economic and social development (E/4551) that "several projects which need urgent financing are in danger of being delayed". In that connexion, it was reassuring to see, in paragraphs 17 and 119 of the Population Commission's report (E/4454), that the question of priorities was under study and that the Commission was aware that family planning had not yet received the attention it deserved in the United Nations Population Programme.

His delegation welcomed the establishment of the Trust Fund for Population Activities. It should be pointed out that, in paragraph 33 of its report, the Commission took note of the increasing number of country requests for technical assistance in population matters and anticipated an even greater increase in the future. Under the circumstances, the Council should take appropriate measures and prepare guidelines to enable the increased volume of requests to be effectively met.

It was in the light of the preceding considerations that his delegation viewed the draft resolution in the Commission's report, and reserved the right to comment on it later.

Mr. POSNETT (United Kingdom) said he welcomed the inclusion in the agenda of an item on population and its relation to economic and social development, since that was a problem of immediate importance even if its solution could only be a long-term one. As the head of the United Kingdom delegation had said in plenary, a solution to that problem was an essential ingredient of remedies for economic and social ills. It was not only a question of improving the per capita rate of economic growth but also

of freeing future generations from hunger, ignorance and poverty and of effectively recognizing man's basic right freely to decide on the number and spacing of his children, as was emphasized in several paragraphs of the Declaration on Population by World Leaders (E/4551, annex I). His delegation agreed, therefore, with those delegations which had stated that, on the one hand, it was a problem of basic human rights and, on the other, a decision which, in the last analysis, was a matter for the family.

It was certain that the economic aspects of the problem were of the highest importance. As the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) had said at the 1532nd plenary meeting, the breakthrough on the food side had to be matched by population planning to prevent population growth from continuing to nullify the growth in agricultural production. Within the context of measures to guarantee future generations better physical and moral health conditions, it was also necessary to give young people the educational and employment possibilities they would demand and, consequently, to make provision in time for the bottlenecks which would occur in the training of teachers and in industrial and agricultural employment openings.

It was obvious that attempts to improve human resources could be hampered by the population explosion. As the Secretary-General had pointed out, the second Development Decade would have to emphasize the critical relationship between population and resources and begin to overcome the problems arising from that relationship. There had been a welcome change in the attitude of the United Nations to that problem, and the Secretary-General was to be congratulated on his initiative. Although, like the French Government, his own Government was not normally in favour of establishing Trust Funds to finance particular activities, it appeared that, in the present case, the Trust Fund for Population Activities could be an effective means of pump-priming and of stimulating international action. Care should be taken to ensure that the Fund did not become a substitute for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), to which it should simply add momentum. In view of the interesting suggestion made by the United States representative, he wondered whether the Secretariat would soon be in a position to give an indication of how the Fund would be used. His delegation noted with satisfaction that, according to annex II to the Secretary-General's note, a large proportion of the Fund's resources would be devoted to regional activities and work in the field.

Moreover, his delegation endorsed what was said in paragraphs 156 and 161 of the report of the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination (E/4493/Rev.1). As other delegations had pointed out, it was important that the Population Division should not yield to the temptation to pursue demographic research as an end in itself. It was essential to respect the basic principle of technical assistance, namely, that it was for governments to formulate policies and to submit requests in consequence, the United Nations limiting itself to supplying assistance in response to such requests. Conditions differed from country to country and it rested with governments to decide what type of assistance they needed.

His delegation considered that the question of co-ordinating population activities was very important and was glad that it had been taken into account in the draft resolution submitted to the Council. It had studied with interest annex II to the thirty-fourth report of the Administrative Committee on Co-ordination (ACC) (E/4486/Add.1). While welcoming the establishment of a Sub-Committee on Population, it agreed with the Japanese delegation that co-ordination should also embrace non-governmental organizations and national and private institutions. The ACC had referred to that point but, as the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination had said in paragraph 281 of its report, much remained to be done in developing procedures for co-ordination, particularly in the field of demographic projections. The ACC should take care to avoid duplication in that field among various specialized agencies. His delegation would like the draft resolution submitted to the Council to request the ACC to take new and energetic steps to eliminate any overlapping between the work of the specialized agencies in connexion with population studies and the staff employed on them.

It was only by endeavouring to establish an equilibrium between human resources and food resources that one could hope to contribute to the happiness of future generations, and his delegation hoped that the solution adopted by the Committee would reflect some of the considerations he had just mentioned.

Mr. ONEISH (Libya) said that, although his country had a population of only about one and a half million in a world of over 3,000 million people, it shared the concern of those countries which were faced with a population problem. The head of his delegation had already spoken on the subject at a plenary meeting of the Council.

The problem should be considered within the context of over-all economic and social development. Family planning or birth control should not be regarded as the only possible solution to the population problem, in particular, or to the problem of faster economic development in general. The scientific and technical progress made in various fields, particularly food production, was encouraging, in so far as it helped to increase productivity, especially in developing countries, and resulted in more effective use of resources. United Nations bodies could play a significant role in that process. However, each country must be free to formulate its own population policy and the right of every family to have as many children as it wanted must be respected. That proviso was clearly stated in General Assembly resolution 2211 (XXI) of 17 December 1966.

The general conclusion emerging from the Population Commission's report was that the relationship between demographic, economic and social change was not a simple one, and that consequently there was no simple or uniform solution to the problems arising from that relationship. Economic and social forces had certainly influenced demographic change, including fertility decline. However, the relationship was difficult to define accurately, as the Population Commission had acknowledged in the resolution approved at its twelfth session and adopted by the Economic and Social Council (resolution 933 C (XXXV) of 5 April 1963).

The Interregional Workshop on Programmes of Training in the Field of Population, held in Denmark in 1967, had emphasized the valuable service performed by the centres which were training demographers needed by Governments for demographic research and encouraging the development of national training activities. His Government attached great importance to such programmes and believed that existing training centres should be expanded and given assistance by United Nations bodies. It shared the Commission's view that the centres sponsored by the United Nations should supplement training offered by universities or other national training institutions in developing regions.

His delegation was prepared to support the draft resolution contained in chapter XI of the Commission's report. It would clarify its position further when the draft was put to the vote after consideration by the Committee.

Mr. BHANDARI (India) said the growing intensity of studies, research and programmes undertaken in recent years revealed the importance of the population problem in the context of the struggle against hunger and poverty. The problem was now engaging the attention of Governments and international organizations. However,

the tasks were immense and required, in addition to the studies being conducted or contemplated, action-oriented measures by United Nations bodies at the regional and country levels, in the form of training and technical assistance projects, field research and mobilization of adequate external resources to supplement the efforts made by developing countries and to enable them to manufacture the equipment and supplies they needed in that field.

The main effort had to be at the government level in each country. There was no universally applicable solution or remedy. It was encouraging to note that several Governments had recently adopted new policies, either in dealing with their own problems or in extending technical co-operation to countries requesting it.

He outlined the efforts made by his Government in that field and referred to the assistance it had received from United Nations bodies. Its family-planning programme was based on the principle of voluntary acceptance and every person was free to adopt any of the approved methods of contraception. The programme recognized the right of individual families to exercise discretion regarding the number and spacing of children. For that immense task, involving 90 million couples in the reproductive age group, various measures had been adopted to strengthen, enlarge and reorganize the family-planning programme, both at the central and state administration levels, to ensure that it reached all villages and hamlets. The process included efforts to encourage people to accept the small family norm of two or three children and to accept family planning methods with confidence, the **organization and extension** of services and supplies, the training of social workers, the strengthening and co-ordination of family-planning organizations at various levels and the execution of research and evaluation programmes. As a special measure, maternal and child health services had been integrated with family-planning services at all levels.

In recent years, several measures had been taken by the Department of Family Planning. In view of the magnitude of the programme, an effort was made to enlist the active support of all sections of the population and the greatest possible number of public and private organizations, educational institutions and eminent religious, political and other influential personalities. During 1967, the Government had opened more than 6,000 family welfare centres and about 130 mobile sterilization units. There were now forty-one family-planning training centres, compared with twenty-eight in the previous year. Over 1,800,000 sterilization operations had been performed in 1967-1968, compared with 800,000 in the previous year.

His Government was grateful to United Nations organizations, especially UNDP, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), for helping with the establishment of training and research and health centres, providing experts, consultants and training facilities and donating vehicles, medicines and other supplies. He hoped that assistance would continue in the future.

His delegation welcomed the co-operation arrangements outlined in the report of the ACC and fully supported the suggestion that a uniform procedure for population projections should be established. He recalled that, at the twenty-fourth session of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Far East (ECAFE), his Government had supported a recommendation for the establishment of a regional advisory group on population programmes and of a population information centre, for which his Government had offered to place existing institutional facilities in India at ECAFE's disposal.

Mr. HASNAOUI (Morocco) expressed appreciation of the untiring efforts made by United Nations organizations to promote population planning to assist the economic and social development of poor countries. His Government would support any concerted international action that would further progress in that field.

In several developing countries population pressure undoubtedly undermined, and in some cases cancelled out, the effect of economic growth. Population expansion was also the cause of serious social problems accompanying the migration of country people to urban centres. Such uprooted elements of the population had the added misfortune of being unable to acquire the wealth and advantages offered by an industrial civilization, which nevertheless seemed to be almost within their reach. That process threatened the political stability of the country in which it occurred.

Family planning was advocated as the ideal means of restoring the balance between material and human resources, but it could only attain its objective in the context of over-all economic social and cultural development. Many United Nations studies seemed to attach undue importance to the population aspects of the question and did not give sufficient consideration to sociological factors. A population policy could not be based only on data which, although scientifically analysed, might not reflect the needs of each individual situation. It was not so much a question of fixing an arbitrary population level on the basis of the current production of a given country as of increasing that production to the level where

it enabled the population to live in decent conditions. It was therefore necessary to undertake studies of population problems as a whole, in the light of an over-all development strategy, and at the same time consider practical measures by which the desired objectives could be attained. The Governments of developing countries were prepared to spare no effort to meet the challenge of ignorance and poverty, but the success of any action they took in the limited field of family planning did not depend on their determination alone. They had to take into account the character and diversity of the people as individuals, their traditions, religious beliefs, moral principles and personal motivation - factors which could oppose and even defeat their efforts. Caution and patience were therefore essential in such a delicate matter.

It was important to bear in mind, above all, the particular needs of each region and each human community. Population studies and programmes should be conceived in the context of integrated action designed to ensure the economic and social advancement of mankind. Moreover, it would have to be decided whether birth control was compatible with human rights. A whole range of factors must therefore be borne in mind. The development of education, training and public information would undoubtedly lead to a solution in the long run. The rich countries could, for their part, help to alleviate the inevitable poverty accompanying under-development. It would be imprudent, however, to resort only to Malthusian measures, which could in the long run result in an older population and a loss of vitality.

United Nations bodies should take co-ordinated, integrated action to establish a harmonious balance between material wealth, natural resources and human potential. Such co-ordination would also help to avoid the duplication of effort which occurred at both the research and operational levels. The regional economic commissions should also intensify their activities in accordance with the new development strategy, bearing in mind the special conditions of each country. The work of national and private institutions and philanthropic organizations concerned with that problem should also be co-ordinated. The training of national professional staff, especially demographers, statisticians, sociologists, and doctors, was essential for the success of any family-planning programme.

His delegation supported the suggestion put forward by the Swedish representative that Governments and individual families should be given absolute freedom of choice in the matter of birth control.

He agreed with and would support the draft resolution contained in chapter XI of the Population Commission's report.

Mrs. HENRION-ERNST (Belgium) recalled that the Population Commission had itself noted in its report the complexity and diversity of the problems facing governments with regard to population. There seemed to be a definite link between population density and economic and social development, though it was difficult to establish the optimum relationship between the various factors. The French representative had very clearly explained how difficult it was to decide on a proper demographic policy.

Nevertheless, it was impossible not to be alarmed at the over-rapid growth of population in vast regions of the developing world; the developing countries had an urgent problem to solve, and the emergency solution they were advocating was that known as family planning or, in other words, birth control. Like many other delegations, her delegation wished to stress that birth control was only a stopgap measure and could not be accepted as the main factor of development. It should be possible to find and apply many other means of improving the standard of living of people in the developing countries.

Over the last few years, the United Nations and several of the specialized agencies had carried out studies of population problems and were slowly evolving towards action at the request of governments. It was naturally understood that each country was master of its own population policy and that each government should decide on the type of assistance it required. There was, however, a limit to that right of governments, to which the Belgian delegation attached tremendous importance: the limit imposed by respect for the liberty and dignity of the individual. In that connexion, her delegation wished to affirm its belief that certain methods should be condemned out of hand: abortion, for instance, which was a derogation from the right to life, and sterilization, which was a derogation from individual integrity even if the person concerned willingly and deliberately agreed to it; moreover, some legislations condemned voluntary self-mutilation.

Her delegation considered that other methods of contraception were infinitely preferable; for instance, there were the chemical contraceptives commonly known as "the pill", and the rhythm method based on the menstrual cycle. Both methods implied some training and self-discipline, however, and doctors still did not know what the long-term effects of chemical contraceptives might be. Mechanical contraceptives were easier to use and more efficient, although persons using them had to remain under medical supervision to avoid serious accidents.

In conclusion, she wished to emphasize the importance of the Teheran resolution on family planning - the latest position on the question - which had been unanimously adopted by more than eighty countries. The resolution recognized the fundamental right of couples to decide on the size of their family and the spacing of their children. That right was not an unconditional one, however, and - under the terms of the resolution itself - it had to be exercised with a full sense of responsibility. Consequently, a tremendous and rapid effort of education had to be undertaken or pursued and dissemination of information on birth control methods had to be made part of rural education, community development, mass education and literacy campaigns.

Her delegation had welcomed the statements of the Directors-General of the International Labour Office and UNESCO. The Director-General of UNESCO, Mr. Mahou, had spoken of his agency's satisfaction at finding that justification for remedies against the population explosion was now being sought much more in terms of human rights than of economic necessity, a fact which provided an infinitely more respectable basis and a greater guarantee of the exercise of the greatest of all powers, namely that of perpetuating life.

Mr. VERONILES (Philippines) said that, his delegation had already had occasion to state at the 1536th plenary meeting that family planning should be an essential component in the development programme of the 1970's. His country had not yet formulated any official policy on family planning, although it was one of the thirty signatories of the Declaration on Population. It believed citizens had a right to receive, from the competent government agencies, information concerning family planning. That was in no way incompatible with the right and duty of parents to decide on the number of their children according to the dictates of their own conscience, since the purpose was simply to inform and educate.

The Philippines, aware of the pressure of demographic growth on the economic and social development of the country, was helping and encouraging private agencies concerned with family planning. It welcomed the establishment, announced by the Secretary-General, of the Trust Fund for Population Activities, and wished to thank the governments that had made contributions to that fund, particularly the United States of America, which had offered \$500,000 as well as an additional \$235,000 to be used for financing population activities in the ECAP region.

His delegation endorsed the views already expressed by several delegations concerning the need, emphasized by the Committee for Programme and Co-ordination itself, for action-oriented programmes in the field of population. It recognized the need to co-ordinate activities concerned with population and was glad that the ACC had set up a Sub-Committee on Population for that purpose. His delegation had noted with satisfaction the co-ordination established between the United Nations, UNICEF, the International Labour Organisation (ILO), FAO, UNESCO and WHO in the field of population; such co-ordination should also operate at the national and regional levels.

His delegation took a favourable view of the draft resolution contained in the report of the Population Commission, but reserved the right to submit certain minor amendments to it when the time came.

Mr. MACURA (Director, Population Division) said that the consultant's conclusions would be utilized in two or three stages. During the first stage, a study would be made of the minor aspects of co-ordination with the specialized agencies, bearing in mind their respective terms of reference.

During the second stage, his conclusions would be implemented within the United Nations Secretariat. The choice had been either to create, within the Population Division, new posts for experts in public administration, human rights, social development, family protection, etc. - a measure which would require doubling the strength - or to employ the services of experts from the Divisions of Social Development, Public Administration, Human Rights etc. under suitable arrangements with those Divisions. After consultations, the second solution had been considered most appropriate and more likely to permit the proper utilization of expert resources.

During the third stage, the consultant's detailed report would be used in establishing directives for the population programming officers, who would be appointed towards the end of the year after training at Headquarters.

Since the problem was the complex one of utilizing and managing the Trust Fund, he thought that the relevant observations contained in the consultant's report should be taken into account during the discussions that were to take place on population programmes in general and on the financing capacity of UNDP in particular.

A second question had been raised concerning the inquiries carried out among governments on the relationship between economic and social development and demographic trends in their countries. The first of those inquiries had been carried out in compliance with a request made by the General Assembly (resolution 1838 (XVII) of 18 December 1962), the second was to be carried out in accordance with Council resolution 1048 (XXXVII) of 15 August 1964, which requested the Secretary-General to undertake, at appropriate intervals, similar inquiries on problems resulting from

the relationship between economic development and population changes. The main reason why the Population Commission at its fourteenth session had not considered it feasible to recommend a second inquiry was that government attitudes on matters of demographic policy were rapidly evolving and an inquiry undertaken at the present stage might very quickly become outdated. It therefore seemed preferable to postpone an inquiry of that kind. That did not mean that the Council and the Population Commission would lack information on government attitudes in respect of demographic policy, since the Commission had recommended that a study be made of national measures in the field of population, in close collaboration with the specialized agencies and non-governmental organizations. That study, which would be completed before the next session of the Population Commission, would be of a practical nature and would answer most of the questions raised so far.

Lastly, he had noted that the Council was tending more and more to favour a strengthening of the regional and national components of the population programme. It was planned that no less than five international organizations should participate in that programme; the regional economic commissions were also ready to play an active part to ensure that the programme met regional needs. The need for such a programme had been explicitly stated during the meeting of executive secretaries of the regional economic commissions and the Director of the United Nations Economic and Social Office in Beirut (E/4560).

The meeting rose at 11.45 a.m.